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I'll start the paper by summarizing Thomson's main argument in "A Defense of Abortion," then I'll consider the most potent objection to her argument before analyzing Thomson's response to the objection.

Thomson examines several aspects of a common case against abortion and refutes them with various arguments and examples. She begins by establishing a premise that is necessary for the argument she refutes. The premise is that no matter the size or stage of a fetus, all fetuses will be considered human. With that out of the way, Thomson considers the canonical example against abortion: since fetuses are human, and all humans have a right to live, then all fetuses have a right to live.

She then considers various aspects of the argument -- agent-relative prerogatives, defining "right to live," intention, selfishness, and the law -- then shows how each perspective invalidates the argument against abortion. The most compelling point she makes is that the mother-fetus relationship is special in that the mother is potentially significantly impacted while the fetus is assumed to not be able to make a conscious decision, therefore the mother should get to choose whether or not to get an abortion.

By considering the scenario where if the fetus lives, then the mother dies, we see that getting an abortion or not getting one both result in the death of a person. Opponents of abortion

argue that even though the mother will die without an abortion, she must be willing to let this happen because the alternative would result in actively killing the innocent child, which is worse than passively letting the mother die.

Thomson responds to this by saying that the mother should be able to save herself even if it produces a worse outcome for society. An example she gives is where two men are in the cold mountains and one is wearing the other's jacket while the other person does not have a jacket and will soon freeze to death. The second man should be able to take the jacket from the first since it is his, implying that the mother should be able to decide whether or not to get an abortion because it is her body.

Another example Thomson uses throughout her paper is where you find yourself strapped to a hospital bed supporting a famous violinist with your blood, and unplugging yourself will kill the violinist since your blood is unique in helping the violinist survive. If you had to stay hooked up to the violinist for a long time for them to get better, it seems intuitive that you shouldn't be morally required to stay due to how inconvenient it is and how you should be able to decide what you want to do with your body. Thomson draws parallels to abortion where the mother should be able to choose whether or not to support the fetus.

While these examples provide a strong case for the mother being able to choose a potentially worse moral outcome, these agent-relative prerogatives could lead to a slippery slope where the mother could prioritize her own life over a dozen or a million other lives, but Thomson's claims that the abortion case is special in that both are innocent -- they're in the situation without fault to themselves. For this reason, bystanders cannot intervene but the

threatened person can, implying that the mother should be able to choose whether or not to have an abortion.

My objection to Thomson's argument is that she only considers generalized aspects of the agents involved and fails to notice the nuances in the relationship between the mother and fetus that can affect the decision to get an abortion. The first part of the objection can be seen through an example. If the mother were to have twins, then she would have to choose between herself and her two children. Thomson claim implies that only the mother can make this decision. However, if the mother were to have triplets or quadruplets or, hypothetically, the entire next generation of children, then it seems intuitive that the rest of society should have a say in whether or not to have an abortion since the effect is so significant.

Another example where there are only two people involved is if you and the president of the United States (now might not be the best time to reference the president) were stuck in a cave and the president was tied up, and you need to sacrifice a person to escape. Saving yourself would be permissible from agent-relative prerogatives but common sense tells us that you should probably save the president, showing that outside influence can come into play in these situations.

We can imagine that Thomson would respond by pointing out that these examples are a bit unrealistic, and that in a normal case, the impact the mother will face is much more immediate and relatively significant than the impact the fetus(es) will face. However, if we take away the assumption that the mother will die if the fetus is allowed to live, then we obtain a much more realistic scenario that seems to diminish Thomson's argument significantly since the agent-relative prerogatives are much weaker.

Let's put this argument aside for now and consider the parts in the mother-fetus relationship that Thomson neglects. She argues that only the mother can get to choose because both parties are innocent and it is the mother's life/body, but Thomson doesn't mention that the mother and fetus share a bond -- both physical and emotional.

The fetus contains genetic material from the mother thus giving the mother a predisposition to letting the fetus grow and prosper. This predisposition impacts the mother's decision making consciously or unconsciously, potentially leading the mother to choose a decision that may not be in the best interest of herself and those around her. For example, if a homeless mother has no money, food, or housing for herself let alone a newborn child, her having to raise a child will make it extremely difficult for both of them. Even if the child goes to a foster home, that child is more likely to have mental or physical problems due to malnourishment while a fetus, impacting the foster family and those that interact with the child. These results create a reasonable argument against abortion.

Thomson might respond by saying that this evolutionary desire to pass on genetic material is outdated and shouldn't be used as a moral guideline due to its impracticalness and lack of basis. While I agree that genetic tendencies are outdated, they still play a part in our decision making for what seems intuitively morally sound. For example, in the violinist example, Thomson claims that it's morally intuitive that you shouldn't be required to be strapped to the violinist, implying that genetic predispositions do play a role in deciding moral decisions, and that abortion goes against the predisposition to cultivate offspring.

Not only do the mother and fetus share a physical blood bond, they also share an emotional bond. If a mother leaves behind a fetus, she will not only fail to pass on her genetic

material, but also feel an involuntary remorse at losing her child. This guilt and sadness can carry on throughout the mother's life, impacting her and those around her in very tangible, negative ways. While this is another argument for the moral intuitive against abortion, Thomson might argue that in this case, the mother isn't experiencing a life-threatening situation and therefore agent-relative prerogatives are weaker, implying that abortion might still be ok. However, this would also weaken her earlier argument about how only the mother should get to choose whether or not to get an abortion because of how significant the decision would be on her.

One could also argue that even though the mother will experience negative effects from an abortion, she should be able to decide whether or not she wants to deal with that, and that there shouldn't be a law in place that forces the mother to avoid that situation. My objection to this is that if we take a look at the case of a person that decides to take drugs and is addicted/negatively affected for the rest of their lives, it seems like we should also let them decide if they want to endure that fate. However, the consumption of drugs is still outlawed, implying that outlawing abortion is also ok. Another potential objection from Thomson is that mothers might be the same kind of remorse if a child were forced to be born and then be given to a foster home. I agree, but the mother will likely feel the negative effects to a lesser degree because the child will still be alive, whereas if the mother got an abortion, she will have, in essence, killed the child.

Thomson also uses the laws society has put into place when she references how there isn't a law to be a good Samaritan but women are potentially being forced via the law to be good Samaritans to their babies if abortion becomes illegal. This along with the objections I stated above convince me that Thomson's argument has too many holes to be considered sound. In

summary, Thomson's argument that only the mother can choose whether or not to have an abortion is too general and discounts key aspects of a mother-fetus relationship that are essential in analyzing the morals of abortion.

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