



Phil 173: Child support and choice

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Parental Responsibility

- How might we reply:
 - Argue the conclusion does not follow from Hazmat
 - Argue that transfers of responsibility **are** possible
 - Argue that the Hazmat account is wrong
 - Different account of responsibilities
 - Maybe we are wrong about Joe Blow
 - Accept the conclusion!

Parental Responsibility - Brake

- Central claim: Arguments advanced in defence of abortion imply that unwilling biological fathers ought not be obligated to provide for their biological offspring
- Thomson's People Seeds case
 - Main idea: Foreseeability does not imply responsibility
 - Otherwise put, that I know that an avoidable action *might* have some downstream consequence does not mean that I acquire responsibilities if that consequence does arise
 - Think about non-reproductive cases...

Parental Responsibility - Brake

- But we can defend the view that fathers do not acquire obligations even if we do not accept Thomson's defense of abortion
- Those who argue that procreation generates obligations to support a child generally advance two kinds of arguments:
 - Consent to sex entails content to support any children that result
 - But this seems to stretch the idea of consent beyond recognition
 - What might Millum say here?
 - Being responsible for someone's existence generates responsibilities to provide for them

Parental Responsibility - Brake

- Being responsible for someone's existence generates responsibilities to provide for them
 - But distinction between
 - Responsibility for existence
 - Responsibility for neediness-given-existence
 - Responsibilities arise only when responsible for neediness-given-existence
 - In procreation cases procreators are responsible for existence, not neediness-given-existence
 - For a response to this argument see Brandt, "Gamete Donation, the Responsibility Objection, and Procreative Responsibilities"...

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- Other candidates for sources of responsibility
 - Duty to one's sexual partner
 - Respect for choice?
 - Duty of aid given partner's choice?
- Concerns about equality
 - Over-burdening women given sexism in society

Parental Responsibility - Brake

- Another way to look at the central worry
 - Is it unfair that women/gestators can choose whether or not to have the obligations of parenthood post-conception, but men/non-gestators cannot
- One way we might defend the asymmetry is to point out that the burdens themselves are fundamentally different
 - To impose parenthood on someone who is gestating involves an imposition on their bodily integrity. The threshold for such impositions is *very* high – higher than the threshold for imposing financial obligations
 - Think about true car accidents

Parental Responsibility - Brake

- BUT that there is a justified asymmetry in deciding whether a pregnancy is continued does not mean that there should be an asymmetry in the obligations that follow
- While the burdens of economic obligations are different in kind from impositions on bodily integrity, they not negligible, or even inconsequential
 - We need strong justifications for why these should be imposed on a particular individual

Parental Responsibility - Brake

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Parental Responsibility - Brake

- Furthermore, consider adoption
 - Why should you need consent from your *partner*?

Parental Responsibility - Brake

- Brake's solution: more collective attitude to obligations to children

- Does this cause problems?
 - Think about the burdens this would permit individuals to impose on others
 - Could society then create rules about reproduction? Might this include ascriptions of responsibility?
 - Might we end up back at a Millum type view?

Parental Responsibility - Brake

Mini recap:

- How do we acquire parental responsibilities

- ☐ Millum
- ☐ Weinberg
- ☐ Brake

Note that no view places importance on genetics per se

Might a genetic connection be morally significant at all?

Why?