

## PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY ABSTRACTS

### Acta Analytica

*E. Mills, Early Abortion and Personal Ontology, Acta Anal* 28.1 (March 2013): 19–30 • We are beings endowed with “personal capacities”—the capacity for reason, for a concept of self, perhaps more. Among ontologically salient views about what else we are, I focus on the “Big Three.” According to animalism, we are animals that have psychological properties only contingently. According to psychologicistic materialism, we are material beings; according to substance dualism, we are either immaterial beings or composites of immaterial and material ones; but according to both psychologicistic materialism and substance dualism, we essentially have some psychological properties. I argue that—contrary to what has been argued and is natural to think—none of the Big Three yields different assignments of moral status to early fetuses from any of the others, and consequently the moral status of early abortion doesn’t depend on which (if any) of these views of personal ontology is correct.

### American Philosophical Association Newsletters

*M. Tooley, Mary Anne Warren on Abortion, APA Newsl* 12.2 (Spring 2013): 9–14 • The article focuses on the viewpoint of philosophy professor Mary Anne Warren on the moral and legal status of abortion. The essay by Judith Jarvis Thomson titled “A Defense of Abortion” is discussed. Warren points out that the term “human” is used to refer to people with a certain genetic makeup. Her conclusion concerning the relevance of potential personhood to abortion is elaborated.—C.K.

### Ethical Theory and Moral Practice

*R.J. Kornegay, Hursthouse’s Virtue Ethics and Abortion: Abortion Ethics without Metaphysics? Ethical Theory and Moral*

*Pract* 14.1 (February 2011): 51–71 • This essay explicates and evaluates the roles that fetal metaphysics and moral status play in Rosalind Hursthouse’s abortion ethics. It is motivated by Hursthouse’s puzzling claim in her widely anthologized paper “Virtue Ethics and Abortion” that fetal moral status and (by implication) its underlying metaphysics are “in a way, fundamentally irrelevant” to her position. The essay clarifies the roles that fetal ontology and moral status do in fact play in her abortion ethics. To this end, it presents and then develops her fetal metaphysics of the potential and actual human being, which she merely adumbrates in her more extensive treatment of abortion ethics in her book *Beginning Lives*. The essay then evaluates her fetal ontology in light of relevant research on fetal neural and psychological development. It concludes that her implied view that the late-stage fetus is an actual human being is defensible. The essay then turns to the analysis of late-stage abortions in her paper and argues that it is importantly incomplete.

### Human Life Review

*M. Lu, Defusing the Violinist Analogy, Human Life Rev* 39.1 (Winter 2013): 46–62 • Judith Jarvis Thomson’s “A Defense of Abortion” (1971) is surely the most influential philosophical article ever published on abortion. The framework she sets up has largely shaped the philosophical discussion since, by offering the then-novel observation that the status of the child as a person is largely irrelevant to the question of whether a woman has the right to procure an abortion. In teaching this article to undergraduates I have seen pro-abortion students positively giddy at having their preconceptions given such apparently strong support, and pro-life students unfortunately quick to retrench into a religiously grounded position. Indeed, Thomson’s arguments are intuitively powerful,

particularly her justly famous “violinist analogy.” At the same time, however, closer inspection reveals that her pro-abortion conclusions are not nearly as formidable as they initially appear, and that the pro-life position can certainly be vindicated on non-religious grounds. In what follows I will examine Thomson’s arguments closely and at length to show not only exactly why they fail, but also how her entire approach to the question of abortion is misguided.—*Extract from article*

### Hypatia

*B.A. Manninen, The Value of Choice and the Choice to Value: Expanding the Discussion about Fetal Life within Prochoice Advocacy, Hypatia 28.3 (Summer 2013): 663–683* • In this essay, I provide evidence that a new generation of prochoice advocates wishes to move away from defending abortion rights via the view that fetal life has little or no value (for example, as Mary Anne Warren does in her “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion”) and toward a more complex view of abortion rights. This newer view simultaneously grants that fetuses are more than simply “clumps of cells,” that they are, to some extent, entities that possess some degree of value, and also that women still have the right to decide whether they wish to continue a pregnancy (for example, as can be found in the writings of Rosalind Hursthouse, Judith Jarvis Thomson, and Margaret Olivia Little). Prima facie, this may sound like an impossible task—an instance of “having your cake and eating it too”—but I will show throughout my paper that, and how, such a task can indeed be accomplished.

### International Journal of Applied Philosophy

*J. Kirsch, Is Abortion a Question of Personal Morality?, Int J Appl Philos 27.1 (Spring 2013): 91–99* • Is abortion a question of personal morality? Liberals and feminists often embrace this idea, but so also do those who are personally opposed to abortion. Someone may claim to believe personally that abortion is wrong without holding the corresponding public belief. I am interested in what exactly one means

when one says that abortion is a question of personal morality. In Sec. II, I consider three influential interpretations of the claim that abortion is a question of personal morality. After showing that each of these interpretations is inadequate, I develop a fourth that avoids some of the problems with the first three (in Sec. III). But even on this interpretation, the claim that abortion is a question of personal morality is difficult to defend. This is because we cannot show that abortion is a question of personal morality without first knowing something about the moral status of the fetus. I conclude the paper with some pessimistic remarks concerning our ability to arrive at a compromise position on abortion.

