

## Handout 7.3: Special Duties to Children & Comparative Burdens

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### Section 7.6. Special Duties to Care for Children

*Prompt for Group #1 and #2:* Thompson says that we do **not** have a special moral obligation to a human fetus solely because of a biological relationship we share with it (e.g. mother/father). We only have a special duty to care for children if and only if we *implicitly* (through our actions) or *explicitly* (through a statement) take it on. In other words, she might argue:

P1: We have no special moral duty to a human fetus in utero in virtue of having some biological relationship to it.

P2: We only have a special moral duty to a human fetus if and only if we take it on implicitly or explicitly.

P3: Just in virtue of being pregnant, a woman has a biological relationship to the fetus but does not have a special moral duty to care for it.

C: Therefore, while a human fetus is a person, and has a right to life, abortion is morally permissible.

#### *Group #1*

Using pp.166 and the discussion of adult children and siblings as your guide, argue that **P1 is false**. That is, argue that the following claim is true:

We **do** have a special moral duty to care for a human fetus in virtue of having a biological relationship to it.

#### *Group #2*

Using pp.166 and the discussion of a father's relationship to a child as your guide, argue that **P1 is false**. That is, argue that the following claim is true:

We **do** have a special moral duty to care for a human fetus in virtue of having a biological relationship to it.

## Section 7.7. The Comparative Burdens Debate

Consider the following argument:

P1: Pregnancy places a **heavier burden** on women (the hardships, risks, and work of child-bearing are placed primarily on women) than it does on men.

P2: The burdens for raising children are unequal, unjust, and a form of discrimination.

P3: Since the burdens are not equal, women should only have to take on the burdens of caring for a human fetus if and only if they choose to take it on (implicitly/explicitly).

IC: Therefore, women do not have a special moral obligation to care for a human fetus.

C: Therefore, abortion is morally permissible.

### **Group #3: Pro-Choice Side**

Argue for the pro-choice position using this idea of *comparative burdens*. Here are some things to help you:

1. Get a clear idea of the unfair burdens objection. This is found in the first two paragraphs of §7.7
2. Review some of the objections that Kaczor raises to the comparative burdens argument on pp.169-171. *Think of how the pro-choice side would respond to some of them.*
3. On p.171 (middle of the page), the comparative burdens objection is developed. Be able to incorporate this into your argument *for* the pro-choice position.

### *Time to Set up Your Argument*

1. First, put the comparative burdens argument in your words. Think about how best to explain this to the class.
2. Second, come up with some clear example / reasons why **P1 is true**. With respect to child-rearing, what burdens do women face that men don't?
3. Considering **P2**, what reason is there for saying that the burdens faced by men and women should be equal? Is placing a heavy burden on women to rear children a form of **discrimination**? If so, make an analogy with some other form of discrimination to prove your point.
3. What sort of counter-arguments will the pro-life side raise? How will you respond to them?

### *Group #4: Pro-Life Side*

On pp.168-172(top), Kaczor raises at least **nine** objections to the argument put forward above. Quickly read over these pages and isolate a few that (i) you understand (not all of them are crystal clear) and (ii) why the above argument is flawed. Do this by isolating one of the premises and stating that it is false. For example, "We think that P1 is false because ..."

### *Time to Set up Your Argument*

1. First, put the comparative burdens argument in your words. You are just rehearsing the pro-choice argument so you know what you are rejecting.
2. Second, give a clear statement of which part of this argument you are rejecting.
3. Third, state the number of reasons you have for rejecting a particular premise: "P1 is false for two reasons. First, ... ; Second, ..."
4. Give a quick summary and prepare for the pro-choice side to have some questions/responses to what you have said.