



## PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

In “Better Never to Have Been Born,” Dan Thomas argues that Christians should not only permit but celebrate abortion and infanticide as the only ways to make certain that human beings go to heaven. He makes the case that there is an inconsistency in the beliefs of Christian critics of abortion. Christian belief holds that all human beings have one of two ultimate destinies: heaven or hell. Hell is the worst possible fate for a human being; heaven is the best. So what determines whether a human being goes to heaven or to hell? According to Thomas’s account of Christian belief, “damnation can only be conferred on moral agents who can act of their own accord and thus willingly accept or reject God’s grace.” Now, all human being prior to the age of reason—for example, toddlers, babies, and prenatal human beings—are not responsible agents who can be held ethically accountable for their actions. They cannot perform human actions as morally good or evil but only acts of a human being that cannot be evaluated ethically, such as breathing or circulating blood. If these beliefs are correct, Thomas continues, “the only way to avoid hell entirely is to come into existence briefly—for a few seconds, a few minutes, or a few years—and then die because an early death comes with an eternal safeguard: innocent children maintain their innocence forever.”<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, Thomas points out that Christians hold that life in heaven is infinitely more important than life on earth as well as infinitely longer in duration: “According to the author of the book of James, human life does not last very long: ‘What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes’ (James 4:14). A blip, a bubble, a mist, a dream, a tiny speck, a poof of wind, a candle-snuff: such analogies appear throughout Christian literature and denote the transience of human existence.”<sup>2</sup> It is madness to prefer life on earth to eternal life in heaven.

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1. Dan Thomas, “Better Never to Have Been Born: Christian Ethics, Anti-abortion Politics, and the Pro-life Paradox,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44. 3 (September 2016): 522, doi: 10.1111/jore.12152.

2. *Ibid.*, 530.

Given their theological suppositions, Christian pro-life activists hold incompatible beliefs: “In their attempts to lengthen earthly lives,” writes Thomas, “conservative activists endanger infant souls. For the sake of life on earth, they jeopardize the assurance of life in heaven.” Since the death of the newborn baby or the prenatal human being secures eternal life for him or her, consistent Christians should not condemn but rather celebrate both abortion and infanticide, because “death alone guarantees the infant’s salvation.”<sup>3</sup> Likewise, consistent Christians should not criticize but commend abortionists as bringing more people to heaven than anyone else: “If the unborn are indeed spiritually blameless, then abortion practitioners are not monstrous murderers. They are instead the nation’s most effective evangelists. Under their supervision, abortees reap the benefits of being born again without ever being born at all.” In Thomas’s interpretation of Christian beliefs about heaven and hell, “the only safe child is a dead one.”<sup>4</sup> What Thomas calls the pro-life paradox is the alleged inconsistency in Christian beliefs about the afterlife and Christian defense of prenatal human beings.

How might a Christian critic of abortion respond to the argument that it is better not to be born? If Thomas’s argument were true, the pro-life paradox would also justify killing many normal adults. On the supposition that baptism takes away all sin and makes someone fit for heaven, should we not murder an adult immediately after her baptism? Why not wait outside a confessional and shoot someone in the head after his sins have been forgiven? Killing in these cases would assure that the person does not go to hell by later falling into mortal sin and dying in this condition. So murders of this kind should be celebrated as saving someone from the dangers of going to hell. This conclusion is absurd; so too is the pro-life paradox. But where exactly does it go wrong?

One key supposition in the pro-life paradox is that all humans who die before the age of reason certainly go to heaven. However, many Christian theologians, indeed most Christian theologians over the centuries, reject this presumption that infants and prenatal human beings who die certainly go to heaven.

St. Augustine taught that unbaptized infants go to hell where they receive the lightest punishment possible because they have only original sin and no actual sin.<sup>5</sup> St. Jerome, St. Gregory the Great, and St. Anselm agreed. If these theologians are right, then abortionists not only kill the unborn, but they also consign them to hell. The only way infants can avoid hell is if they are born.

St. Thomas Aquinas proposed a second option in which infants who die without having been baptized enjoy a natural happiness, which he called limbo, that differs from heavenly supernatural happiness.<sup>6</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Bonaventure, and Bl. Duns Scotus held similar views. If these theologians are right, then abortionists

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3. Ibid., 535.

