Case Twilight of the Golds

In a 1993 play, The Twilight of the Golds, by Jonathan Tolins, Rob and Suzanne Stein debate whether Suzanne should have an abortion after being told by a doctor that the male fetus she is carrying has a gene that probably will lead to homosexuality. The wife’s gay brother David tries to talk her out of it, discovering in the process that his parents might have aborted him had they been provided with similar information. The play is not based on actual diagnostic capability or current genetic science but the direction of development in both areas indicates that we may soon be faced with just such a choice in the not-too-distant future. Given the development in genetic engineering, it seems within the realm of possibility that we may some day be able not only to detect homosexuality in utero, but also to intervene genetically and change the fetus’ sexual orientation.

This case can be considered from the perspectives of individual ethics, institutional ethics and societal ethics. Please answer the following questions in these areas using this scale:

1. Homosexuality should be seen as a genetic error and corrected if possible.
   - 1 strongly agree  
   - 2 agree  
   - 3 not sure  
   - 4 disagree  
   - 5 strongly disagree

2. Homosexuality is primarily a question of lifestyle and free choice.
   - 1 strongly agree  
   - 2 agree  
   - 3 not sure  
   - 4 disagree  
   - 5 strongly disagree

3. Homosexuality is a given of nature, just like heterosexuality.
   - 1 strongly agree  
   - 2 agree  
   - 3 not sure  
   - 4 disagree  
   - 5 strongly disagree

4. Homosexual orientation is neutral, but homosexual activity is wrong.
   - 1 strongly agree  
   - 2 agree  
   - 3 not sure  
   - 4 disagree  
   - 5 strongly disagree

5. It will be advisable to change a homosexual fetus’ sexual orientation through genetic intervention when that is possible.
   - 1 strongly agree  
   - 2 agree  
   - 3 not sure  
   - 4 disagree  
   - 5 strongly disagree

1. The American Psychiatric Association made a mistake in declaring homosexuality as normal human orientation.
   - 1 strongly agree  
   - 2 agree  
   - 3 not sure  
   - 4 disagree  
   - 5 strongly disagree

2. Religion, not psychology, should judge the nature of homosexuality.
   - 1 strongly agree  
   - 2 agree  
   - 3 not sure  
   - 4 disagree  
   - 5 strongly disagree

3. Schools should help children overcome the homophobia of our culture.
   - 1 strongly agree  
   - 2 agree  
   - 3 not sure  
   - 4 disagree  
   - 5 strongly disagree

4. The media should do more to clarify the difference between homophobia and legitimate negative judgments about homosexuality.
   - 1 strongly agree  
   - 2 agree  
   - 3 not sure  
   - 4 disagree  
   - 5 strongly disagree

5. Health professionals should work to slow down genetic progress so that our ethical categories come closer to matching our capacity to manipulate life.
   - 1 strongly agree  
   - 2 agree  
   - 3 not sure  
   - 4 disagree  
   - 5 strongly disagree

An essential first step in dealing with ethical issues is to determine on which level we are working. Then we can decide who and what ethical tools are needed to address adequately the question on that level. The people and tools suited to one level are not always appropriate for other levels.

OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING 
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT