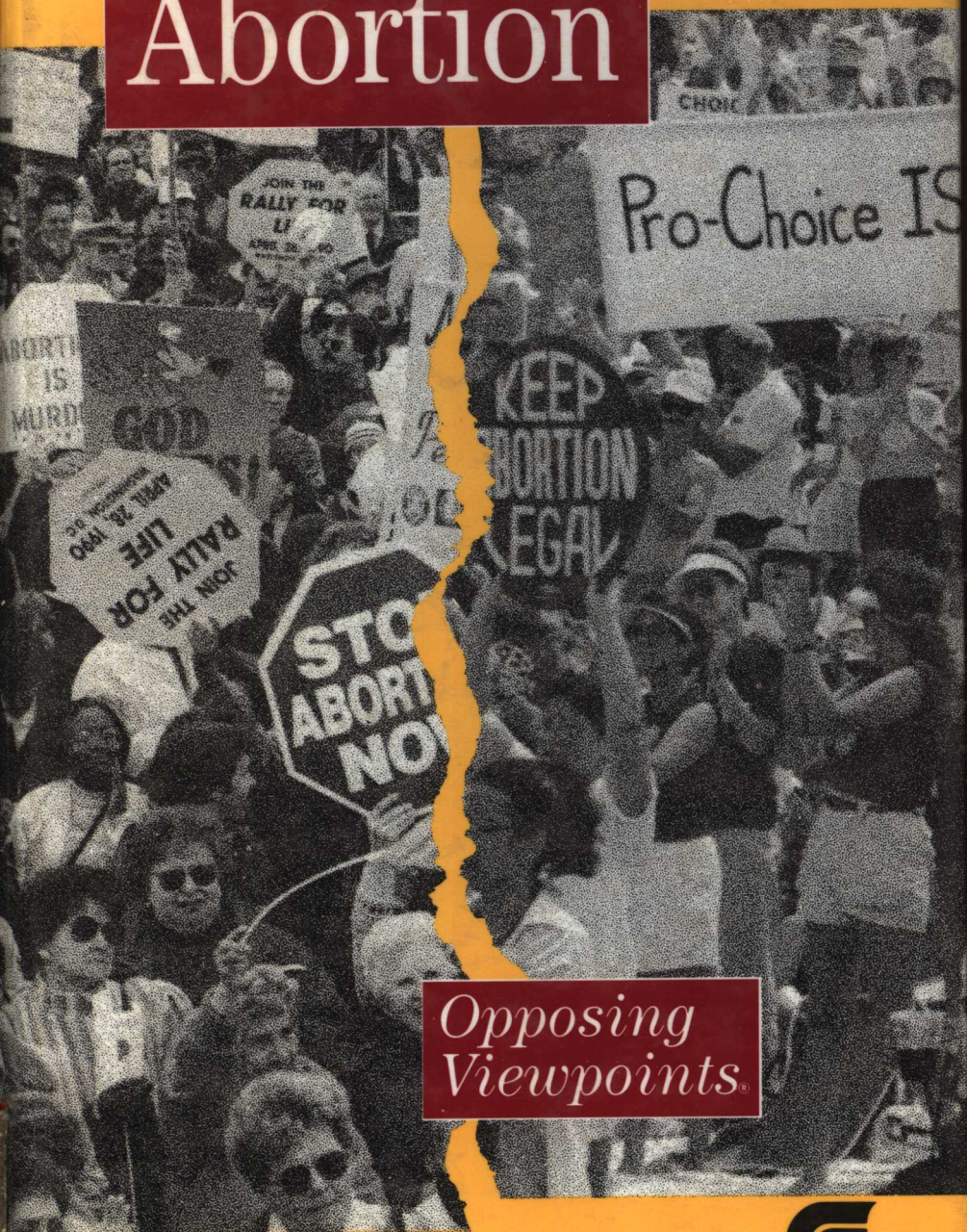


Abortion



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Abortion

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Opposing Viewpoints

David L. Bender & Bruno Leone, *Series Editors*

Charles P. Cozic & Stacey L. Tipp, *Book Editors*

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First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

The basic foundation of our democracy is the first amendment guarantee of freedom of expression. The Opposing Viewpoints Series is dedicated to the concept of this basic freedom and the idea that it is more important to practice it than to enshrine it.