4. Ibid., 538.

5. International Theological Commission (ITC), *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die without Being Baptised* (January 19, 2007), nn. 16–18.

6. Thomas Aquinas, *De malo* 5.3; and *Summa theologiae* suppl. III.69.6.

not only deprive human beings in utero of earthly life, they also ensure that they will not have heavenly life. Although the natural happiness of limbo is possible, the only way infants can go to heaven is if they are allowed to be born.

A third option is that we simply do not know with certainty what happens to unbaptized children who die before the age of reason, but we can hope that somehow they are saved. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,

As regards *children who have died without Baptism*, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them," allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism.<sup>7</sup>

This view was also expressed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1980 as well as by the International Theological Commission in 2007.<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that the Catechism speaks of hope, which differs from presumption.<sup>9</sup> Hope concerns the good of salvation that is possible but difficult to obtain. By contrast, presumption assumes that salvation is a good that is not just possible to obtain but certain to happen. If the view expressed in the Catechism is correct, then it is presumptuous to assume with certainty that all unbaptized infants go to heaven, though we may hope that they do.

A fourth prominent view of who is saved also causes the pro-life paradox to collapse. Avery Cardinal Dulles notes that "Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa sometimes speak as though in the end all will be saved."<sup>10</sup> Dulles points out that in more recent times Edith Stein, Karl Rahner, Jacques Maritain, Richard John Neuhaus, and most famously Hans Urs von Balthasar defended the possibility that everyone escapes the pains of hell. If everyone escapes the pains of hell, then killing children before or after their birth deprives them of their lives on earth but is irrelevant to preventing their eternal damnation.

If Augustine, Aquinas, the Catechism, or von Balthasar is correct, then Thomas's pro-life paradox collapses. But let us assume for the sake of argument that all four of these theological options are mistaken. Would Thomas's case then be justified?

The work of Aquinas can shed some light on this question. According to the *Summa theologiae*, baptism of water, blood, or desire is necessary in order to have eternal life. Consequently, Aquinas asks, "Whether children of Jews or other unbelievers be baptized against the will of their parents?"<sup>11</sup> He answers that they should not,

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7. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1261, original emphasis.

8. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Pastoralis actio*, On Infant Baptism (October 20, 1980), n.13, *AAS* 72 (1980), 1144; and ITC, *Hope of Salvation*, n. 5.

9. Christopher Kaczor, *Thomas Aquinas on Faith, Hope, and Love: Edited and Explained for Everyone* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2008), 119–123.

10. Avery Dulles, "The Population of Hell," *First Things*, May 2003, <https://www.firstthings.com/>.

11. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III.68.2 ad 3 and III.68.10.

even though their eternal salvation is at stake, because it is contrary to natural justice to usurp the role of parents in governing their own children, including determining whether or not their children are to be baptized. If it is contrary to justice to baptize someone else's children, it is an even more obviously an act contrary to justice to intentionally kill an innocent human being. The right to life is the most basic and fundamental natural right.

In the very next article, Aquinas considers the question, "Whether a child can be baptized while yet in its mother's womb?" Aquinas considers the objection, "Further, eternal death is a greater evil than death of the body. But of two evils the less should be chosen. If, therefore, the child in the mother's womb cannot be baptized, it would be better for the mother to be opened, and the child to be taken out by force and baptized, than that the child should be eternally damned through dying without Baptism." This objection pithily summarizes the heart of Thomas's pro-life paradox.

Aquinas critiques this objection by citing the Pauline principle, "We should 'not do evil that there may come good' (Romans 3:8). Therefore it is wrong to kill a mother that her child may be baptized. If, however, the mother die while the child lives yet in her womb, she should be opened that the child may be baptized."<sup>12</sup> The same reasoning applies to the case of intentionally killing a child in utero in order to secure his or her eternal life (though it is extremely hard to believe that abortions are actually undertaken for the purpose of securing heavenly happiness for the child). The Pauline principle that Aquinas articulates is absolutely fundamental:

It often happens that man acts with a good intention, but without spiritual gain, because he lacks a good will. Let us say that someone robs in order to feed the poor: in this case, even though the intention is good, the uprightness of the will is lacking. Consequently, no evil done with a good intention can be excused. "There are those who say: And why not do evil that good may come? Their condemnation is just" (Rom 3:8).<sup>13</sup>

Of course, this principle is not unique to Aquinas. In *Veritatis splendor*, Pope St. John Paul II emphasizes its fundamental importance in the entire Christian tradition:

In teaching the existence of intrinsically evil acts, the Church accepts the teaching of Sacred Scripture. The Apostle Paul emphatically states: "Do not be deceived: neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9–10).

