

Consider this Pro-Life argument:

- (K1) It's always wrong to kill an innocent person.
- (K2) Abortion kills an innocent person.
- (K3) So, abortion is always wrong.

Now, there's a lot of debate over premise K2—in particular, whether an embryo or fetus counts as a person. But let's grant the Pro-Lifer that claim, just for the sake of argument.

The more important problem is that, despite being plausible on the face of it, the moral principle (premise K1) is open to counterexamples.

If a doctor kidnaps you and forcibly hooks your body up to a blood transfusion for a deathly ill person, such that unplugging kills them, is it morally wrong to unplug? It might be *nice* of you to stay plugged in, but I think most people would agree, it's not *morally wrong* to unplug. You have a right to bodily autonomy, after all.

So, premise K1 is just false. It's not always wrong to kill an innocent person.

Now, Pro-Lifers might respond by saying: Hey! These cases are disanalogous. You were kidnapped in this scenario, whereas abortion typically results from consensual sex.

To which I'd respond: Yes. The cases are disanalogous in certain ways, but you misunderstood the philosophical point being made. I'm not making an argument by analogy that says: since unplugging isn't wrong, neither is abortion.

All I'm saying is that the moral principle in this Pro-Life argument is false. That doesn't necessarily mean the conclusion is false, but it does mean you need to revise the argument, since it's unsound.

References

Judith Jarvis Thomson – “A Defense of Abortion”