

09.10.2025

## Literatur zu Judith Jarvis Thomsons Verteidigung der Abtreibung Bibliography on Judith Jarvis Thomson's Defense of Abortion

Alphabetische Ordnung / alphabetical order:  
<http://www.ethikseite.de/bib/bthomson.pdf>

Chronologische Ordnung / reverse chronological order:  
<http://www.ethikseite.de/bib/cthomson.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> “Professor Judith Jarvis Thomson’s seminal paper “A Defence of Abortion” published in 1971 has formed part of higher education syllabi for decades. In the paper Thomson criticizes one of the fundamental arguments against abortion, that is, the right of the foetus to life by denying that the foetus is a person. This article argues that her thought experiments do not compare to the reality of abortion and focuses on the influence of the paper on arguments concerning personhood.”

3, S. 59–86 (“Abortion as Justified Homicide”), Kap. 4, S. 87–101 (“Analogical Arguments and Sex Equality”).

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<sup>2</sup> “Philosophical debate about the ethics of abortion has reached stalemate on two key issues. First, the claim that fetuses have moral standing that entitles them to protections for their lives has been neither convincingly established nor refuted. Second, the question of a pregnant woman’s obligation to allow the gestating foetus the use of her body has not been resolved. Both issues are deadlocked because philosophers addressing them invariably rely on intuitions and analogies, and such arguments have weaknesses that make them unfit for resolving the abortion issue. Analogical arguments work by building a kind of consensus, and such a consensus is virtually unimaginable because (1) intuitions are revisable, and in the abortion debate there is great motive to revise them, (2) one’s position on abortion influences judgments about other issues, making it difficult to leverage intuitions about other ethical questions into changing peoples’ minds about abortion, and (3) the extent of shared values in the abortion debate is overstated. Arguments by analogy rely on an assumption of the commensurability of moral worldviews. But the abortion debate is currently unfolding in a context of genuinely incommensurable moral worldviews. The article ends by arguing that the default position must be to permit abortion as a consequence of the freedom of conscience protected in liberal societies”.

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<sup>3</sup> “I argue against responsibility arguments that offer a defence of abortion even on the assumption that the fetus is a person. I focus on argumentation originally offered by Judith Jarvis Thomson and then later defended by David Boonin. I offer thought experiments meant to show that, under certain conditions, one bears moral responsibility for creating a fetus. I then offer a positive argument for when one is morally responsible for the creation of a fetus. This argument relies on the presence of other forms of sex that reasonably approximate the goods of penile-vaginal intercourse. Given the presence of these options, sexual partners who engage in penile-vaginal intercourse bear moral responsibility for the creation of the fetus. While I do not think this argument settles the abortion debate – there still may be other ways to successfully defend abortion – it does explain why responsibility arguments like those offered by Thomson fail.”

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<sup>4</sup> "This article considers the objection to abortion that a woman who voluntarily engages in sexual activity is responsible for her fetus and so cannot have an abortion. The conclusion argued for is that the conceptions of responsibility that can ground the objection that are considered do not necessitate a requirement on the part of a pregnant woman to carry her pregnancy to term. Thus, the iterations of the responsibility objection presented cannot be used to curtail reproductive choice."

Beckwith, 2. Auflage, Belmont u. a. 1998, S. 176–99.

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<sup>5</sup> “In this paper I argue that teleology and a proper teleological analysis of the uterus is important for a comprehensive understanding of the rights of the unborn. I argue that a right to life entails the right to use those organs that naturally function for an individual’s survival. Consequently, an unborn child has a right to his mother’s uterus. If this is accepted, bodily-rights arguments for abortion such as those proposed by Judith Jarvis Thomson and David Boonin are completely undermined. While Thomson and Boonin may be justified in arguing the right to life does not always entail the right to use another person’s body, I argue that the right to life of the unborn does entail the right to use their mother’s body.”

<sup>6</sup> “Ultimately, my argument is an equal protection argument. I shall suggest that abortion should be viewed as presenting a problem in what we might call “the law of samaritanism”, that is, the law concerning obligations imposed on certain individuals to give aid to others. It is a deeply rooted principle of American law that an individual is ordinarily not required to volunteer aid to another individual who is in danger or in need of assistance. In brief, our law does not require people to be Good Samaritans. I shall argue that if we require a pregnant woman to carry the fetus to term and deliver it – if we forbid abortion, in other words – we are compelling her to be a Good Samaritan. I shall argue further that if we consider the generally very limited scope of obligations of samaritanism under our law, and if we consider the special nature of the burdens imposed on pregnant women by laws forbidding abortion, we must eventually conclude that the equal protection clause forbids imposition of these burdens on pregnant women. Some other potential samaritans whom there is better reason to burden with duties to aid are burdened less or in less objectionable ways, and still other potential samaritans whose situations are closely analogous to that of the pregnant woman are burdened only trivially or not at all.”

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<sup>7</sup> "Some responses to analogies between abortion and infanticide appeal to Judith Jarvis Thomson's argument for the permissibility of abortion. I argue that these responses fail because a parallel argument can be constructed for the permissibility of infanticide. However, an argument on the grounds of a right to choose to become a parent can maintain that abortion is permissible but infanticide is not by recognizing the normative significance and nature of parenthood."

<sup>8</sup> "Judith Jarvis Thomson concludes "A Defense of Abortion" with a discussion of samaritanism. Whereas her rights-based arguments demonstrate the moral permissibility of virtually all abortions, this new consideration of samaritanism provides grounds for morally objecting to certain abortions that are otherwise morally permissible given strictly rights-based considerations. I argue, first, that this samaritanism

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constraint on the moral permissibility of abortion involves an appeal to virtue-theoretical considerations. I then show why this hybridization of rights-based considerations and virtue-theoretical considerations has advantages over responses to the moral status of abortion that are either exclusively rights-based, or else exclusively virtue-theoretical. I conclude by offering some thoughts on how to utilize this hybrid strategy outside of Thomson's particular context, as well as why we might generally favor such a strategy in our moral reasoning."