If acts are intrinsically evil, a good intention or particular circumstances can diminish their evil, but they cannot remove it. They remain "irremediably" evil acts; *per se* and in themselves they are not capable of being ordered to God and to the good of the person. "As for acts which are themselves sins (*cum iam opera ipsa peccata sunt*), Saint Augustine writes, like theft, fornication, blasphemy, who would dare affirm that, by doing them for good motives (*causis*

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12. Ibid., III.68.11 obj. 3 and III.68.11 ad 3.

13. Thomas Aquinas, "In duo praecepta caritatis et in decem legis praecepta," *Opuscula theologica* 2.1168, quoted in John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor* (August 6, 1993), n. 78.

*bonis*), they would no longer be sins, or, what is even more absurd, that they would be sins that are justified?”

Consequently, circumstances or intentions can never transform an act intrinsically evil by virtue of its object into an act “subjectively” good or defensible as a choice.<sup>14</sup>

An intrinsically evil act should never be done, even for the most noble of purposes, such as securing heaven for someone.

Now a different question arises. Is abortion an intrinsically evil act? In the words of John Paul II,

Given such unanimity in the doctrinal and disciplinary tradition of the Church, Paul VI was able to declare that this tradition is unchanged and unchangeable. Therefore, by the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors, in communion with the Bishops—who on various occasions have condemned abortion and who in the aforementioned consultation, albeit dispersed throughout the world, have shown unanimous agreement concerning this doctrine—I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being.<sup>15</sup>

Given this teaching, if we accept the Pauline principle, Thomas’s case for a pro-life paradox collapses.

For the sake of argument, let us consider a consequentialist view that no acts are intrinsically evil acts and that we should do whatever act maximizes the likelihood of salvation of the greatest number of people. Would it follow from this assumption that we should kill prenatal human beings to ensure that they automatically get to heaven? An affirmative answer would be unwarranted. After all, consequentialism is not just about maximizing the good for one person, but must concern itself with the greatest good for the greatest number of persons. Even if aborting a prenatal human being would ensure that he or she attains eternal salvation, it may still be wrong to kill the child because it does not bring about the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Some people, such as St. Francis Xavier, St. John Paul II, and St. Teresa of Calcutta, cooperate with God to aid the salvation of many people. If any of these great saints had died prior to undertaking their important works of evangelization, the salvation of many other people would have been endangered. In contemplating killing a child, we cannot exclude the possibility that we are depriving the world of a future great saint who would have aided in the salvation of many other people. So even a consequentialist view that seeks to maximize the likelihood of salvation for the greatest number of people does not justify the pro-life paradox.

Moreover, the pro-life paradox erroneously assumes that the only good that really matters is eternal life. Christians take the life and teachings of Jesus as their fundamental guide to what matters. But the example of Jesus suggests that Christ does not simply and only care about the good of souls, but also cares about other

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14. John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor* (August 6, 1993), n. 81.

15. John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* (March 25, 1995), n. 62.

goods. In healing the blind, Jesus points to the importance of vision. In raising the dead back to life, Christ underscores the value of biological human life. In turning water into wine, the Son of Mary emphasizes the importance of marriage and social celebration. Most of all, Jesus consistently cares for rather than kills the weak and vulnerable in his society, whether it is the woman caught in adultery, the Samaritan at the well, or the leper cast out of the human community. In trying to ensure that every human being is protected by law and welcomed in life, Christian pro-life advocates are following the example of Jesus in caring for the vulnerable and defenseless.

Furthermore, Christians are called to love all human beings without exception, not just those who might go to heaven after being killed in utero. Abortionists have souls too, and Christians are called to care about them as well. Even if abortion were not intrinsically evil, it is clearly and obviously contrary to the teachings and disciplines of the Church. For this reason, John Paul II notes in *Evangelium vitae*,

The Church's canonical discipline, from the earliest centuries, has inflicted penal sanctions on those guilty of abortion. This practice, with more or less severe penalties, has been confirmed in various periods of history. The 1917 Code of Canon Law punished abortion with excommunication. The revised canonical legislation continues this tradition when it decrees that "a person who actually procures an abortion incurs automatic (*latae sententiae*) excommunication." The excommunication affects all those who commit this crime with knowledge of the penalty attached, and thus includes those accomplices without whose help the crime would not have been committed. By this reiterated sanction, the Church makes clear that abortion is a most serious and dangerous crime, thereby encouraging those who commit it to seek without delay the path of conversion. In the Church the purpose of the penalty of excommunication is to make an individual fully aware of the gravity of a certain sin and then to foster genuine conversion and repentance.<sup>16</sup>

The penalty of excommunication is intended to stimulate repentance, prompt a change of heart, and lead to a reformation of life. In imitation of Jesus, Christians are called to love every human being, every sinner, and to work and pray for the salvation of all people. To celebrate the work of abortionists is at cross-purposes with the call to help them live in harmony with God's Church.

In sum, the pro-life paradox is no paradox if fundamental Christian teachings are kept in mind. Against the teachings of Augustine, Aquinas, and the Catechism, the pro-life paradox presumes that all infants automatically go to heaven. Against the teaching of Scripture and the Church, the pro-life paradox assumes that one may do evil so that good may come of it. Against the example and teaching of Jesus, the pro-life paradox implicitly assumes that the only good that matters is eternal life. The argument made by Dan Thomas shows no concern for the souls of abortionists who incur automatic excommunication from the Church. In sum, for anyone who accepts any of these basic Christian teachings, the pro-life paradox is no paradox at all.

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16. Ibid.



## PHILOSOPHY ABSTRACTS

*American Catholic  
Philosophical Quarterly*

*T. A. Cavanaugh*, **DER and policy: the recommendation of a topic**, *Am Cathol. Philos Q* 89.3 (Summer 2015): 539–556, doi: 10.5840/acpq201561560 • If viable, DER [double effect reasoning] justifies certain individual acts that—by definition—have two effects. Presumably, it would in some fashion (at the very least, redundantly) justify policies concerning the very same acts. By contrast, acts that sometimes have a good effect and sometimes have a bad effect do not have the requisite two effects such that DER can justify them immediately. Yet, a policy concerning numerous such acts would have the requisite good and bad effects. For while any one such act would lack the relevant two effects, a series of such acts and a policy governing such a series would have them. This paper addresses DER's justification of policies that apply to such acts. It shows that there are certain acts which DER mediately justifies by justifying policies (having the requisite two effects) concerning them. Thus, it recommends the larger topic of DER's bearing on policy.

*Lawrence Masek*, **In defense of a minimalist, agent-based principle of double effect**, *Am Cathol Philos Q* 89.3 (Summer 2015): 521–538, doi: 10.5840/acpq201561559 • Many philosophers assume that the principle of double effect (PDE) is meant to cover trolley cases. In fact, trolley cases come from PDE's critics, not its defenders. When philosophers stretch PDE to explain intuitions about trolley cases, they define intended effects too broadly. More importantly, trolley cases make poor illustrations of PDE because they focus attention away from the agent and onto the victim. When philosophers lose sight of the agent, some intuitions that fit PDE survive, but the rational basis of these intuitions

collapses. I avoid these problems by defending a minimalist, agent-based version of PDE. My version is minimalist because I do not try to turn PDE into a complete checklist that explains intuitions about every case. It is agent-based because I consider the agent's perspective to define intentions and to make moral judgments.

*Jean Porter*, **Choice, causality, and relation: Aquinas's analysis of the moral act and the doctrine of double effect**, *Am Cathol Philos Q* 89.3 (Summer 2015): 479–504, doi: 10.5840/acpq201561558 • The traditional distinction between the agent's intention and the effects which she merely permits would seem to allow for a re-description of the act in terms of the agent's overall good aims. This paper argues that Aquinas understands the relation between the agent's choice and her overall intention in a different and more persuasive way. His analysis of the object and the end of the act is complicated, but once the relevant distinctions have been sorted out, it is apparent that he does not hold that a particular action can be described, or much less morally evaluated, in terms of the agent's overall good intentions. On the contrary, he insists that the object of the agent's immediate choice is always morally relevant, and can be morally decisive for assessing the overall value of the act.

*Bioethics*

*David DeGrazia*, **Sentient nonpersons and the disvalue of death**, *Bioethics* 30.7 (September 2016): 511–519, doi: 10.1111/bioe.12250 • Implicit in our everyday attitudes and practices is the assumption that death ordinarily harms a person who dies. A far more contested matter is whether death harms sentient individuals who are not persons, a category that includes many animals and some human beings. On the basis of the deprivation account of the harm of death,

I argue that death harms sentient nonpersons (whenever their lives would be worth continuing). I next consider possible bases for the commonsense judgment that death ordinarily harms persons more than it harms sentient nonpersons. Contrary to what some philosophers believe, it is doubtful that the familiar resources of prudential value theory can vindicate this judgment. I show that the approach that at first glance seems most promising for supporting this judgment—namely, invoking an objective account of well-being—faces substantial challenges, before arguing that McMahan’s time-relative interest account supplies the needed theoretical basis. I then go on to extract a significant practical implication of the first thesis, that death ordinarily harms sentient nonpersons: We should find a way to discontinue the routine killing of animal subjects following their use in experiments.

*Thomas Finegan, Intermediate moral respect and proportionality reasoning, Bioethics* 30.8 (October 2016): 579–587, doi: 10.1111/bioe.12259 • In a recent article in this journal Jonathan Pugh critiques the idea of intermediate ‘moral respect’ which some say is owed to embryos. This concept is inherent within the ‘principle of proportionality’, the principle that destructive research on embryos is permissible only if the research serves an important purpose. Pugh poses two specific questions to proponents of the idea of intermediate moral respect. This article argues that while the questions posed by Pugh are certainly pertinent to the debate, the hypothetical responses he suggests to these questions do not quite get to the core of what is troublesome about the concept. The article suggests alternative responses to Pugh’s questions in order to focus attention on more fundamental problems facing the idea of intermediate moral respect, while also pointing to how the intermediate moral respect proponent might best develop these responses. It goes on to argue that these hypothetical responses fail to answer convincingly the questions posed. More specifically, this article challenges two possible justifications for the distinct idea of intermediate

moral respect, namely the argument from potentiality (the argument raised by Pugh) and an argument from the proportionality of fundamental moral status (not considered by Pugh). The article also raises a dilemma inherent in the application of the principle of proportionality to cases involving beings to which intermediate moral respect is owed even where it is allowed, *ex hypothesi*, that both the category of intermediate moral respect and the general proportionality reasoning underpinning the principle of proportionality are basically cogent. This article thus develops and adds to the challenge laid down by Pugh to proponents of the idea of intermediate moral respect.

*Ian McDaniel, The responsibility objection to abortion: rejecting the notion that the responsibility objection successfully refutes a woman’s right to choose, Bioethics* 29.4 (May 2015): 291–299, doi: 10.1111/bioe.12097 • This article considers the objection to abortion that a woman who voluntarily engages in sexual activity is responsible for her fetus and so cannot have an abortion. The conclusion argued for is that the conceptions of responsibility that can ground the objection that are considered do not necessitate a requirement on the part of a pregnant woman to carry her pregnancy to term. Thus, the iterations of the responsibility objection presented cannot be used to curtail reproductive choice.

*Christine Overall, Reproductive “surrogacy” and parental licensing, Bioethics* 29.5 (June 2015): 353–361, doi: 10.1111/bioe.12107 • A serious moral weakness of reproductive “surrogacy” is that it can be harmful to the children who are created. This article presents a proposal for mitigating this weakness. Currently, the practice of commercial “surrogacy” operates only in the interests of the adults involved (the gestator and the commissioning individuals who employ her), not in the interests of the child who is created. Whether “surrogacy” is seen as the purchase of a baby, the purchase of parental rights, or the purchase of reproductive labor, all three views share the same significant flaws. They endorse the transfer, for a fee, of the infant



from the woman who gestated it to those who commissioned it, but without justifying such a transfer; they fail to demonstrate that the commissioners have any entitlement to the infant, or, for that matter, suitability to be the infant's parents; and they fail to take any notice of the infant's needs, interests, and wellbeing. A mere genetic connection is not enough to establish that the commissioners are entitled to receive the baby or that they are competent to raise it. Their good intentions, however caring, are not enough. Therefore, just as in the practice of adoption, there should be a formal institutionalized system for screening and licensing the prospective social parents, which would make the infant's needs, interests, and wellbeing paramount. I reply to several potential objections to this proposal, including the objection that genetic parents who raise their own child are not screened and licensed.

