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Phil 225: Cont. Ethical Issues

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Personal Reflection

The problem discussed in our group project revolved around abortion. The general consensus is that the rate of abortions should be reduced as the main objective while the legal ability to receive an abortion is put into question. Personally, I am relatively familiar with the process of attaining an abortion and sought to reevaluate or enhance my stance on the issue. The ethical and legal question of abortion continues to be a sensitive topic and the most challenging part of this project was to remain bipartisan while presenting reliable, informative information. A majority of videos and activities initially discussed were too politically polarized and usually did not allow for discretion or impartiality. The concern for this problem, nevertheless, was that abortions are undesirable but propositions for solutions have political and social drawbacks that may create negative externalities.

Commonly proposed solutions to reduce the rate of abortions is to 1) ban abortions, 2) ease the adoption process, 3) to make contraceptives more accessible and cheaper, and 4) to improve sex education. All these solutions have drawbacks or potential negative externalities, and trade-offs must be made; the question is what trade-offs are ethically sound to make. The drawback to banning abortions is that it would not eradicate abortion but would promote unsafe and unregulated abortions. Easing adoption may lead to more carelessness from the public as the repercussions of having unsafe sex is greatly diminished. Making contraceptives cheaper would, from a conservative and religious standpoint, promote premature and out-of-marriage relational intimacy in young and unmarried couples. Improving sex education is always a positive goal but the question of how early and how thorough children would be receiving this education becomes nuanced.

My stance before the project was that abortion is ethical and the women’s choice so long as the zygote does not develop into a fetus. The first trimester should be based on parental decision, financial situation, and circumstance whether an abortion should be done or not. But once there is neurological activity, it becomes more nuanced. Of course, if it were a medical need then it is up to the discretion of medical professionals and the parents no matter what trimester, but if it is not out of medical need decisions should be made before fetal sentience. This stance was fostered from my Christian high school education. However, I was taught abstinence until marriage and a complete ban on abortion which I did not practically and realistically agree with. This was formed as an individual opinion that strayed away from orthodox Southern Baptist doctrine and I continue to believe this to be my stance even after the project.

A group member of mine believed that it is the woman’s choice. However, the societal stigma or view of abortion would be that women are going to abuse the privilege and legality of it. Therefore, society should offer the proper resources to prevent abortions from happening in the first place. I personally agree that society sees legality as something that can be abused, and we should focus on prevention and alleviation of the need to get abortions. I also agree with the point by another member that it is ethical for a woman to have an abortion in cases where she has an obligation of responsibility, in poverty, or another ethical reason to where having the child is not the best option. However, getting an abortion is still a serious situation that requires meticulous evaluation and should not be taken lightly. The member also believed that abortion is not the best option most of the time as life starts at the heartbeat, but he is ethically willing to compromise this in certain situations. As stated in the article by Hursthouse, the ethical option may not always be the “right” option and unwanted pregnancies should be tackled actively instead of reactively. As it is now, there is a trimester limit to which abortions can be obtained but if there is more effort to curb the need to get abortions then the legality of it would not be of as much priority as preventing an unwanted pregnancy in the first place. Nevertheless, dialogue and continual discussion with an open mind is a step in the right direction towards determining what is ethical as well as legally and socially pragmatic.