

Abortion

Mary Anne Warren

“On the Moral and Legal Status of
Abortion”

Abortion Statistics

- From Planned Parenthood of America
 - 90% all abortions occur in first trimester
 - Of those, 99% occur within first three weeks
 - Remaining 1% in the 6th – 8th weeks

Moral Community

- Moral Agents
- Moral Patients

Axiology

- What properties are necessary or sufficient for membership in moral community?
 - “Being Alive”?
 - Biological?
 - Too broad
 - Too narrow
 - Biographical?
 - “Being Human”?
 - Ambiguous
 - Biological sense?
 - Moral sense?

Sanctity of Life

- “Life is of intrinsic moral worth”.
 - What kind of life?
 - *Homo sapiens* only?

Moral Interests/Well-being

- What properties are necessary for possessing moral interests or well-being?

Personhood

- Biographically Alive aka Personhood
 - Consciousness (suffering not pain)
 - Reasoning
 - Self-motivated activity
 - Capacity to communicate
 - Self-concepts

Necessity and Sufficiency

- Some properties are necessary
 - Probably 1, 2, and 5
- Some properties may be sufficient
 - 4

The Embryo – 21 Days

BACK NEXT

Carnegie Stage 9
1st Trimester

Appearance of Somites

SIZE: 1.5 - 2.5 mm

TIME PERIOD: 19 - 21 days post-ovulation

Looking at the embryo from the top, the head end is wider than the tail end, with a slightly narrowed middle.

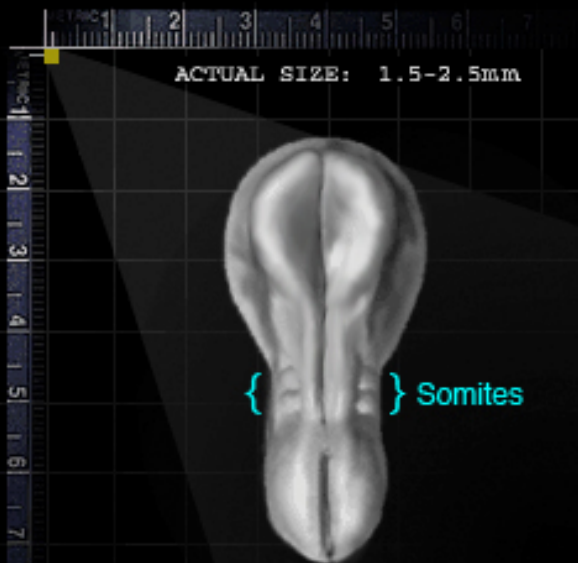
Somites, which are composed of mesoderm, appear on either side of the neural groove. The first pair of somites appear at the tail and progress to the middle. One to three pairs of somites are present by Stage 9.

Every ridge, bump and recess now indicates cellular differentiation.

A head fold rises on either side of the primitive streak. The primitive streak now runs between one-fourth to one-third of the length of the embryo.

Secondary blood vessels now appear in the chorion/placenta. Hematopoietic cells appear on the yolk sac simultaneously with endothelial cells which will go on to form blood vessels for the newly emerging blood cells.

Endocardial (muscle) cells begin to fuse and form into the early embryo's two heart tubes.



ACTUAL SIZE: 1.5 - 2.5mm

{ Somites }

The Visible Embryo
<http://www.visembryo.com> © 2008

The Embryo – 56 Days

BACK NEXT

Carnegie Stage 22
1st Trimester

Cartilage begins to transform into bone

SIZE: 19.0 - 24.0 mm

TIME PERIOD: 54 - 56 days post-ovulation



Head and Neck
Head developing the fissures characteristics of humans. Eyelids and external ear more developed and the upper lip fully formed. The brain can move muscles.

Thorax
The critical period of heart development ends. It will continue to develop, but not at such a quick pace.

Pelvis
In female embryos, the clitoris is beginning to form. The penis will develop from the same tissue.

Limbs
Fingers lengthen while distinct grooves (digital rays) form between the fingers, which also lengthen as the hands approach each other across the abdomen. Feet approach each other, but are still fan-shaped and the toe digits are still webbed.

Primary ossification centers appear in the long bones, directing the replacement of cartilage by bone. This process usually begins in the upper limbs. Fingers overlap those of opposite hand, and the digits of the fingers fully separate. Feet lengthen and become more defined.

Spine, Skeleton, and Muscles
The stubby tail is still present, but much smaller.

The Visible Embryo
<http://www.visembryo.com> © 2008

Community Membership

- Does the embryo possess *any one* property:
 - Consciousness
 - Reasoning
 - Self-motivated activity
 - Capacity to communicate
 - Self-concepts

Potential Personhood

- Is an embryo a potential person?
- Do embryos possess *actual* interests/well-being?

Conflicting Interests

- “...the rights of any actual person invariably outweigh those [the potential rights] of any potential person, whenever the two conflict.”
 - Actual rights of actual person (woman)
 - Autonomy
 - Self-determination
 - Kill Commander Data?
 - “Life”?
 - Actual
 - Potential

Conclusion

- Embryo is not a member of moral community.
- Embryo has no actual rights.
- Actual rights trump potential rights.

Postscript - Infanticide

- Neonates fail to satisfy some, though not all criteria.
 - No self-concepts until ~14 months of post-birth age.
 - No reasoning until after 14 months.
 - Swine are about as smart as a 5-year-old *homo sapien*.
 - Octopi and squid are as smart (or better) as a 20-year-old *homo sapien*.
- Need ad hoc criteria to eliminate infanticide.

ad hoc Criteria

- (Not Mary Anne Warren's solution)
- Can an embryo (or fetus) have actual rights?
 - Direct vs. Indirect Rights
- Problem:
 - Infanticide is still permissible but in a smaller range of cases.