### *Ethics*

*Thomas Bogardus, Only all naturalists should worry about only one evolutionary debunking argument, Ethics* 126.3 (April 2016): 636–661, doi: 10.1086/684711 • Evolutionary debunking arguments abound, but they're all murky where it counts most: exactly which epistemic principle combines with the facts of evolution to undermine moral realism? I'll identify some possible principles but show that most are false, spoiling the arguments built upon them. And every argument threatens only "representationalist" views of moral psychology, on which moral judgments rely on mental intermediaries, for example, sentiments. Only one argument remains a menace: a new "Argument from Symmetry." But it should worry only all naturalists, pressing a trilemma: abandon moral realism, accept a rationalism incongruous with naturalism, or reject naturalism. Nonnaturalists are free and clear.

*Guy Kahane and Julian Savulescu, Disability and mere difference, Ethics* 126.3 (April 2016): 774–788, doi: 10.1086/684709 • Some disability activists argue that disability is merely a difference. It is often objected that this view has unacceptable implications,

implying, for example, that it is permissible to cause disability. In reply, Elizabeth Barnes argues that viewing disability as a difference needn't entail such implications and that seeing such implications as unacceptable is question-begging. We argue that Barnes misconstrues this objection to the mere difference view of disability: it's not question-begging to regard its implications as unacceptable, and the grounds that Barnes offers for potentially blocking some of these implications fail to explain our conviction that it's impermissible to cause disability.

### *Journal of Applied Philosophy*

*Brian Berkey, Prospects for an inclusive theory of justice: the case of non-human animals, J Appl Philos*, e-pub December 1, 2015, doi: 10.1111/japp.12163 • In this article, I argue that there are three widely accepted views within contemporary theorising about justice that present barriers to accepting that non-human animals possess direct entitlements of justice. These views are (1) that the basis of entitlements of justice is either contribution to a cooperative scheme for mutual advantage or the capacity to so contribute; (2) political liberalism, that is, the view that requirements for coercive state action can be justified only by appeal to the ideal of citizens as free and equal and the principles of justice that are entailed by that ideal; and (3) that the principles of justice apply directly to the institutions of what John Rawls calls the 'basic structure of society', and not to the conduct of individuals. I then consider several attempts to ground direct entitlements of justice for animals via modest revisions to one or more of these widely accepted views, and argue that they fail, and that, more generally, any such attempt must fail. I claim that any theory that can include direct entitlements for animals must reject (1) and at least one of (2) and (3), and that there are reasons to think that those who are inclined to endorse direct entitlements for animals are unlikely to be satisfied with any view that does not reject all three of the widely accepted views. I conclude by briefly noting some of the important implications of rejecting all of these views.

*Journal of  
Medical Ethics*

*Stephen Barrie, QALYs, euthanasia and the puzzle of death, J Med Ethics* 41.8 (August 2015): 635–638, doi: 10.1136/medethics-2014-102060 • This paper considers the problems that arise when death, which is a philosophically difficult concept, is incorporated into healthcare metrics, such as the quality-adjusted life year (QALY). These problems relate closely to the debate over euthanasia and assisted suicide because negative QALY scores can be taken to mean that patients would be “better off dead”. There is confusion in the literature about the meaning of 0 QALY, which is supposed to act as an “anchor” for the surveyed preferences on which QALYs are based. In the context of the debate over euthanasia, the QALY assumes an ability to make meaningful comparisons between life states and death. Not only is this assumption questionable, but the ethical debate is much more broad than the question of whether death is preferable to a state of living. QALYs are derived from preferences about health states, so do not necessarily reflect preferences about events (e.g., dying) or actions (e.g., killing). This paper presents a new kind of problem for the QALY. As it stands, the QALY provides confused and unreliable information when it reports zero or negative values, and faces further problems when it appears to recommend death. This should preclude its use in the debate over euthanasia and assisted suicide. These problems only apply where the QALY involves or seems to involve a comparison between life-states and death, and are not relevant to the more general discussion of the use of QALYs as a tool for comparing the benefits derived from treatment options.

