Abortion and regret

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ABSTRACT
The article considers three theses about post abortion regret which seek to illustrate its pertinence to reasoning about abortion, and which are often deployed, either explicitly or implicitly, to dissuade women out of that reproductive choice. The first is that post abortion regret renders an abortion morally unjustified. The second is that that a relatively high incidence of post abortion regret —compared with a lower incidence of postnatal regret in the relevant comparator field—is good evidence for the moral impermissibility of abortion choice. The third is that high rates of post abortion regret suggest that abortion is not the most prudent or welfare-maximizing choice for the woman concerned. All three theses argue for the compellingness of knowledge about post abortion regret in moral and practical reasoning about abortion, especially from the pregnant woman's point of view. This article argues that all three theses are flawed. In particular, it seeks to remind readers that feelings of regret directed at past decisions are often decoupled from the fact of the matter about their moral or rational justification. Moreover, certain features of reproductive decisions in particular make regret an especially unsuitable yardstick for actual justification in this context, and even less epistemic ally reliable as evidence for a Lack of justification than it may be in other fields of decision-making. The implication is that rates of post abortion regret, even if they can be presumed to be higher than rates of postnatal regret, are not as pertinent to moral and practical reasoning about abortion as is sometimes suggested.