### International Philosophical Quarterly

*M. Lu, Aristotle on Abortion and Infanticide, Int Philos Q 53.1 (March 2013): 47–62* • Some recent commentators have thought that, if updated with the findings of modern embryology, Aristotle’s views on abortion would yield a pro-life conclusion. On the basis of a careful reading of the relevant passage from Politics VII, I argue that the matter is more complicated than simply replacing his defective empirical embryological claims with our more accurate ones. Since Aristotle’s view on abortion was shaped not only by a defective embryology but also by an acceptance of the classical Greek practice of exposure/ infanticide, substituting a more accurate embryology will not straightforwardly generate a strongly pro-life conclusion. In the end, this analysis reveals how different Aristotle’s ethical thought on this matter really is from the contemporary discussion of abortion.

### Journal of Bioethical Inquiry

*K. Hine, How to Understand a Woman’s Obligations to the Fetus in Unwanted Pregnancies, J Bioeth Inq 10.2 (June 2013): 239–247* • Some have challenged Thomson’s case of the famous unconscious violinist (UV) by arguing that in cases of consensual sex a woman is partially morally responsible for the existence of a needy fetus; since she is

partially responsible she ought to assist the fetus, and so abortion is morally wrong. Call this the responsibility objection (RO) to UV. In this paper, I briefly criticize one of the most widely discussed objections to RO and then suggest a new way to challenge RO. In so doing, I investigate the plausibility of the moral principle that appears to be driving RO: If a woman is partially morally responsible for the existence of a needy fetus, she has a moral obligation to assist the fetus. I argue that this principle is false. I suggest modified versions of this principle but argue that, even on the most plausible version, RO does not persuade.

### Journal of Medical Ethics

*M. C. Coleman, Spontaneous Abortion and Unexpected Death: A Critical Discussion of Marquis on Abortion, J Med Ethics 39.2 (February 2013): 89–93* • In his classic paper, “Why Abortion Is Immoral,” Don Marquis argues that what makes killing an adult seriously immoral is that it deprives the victim of the valuable future he/she would have otherwise had. Moreover, Marquis contends, because abortion deprives a fetus of the very same thing, aborting a fetus is just as seriously wrong as killing an adult. Marquis’ argument has received a great deal of critical attention in the two decades since its publication. Nonetheless, there is a potential challenge to it that seems to have gone unnoticed. A significant percentage of fetuses are lost to spontaneous abortion. Once we bring this fact to our attention, it becomes less clear whether Marquis can use his account of the wrongness of killing to show that abortion is the moral equivalent of murder. In this paper, I explore the relevance of the rate of spontaneous abortion to Marquis’ classic anti-abortion argument. I introduce a case I call Unexpected Death in which someone is about to commit murder, but, just as the would-be murderer is about to strike, his would-be victim dies unexpectedly. I then ask: what does Marquis’ account of killing imply about the moral status of what the would-be murderer was about to do? I consider four responses Marquis could give to this question, and I examine what implications these responses have for Marquis’ strategy of

using his account of the wrongness of killing an adult to show that abortion is in the same moral category.

*A. McGee, The Moral Status of Babies, J Med Ethics 39.5 (May 2013): 345–348* • In their controversial paper “After-Birth Abortion,” Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva argue that there is no rational basis for allowing abortion but prohibiting infanticide (“after-birth abortion”). We ought in all consistency either to allow both or prohibit both. This paper rejects their claim, arguing that much-neglected considerations in philosophical discussions of this issue are capable of explaining why we currently permit abortion in some circumstances, while prohibiting infanticide.

### Journal of Value Inquiry

*V. Durà-Vilà, Parental Obligation, Adoption and Abortion: Critique of Porter and Nozickian Alternative J Value Inq 47:1–2 (June 2013): 29–47* • Porter asserts that adoption is not an alternative to abortion since there are certain cases where the biological parents who have given up their child for adoption are still required to discharge their parental obligations. The theoretical framework that supports this claim is Porter’s bifurcated causal account of parental obligation. Her claim is true, but it is misleading if left unqualified by not taking into account properly the frequency and relevance of those adoption cases. First, the actual scope of the biological parents’ moral obligation to their adopted child should be considerably reduced; it is certainly much smaller than what Porter’s article would lead one to believe. Second, because of this, the number of cases where such moral obligation would obtain, even by a pessimistic estimate, represents a very small percentage of the cases where adoption takes place. The problem lies in Porter’s bifurcated causal account. I have argued that endorsing it means going against our current practices concerning adoption, gamete donation and IVF, as well as the intuitions and beliefs that support such practices. Moreover, I have contended that there is no good reason to accept Porter’s account of

parental obligation. Finally, I have proposed that by adapting Nozick's closest continuer schema to deal with the allocation of parental responsibility, that is, to decide who fulfills the role of parent, we can avoid the pitfalls of Porter's bifurcated causal account, while still retaining the capacity to allocate parental obligation to the biological parents in the marginal cases of adoption where this is appropriate.—*Extract from article*

### Linacre Quarterly

**B. Calhoun, The Maternal Mortality Myth in the Context of Legalized Abortion, *Linacre Q* 80.3 (August 2013): 264–276** • It was quoted recently in the literature that “The risk of death associated with childbirth is approximately 14 times higher than with abortion.” This statement is unsupported by the literature and there is no credible scientific basis to support it. A reasonable woman would find any discussion about the risk of dying from a procedure as material, i.e., important and significant. In order for the physician–patient informed consent dialogue to address this critical issue, the physician must rely upon objective and accurate information concerning abortion. There are numerous and complicated methodological factors that make a valid scientific assessment of abortion mortality extremely difficult. Among the many factors responsible are incomplete reporting, definitional incompatibilities, voluntary data collection, research bias, reliance upon estimations, political correctness, inaccurate and/or incomplete death certificate completion, incomparability with maternal mortality statistics, and failing to include other causes of death such as suicides. Given the importance of this disclosure about abortion mortality, the lack of credible and reliable scientific evidence supporting this representation requires substantial discussion.

**E. Koch, Impact of Reproductive Laws on Maternal Mortality: The Chilean Natural Experiment. *Linacre Q* 80.2 (May 2013): 151–160** • Improving maternal health and decreasing morbidity and mortality due to induced abortion are key endeavors in developing countries. One of the most controversial

subjects surrounding interventions to improve maternal health is the effect of abortion laws. Chile offers a natural laboratory to perform an investigation on the determinants influencing maternal health in a large parallel time-series of maternal deaths, analyzing health and socioeconomic indicators, and legislative policies including abortion banning in 1989. Interestingly, abortion restriction in Chile was not associated with an increase in overall maternal mortality or with abortion deaths and total number of abortions. Contrary to the notion proposing a negative impact of restrictive abortion laws on maternal health, the abortion mortality ratio did not increase after the abortion ban in Chile. Rather, it decreased over 96 percent, from 10.8 to 0.39 per 100,000 live births. Thus, the Chilean natural experiment provides for the first time, strong evidence supporting the hypothesis that legalization of abortion is unnecessary to improve maternal health in Latin America.

### Science and Engineering Ethics

**N. Manzaret al., The Ethical Dilemma of Embryonic Stem Cell Research, *Sci Eng Ethics* 19.1 (March 2013): 97–106** • To determine the knowledge, attitude, and ethical concerns of medical students and graduates with regard to embryonic stem cell (ESC) research. This questionnaire-based descriptive study was conducted at the Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK), Pakistan from February to July 2008. A well structured questionnaire was administered to medical students and graduate doctors, which included their demographic profile as well as questions in line with the study objective. Informed consent was taken and full confidentiality was assured to the participants. Data were entered in a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version.12) and analyzed. A total of 204 male and 216 female medical students and doctors were administered questionnaires out of which 105 males (51.4%) and 108 females (50%) were aware of the embryonic stem cell research and its ethical implications. Forty percent males and 47% of females were of the opinion that life begins at conception. Forty-six percent males and 39% females were in favor of stem cell research while only 31%

males and 28% females supported the ESC research. Less than 1/3 of students supported using frozen embryos for research purposes while more than 2/3 indicated that they were unlikely to support abortion for stem cell research purposes. The majority of the students were in favor of stem cell research with some reservations regarding ESC research. A sizeable number of students withheld their views, reflecting their poor understanding of medical ethics. The result of the study indicates a need for incorporating bioethics into the medical curriculum.

**Think:  
Philosophy for Everyone**

*J. Mulder Jr., A Short Argument against Abortion Rights, Think 12.34 (June 2013): 57–68* • In this paper I will put forward a brief argument against abortion rights. The argument concerns itself with the two main

ways in which defenders of abortion rights develop their position. The first strategy through which they tend to do this is by arguing against the personhood of the fetus. The second strategy, made famous by Judith Jarvis Thomson, is to argue that, even if the fetus were a person, its right to life would not entail the right to draw upon the resources of the woman in pregnancy, and so the pregnancy can be terminated (even if the fetus loses its life in the process). My argument will provide reasons to suspect that attacks on fetal personhood are based on a questionable notion of personhood, and that the most common attempts to show that the fetus does not have the right to draw on the resources of the woman in pregnancy also have considerable problems. This will buttress the case for the view that the fetus is a person and that it has the right to draw on the resources of the woman in pregnancy.