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Why Consider Opposing Viewpoints?

"It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it."

Joseph Joubert (1754-1824)

The Importance of Examining Opposing Viewpoints

The purpose of the Opposing Viewpoints Series, and this book in particular, is to present balanced, and often difficult to find, opposing points of view on complex and sensitive issues.

Probably the best way to become informed is to analyze the positions of those who are regarded as experts and well studied on issues. It is important to consider every variety of opinion in an attempt to determine the truth. Opinions from the mainstream of society should be examined. But also important are opinions that are considered radical, reactionary, or minority as well as those stigmatized by some other uncomplimentary label. An important lesson of history is the eventual acceptance of many unpopular and even despised opinions. The ideas of Socrates, Jesus, and Galileo are good examples of this.

Readers will approach this book with their own opinions on the issues debated within it. However, to have a good grasp of one's own viewpoint, it is necessary to understand the arguments of those with whom one disagrees. It can be said that those who do not completely understand their adversary's point of view do not fully understand their own.

A persuasive case for considering opposing viewpoints has been presented by John Stuart Mill in his work *On Liberty*. When examining controversial issues it may be helpful to reflect on this suggestion:

The only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind. No wise man ever acquired his wisdom in any mode but this.

Analyzing Sources of Information

The Opposing Viewpoints Series includes diverse materials taken from magazines, journals, books, and newspapers, as well as statements and position papers from a wide range of individuals, organizations, and governments. This broad spectrum of sources helps to develop patterns of thinking which are open to the consideration of a variety of opinions.

Pitfalls to Avoid

A pitfall to avoid in considering opposing points of view is that of regarding one's own opinion as being common sense and the most rational stance, and the point of view of others as being only opinion and naturally wrong. It may be that another's opinion is correct and one's own is in error.

Another pitfall to avoid is that of closing one's mind to the opinions of those with whom one disagrees. The best way to approach a dialogue is to make one's primary purpose that of understanding the mind and arguments of the other person and not that of enlightening him or her with one's own solutions. More can be learned by listening than speaking.

It is my hope that after reading this book the reader will have a deeper understanding of the issues debated and will appreciate the complexity of even seemingly simple issues on which good and honest people disagree. This awareness is particularly important in a democratic society such as ours where people enter into public debate to determine the common good. Those with whom one disagrees should not necessarily be regarded as enemies, but perhaps simply as people who suggest different paths to a common goal.

Developing Basic Reading and Thinking Skills

In this book, carefully edited opposing viewpoints are purposely placed back to back to create a running debate; each viewpoint is preceded by a short quotation that best expresses the author's main argument. This format instantly plunges the reader into the midst of a controversial issue and greatly aids that reader in mastering the basic skill of recognizing an author's point of view.

A number of basic skills for critical thinking are practiced in the activities that appear throughout the books in the series. Some of the skills are:

Evaluating Sources of Information. The ability to choose from among alternative sources the most reliable and accurate source in relation to a given subject.

Separating Fact from Opinion. The ability to make the basic distinction between factual statements (those that can be demonstrated or verified empirically) and statements of opinion (those that are beliefs or attitudes that cannot be proved).

Identifying Stereotypes. The ability to identify oversimplified, exaggerated descriptions (favorable or unfavorable) about people and insulting statements about racial, religious, or national groups, based upon misinformation or lack of information.

Recognizing Ethnocentrism. The ability to recognize attitudes or opinions that express the view that one's own race, culture, or group is inherently superior, or those attitudes that judge another culture or group in terms of one's own.

It is important to consider opposing viewpoints and equally important to be able to critically analyze those viewpoints. The activities in this book are designed to help the reader master these thinking skills. Statements are taken from the book's viewpoints and the reader is asked to analyze them. This technique aids the reader in developing skills that not only can be applied to the viewpoints in this book, but also to situations where opinionated spokespersons comment on controversial issues. Although the activities are helpful to the solitary reader, they are most useful when the reader can benefit from the interaction of group discussion.

Using this book and others in the series should help readers develop basic reading and thinking skills. These skills should improve the reader's ability to understand what is read. Readers should be better able to separate fact from opinion, substance from rhetoric, and become better consumers of information in our media-centered culture.

This volume of the Opposing Viewpoints Series does not advocate a particular point of view. Quite the contrary! The very nature of the book leaves it to the reader to formulate the opinions he or she finds most suitable. My purpose as publisher is to see that this is made possible by offering a wide range of viewpoints that are fairly presented.

David L. Bender
Publisher

Introduction

"A fetus is no more a human being than an acorn is an oak tree."

Caroline Lund and Cindy Jaquith,
Abortion: A Woman's Right, 1971.

"There is no abortion that is not the unjust taking of another's life."

James T. Burtchaell,
Rachel Weeping: The Case Against Abortion, 1982.

Few issues have fostered such contention and resulted in such polarization as has the topic of abortion. The participants in the abortion debate not only have firmly fixed beliefs, but each group has a self-designated appellation—pro-choice and pro-life—that clearly reflects what they believe to be the essential issues. On one side, supporters of abortion see individual choice as central to the debate: If a woman cannot choose to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, a condition which affects her own body and possibly her entire life, then she has lost one of her most basic human rights. These proponents of abortion believe that while the fetus is a potential life, its life cannot be placed on the same level with that of the woman. On the other side, opponents of abortion argue that the fetus is human and therefore endowed with the same human rights as the mother. Stated simply, they believe that when a society legalizes abortion, it is sanctioning murder.

Abortion is *not* just a contemporary issue. Historically, both tribal and urbanized societies have employed a variety of methods to end unwanted pregnancies. Germaine Greer in her book *Sex and Destiny* described some of the abortion methods used throughout the world. They include the application of pressure outside the womb—using logs and rocks and jumping on the woman's abdomen—as well as internal methods such as the ingestion of highly toxic chemicals and the use of various implements inside the uterus. In today's more industrialized societies, technology has simplified the abortion procedure to a few basic, safe methods. However, technology has also enhanced society's knowledge of the fetus. Ultrasound, fetal therapy, and amniocentesis graphically reveal that complex life exists before

birth, and it is this potential—and many say actual—human life that is at the heart of the debate.

Anyone seeking material for a book on abortion can find literally thousands of articles, newsletters, and books on the topic. The issue is evident in radio, television, newspapers, magazines, nonfiction, and even fiction books. But the selection process is complicated by the overwhelming sensitivity the issue generates for people. Deep-seated views on both sides make the task of compiling an unbiased book on abortion a complicated and touchy one.

The editors of *Abortion: Opposing Viewpoints* have attempted to collect the most representative arguments on the abortion debate. They have endeavored to include prominent pro-life and pro-choice publications and authors who write from conviction, and, in many cases, from personal experience.

The issue of abortion, perhaps more so than most others today, finds few advocates taking the proverbial "middle ground." It is this polarity that makes abortion particularly suited to the opposing viewpoints approach. The five key topics debated are: When Does Life Begin? Should Abortion Remain a Personal Choice? Is Abortion Immoral? Can Abortion Be Justified? Should Abortion Remain Legal? As readers examine the highly charged viewpoints in this book, they will be faced with many thought-provoking and perhaps unsolvable questions about the nature of life. One matter seems certain: As long as contraceptives are not completely reliable and safe, or men and women neglect their use, abortion will remain an issue.

1 CHAPTER

When Does Life Begin?

Abortion

Chapter Preface

Much of the controversy concerning abortion focuses on the question, when does human life begin? Some of the most common theories are that life begins at conception, at the first sign of brain activity, or at viability, when the fetus can survive on its own. Many Americans maintain that life begins at conception. According to abortion opponent John C. Willke, president of the National Right to Life Committee, "At the union of sperm and ovum there exists a living, single-celled, complete human being." Willke maintains that the laws of natural science prove that human life, complete and intact with forty-six chromosomes, begins at fertilization. Therefore, abortion at any stage of pregnancy is the immoral taking of human life and should be illegal.

In contrast, other Americans often assert that human life begins when a fetus reaches the age of viability, or is able to survive outside the womb. Celeste M. Condit, author of *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric*, for example, believes that prior to viability, the fetus is at an immature stage of physical and mental development and cannot be considered a human life. "The fetus before viability is not individually capable of life," Condit writes. "What the fetus requires is *the substance* of the mother's body." On this basis, Condit explains, abortion is moral prior to viability and should therefore be legal.

Many experts, including philosophers, scientists, theologians, and physicians, have pondered the question of when life begins. The authors of the following chapter present arguments in this continuing debate.