*Frances Kamm, Summary of Bioethics Prescriptions, J Med Ethics* 41.6 (June 2015): 488–489, doi: 10.1136/medethics-2014-102018 • *Bioethical Prescriptions* presents revised versions of 27 articles I have published, mostly since 1996. The title of the book plays with the concept of a doctor’s prescriptions only with regard to bioethical content. This may suggest that bioethical prescriptions are something like “Transplant

the organ into person A, not person B, and call me in the morning.” This volume does not provide such simple directives. Often what may be prescribed is to take account of certain factors rather than to adopt a specific act or policy (consider this the book’s warning label). Nevertheless, after fairly intricate examination of an issue, we often see that one course of action or one type of policy is morally superior to another and why this is so. The book begins with our end insofar as its first part, “Death and Dying,” deals not with our creation but our cessation. This is partly because later discussions of other topics make frequent references to death. The first chapter is a philosophical analysis of Tolstoy’s novella *The Death of Ivan Ilych*. The analysis considers whether the way we live affects how we die by examining why Ivan fears death. It also examines how Ivan’s fears connect with general factors that philosophers have argued make death bad. The next several chapters deal with assisted suicide and euthanasia. After laying out several distinctions thought to be of relevance to the morality of deliberately ending life—such as the distinction between killing and letting die, and between intending and foreseeing death—I critically examine arguments for physician-assisted suicide in the so-called Philosophers’ Brief submitted on behalf of several philosophers to the Supreme Court.

*T. M. Scanlon, Kamm on the disvalue of death, J. Med. Ethics* 41.6 (June 2015): 490, doi: 10.1136/medethics-2014-102037 • Frances Kamm’s newest book, *Bioethical Prescriptions*, is a treasure trove of careful argument and penetrating insight. In these brief remarks, I will concentrate on the question of the evil of death: why it is a bad thing to die sooner rather than later. I will be drawing mainly on Kamm’s discussion in her marvellous essay “Rescuing Ivan Ilych,” which forms the first chapter of the book. I believe that the badness of death consists entirely in the loss of the future life one would have had. The value of what is lost includes the value of the experiences one would have had, such as seeing one’s grandchildren grow up, and the value of changes one would have gone through intellectually and emotionally,

and the effects one could have had on the world, including on one's relations with other people. This implies that, while one can often have good reason to believe that it would be a bad thing to die at a given time, one generally does not know how bad a thing this would be, and one often cannot be certain that it would be a bad thing, on balance, since one cannot foresee the future.

*Journal of  
Medicine and Philosophy*

*Jukka Varelius, Voluntary euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, and the goals of medicine, J Med Philos* 31.2 (January 1, 2006) 121–137, doi: 10.1080/03605310600588665 • It is plausible that what possible courses of action patients may legitimately expect their physicians to take is ultimately determined by what medicine as a profession is supposed to do and, consequently, that we can determine the moral acceptability of voluntary euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide on the basis of identifying the proper goals of medicine. This article examines the main ways of defining the proper goals of medicine found in the recent bioethics literature and argues that they cannot provide a clear answer to the question of whether or not voluntary euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are morally acceptable. It is suggested that to find a plausible answer to this question and to complete the task of defining the proper goals of medicine, we must determine what is the best philosophical theory about the nature of prudential value.

*Journal of  
Religious Ethics*

*Dan Thomas, Better never to have been born: Christian ethics, anti-abortion politics, and the pro-life paradox, J Relig Ethics* 44.3 (September 2016): 518–542, doi: 10.1111/jore.12152 • The pro-life paradox, as I call it, begins with a single claim endorsed by many American Christians: infants and young children are innocent in the sight of God because they cannot yet take responsibility for their spiritual well-being. With this in mind, I argue that pro-life believers have unwittingly fallen victim to a theological paradox in which their attempts to save the earthly lives of unborn children make it theoretically possible for said children to die an eternal death. On the one hand, many Christians trust in an eventual spiritual reckoning where God will separate the “sheep” from the “goats” (see Matthew 25:31–46), ushering the former into heaven while damning the latter to hell. However, those who cannot yet repent and seek salvation are not blamed for their spiritual failings. If they die, they go to heaven because they are too young and intellectually immature to know any better. But if dead children are spiritually blameless, then abortion practitioners have perversely and paradoxically saved millions of unborn souls by removing human volition (and thus damnation itself) from the equation and by making it possible for the unborn to experience the joys of heaven without the temptations of earth.