

of the sanctity of life?" The answer is that "some do and some don't." Some liberal Democrats oppose capital punishment because they believe that no one has the right to take a life (the sanctity of life); others because they believe that the state has no right to take a life (a premise different from the sanctity of life); others because they see that capital punishment is final, thus no way exists to correct an error (a position that is connected to the value of life but not the same as the sanctity of life); and others because they believe that capital punishment is administered in racist and classist manners (not related to the sanctity of life.) So with regard to this position, Murphy's incompatibility thesis is not as specific as it could be. He should limit his argument only to those liberal Democrats who oppose capital punishment on the grounds of the sanctity of life.

At the third and fourth questions debates usually turn. The third question asks whether a real incompatibility exists. Certainly from Murphy's perspective one does. From the perspective of many pro-life advocates, there is no real incompatibility. Murphy defines a fetus as a human life for reasons he has not made explicit. Similarly, some pro-choice advocates define a fetus as not a human life. In any event, much of the debate will focus here. If a liberal Democrat opposes capital punishment based on the sanctity of life premise, then it may become incumbent on her to argue that a fetus is not a human life. Otherwise, the incompatibility seems to be real.

Fourth, is the incompatibility significant? Persons who offer incompatibility arguments usually assume that any incompatibility is important. We might call these people "absolutists;" they believe that one's principles should not vary from one situation to the next. Others, who we might call "casuists,"¹³ take the view that principles are important but must be tempered by situations and circumstances. The view of the casuists seems more in line with that of American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said that "foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds." In the case of Murphy's incompatibility warrant, this question can be settled only by debate. Those who oppose Murphy's position might argue that by taking a life, abortion is an unfortunate and regrettable action, but it must be weighed against the consequences: not only the decision to go forward with the birth but all of the consequences that follow. Those who support Murphy might argue that supporting the sanctity of life in the case of capital punishment and ignoring it in the case of abortion leave us in a situation where we can choose our standards of morality as it suits us.

Finally, does the incompatibility warrant also provide an argument to accept the debater's position? By proving that pro-choice advocates are faced with an incompatibility, does Murphy really support his position that abortion generally is immoral? Murphy, at least by implication, would have liberal Democrats resolve the incompatibility by continuing to oppose capital punishment and opposing abortion as well. From another point of view, they might just as easily support capital punishment as well as abortion. In a strictly logical sense, changing either half of the position can erase an incompatibility. So to be purely logical, Murphy would need to give reasons that the position on abortion is the one liberal Democrats need to change, not the position on capital punishment. The absence of this reason in his argument does not mean that his argument is weak, just that it is open to challenge.