Bioethics Session 7 Handout: Abortion

Is it morally permissible to abort a ten-week fetus when you have a clear interest, unrelated to health, in doing so? Here are the basic arguments offered by Tooley and Marquis.

Tooley's Argument: what matters is whether it wants to live

P1 For any entities A, X, it is wrong to deprive A of X only if
   (i) A has a right to X and (ii) A wants X.
P2 In order to want to live, you must conceive of yourself as a thing that can persist through time.
P3 Ten-week fetuses do not conceive of themselves as things that can persist through time.

C It is not wrong to deprive a ten-week fetus of life.

Is this a good argument? What about P1? Do you really have to want to live in order for it to be wrong to kill you? What about suicidal teenagers? What about the comatose?

Marquis' Argument: what matters is its potential

P1 It is wrong to deprive a thing of a valuable future.
P2 By aborting a ten-week fetus, you deprive it of a valuable future.

C It is wrong to abort a ten-week fetus.

It this a good argument? What about P1? What about potential super-cats?