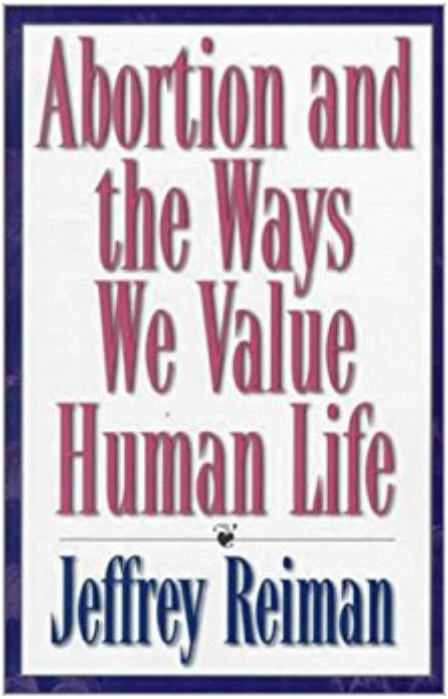
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Abortion And The Ways We Value Human Life (14; Garland Reference Library Of)



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Synopsis

In Abortion and the Ways We Value Human Life, Jeffrey Reiman argues that an overlooked clue to the solution of the moral problem of abortion lies in the unusual way in which we value the lives of individual human beings_namely, that we value them irreplaceably. We think it is not only wrong to kill an innocent child or adult, but that it would not be made right by replacing the dead one with another living one, or even several. Reiman argues that there are only a limited number of facts that could justify such valuing, with the result that human children and adults have the fullest right to protection of their lives, infants have a lesser but substantial right to such protection, and fetuses do not qualify at all. Leading up to this argument, Reiman presents a survey of Western attitudes and laws about abortion from Hammurabi's Code to Roe v. Wade, and a critical analysis of all the major philosophical arguments on the issue, pro and con. The book is written in straightforward, jargon-free language that makes it accessible to college students at all levels and to the educated lay reader as well.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The book certainly has a lot to offer as an introduction to some of the historical context and main arguments in the abortion debate. (Bulletin of Medical Ethics)

Jeffrey Reiman is William Fraser McDowell Professor of Philosophy at the American University and

the author of many books, including Critical Moral Liberalism (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997) and The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison. He is coauthor, with Louis Pojman, of The Death Penalty: For and Against (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

Jeffrey Reiman, best known for his argument against the death penalty, teaches at American University, where I am currently a senior. This semester, I had to buy the book for a class I had with him. Before reading his book, we read a number of other essays important in the philosophical approach to the abortion issue. This book provides an excellent introduction to the philosophical questions, and makes a remarkable argument - that you can understand the prevailing public opinion on abortion and other issues by understanding how human life is valued. Reiman gives a history of the issue, and responds to many of the most prominent authors. He is penetrating, although having heard his arguments orally, I may be slightly biased in his favor. He is an unabashed liberal (look at the titles of some of his other works), and his argument might permit some disturbing consequences beyond abortion. Also, I firmly agree with the preceding author: the book costs far too much. Still, it's worth a read.

Reiman's book on abortion is original and important. It is also even-handed. As with his other works, many of which ponder matters of life and death, Reiman shines a bright, clear light on issues that leave most of us stumped. The book is brief but compelling. It is brief because Reiman knows the relevant philosophical literature inside and out and thus can guide us through the main points with authority; it is compelling because Reiman makes us examine the value of human life in a systematic way, something we might only do under compulsion (since it is an unsettling business). The book is also beautifully written, another Reiman trademark.

This book, which pretends to have a liberal answer to the abortion debate, is just awful. His arguement is basicly this; we value humans in different ways at different points of their lives, these seems to roughly correspond to how rational to human is. Since the fetus lacks rationality, it isn't an entity which has a right to life. While supporters of this arguement may claim this is a misrepresenting it, it really isn't. If Reiman has taken his head out of the philosophical stratosphere and examined the problem, he may have come up with a better arguement. As it is now, it simply represents the way some moral philosophy no longer talks about the real world. Pass this one up. Besides, at this price for the skimpy book (less than 100p), you'd do better using it for nearly anything else.

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