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Something Deadly This Way Comes — “After-Birth Abortion”

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The debate over abortion comes down to one essential issue — the moral status of the unborn child. Those making the case for the legalization of abortion argue that the developing fetus lacks a moral status that would trump a woman’s desire to abort the child.

Those arguing against abortion do so by making the opposite claim; that the unborn child, precisely because it is a developing human being, possesses a

moral status by the very fact of its human existence that would clearly trump any rationale offered for its willful destruction.



This central issue is often obscured in both public argument and private conversations about abortion, but it remains the essential question. We have laws against homicide, and if the unborn child is recognized legally and morally as a human being, abortion would be rightly seen as murder.

In the main, abortion rights advocates have drawn the moral line at the moment of birth. That is why, even with our contemporary knowledge of the developing fetus, abortion rights activists have persistently argued in favor of abortions right up to the moment of birth. Anyone doubting this claim needs only to consider the unified opposition of leading abortion rights advocates to restrictions on late-term abortions.

From the beginning of the controversy over abortion, this supposedly bright line of the moment of birth has been unstable. Abortion rights activists have even opposed efforts to restrict the gruesome reality known as partial-birth abortions. The moment of birth has never been the bright line of safety that the defenders of abortion have claimed.

Now, an even more chilling development comes in the form of an article just published in the *Journal of Medical Ethics*. Professors Alberto Giubilini of the University of Milan and Francesca Minerva of the University of Melbourne and Oxford University, now argue for the morality and legalization of “after-birth abortion.”

These authors do not hide their agenda. They are calling for the legal killing of newborn children.

The argument put forth in their article bears a haunting resemblance to the proposal advocated by Dr. Peter Singer of Princeton University, who has argued that the killing of a newborn baby, known as infanticide, should be allowable up to the point that the child develops some ability to communicate and to anticipate the future.

Giubilini and Minerva now argue that newborn human infants lack the ability to anticipate the future, and thus that after-birth abortions should be permitted.

The authors explain that they prefer the term “after-birth abortion” to “infanticide” because their term makes clear the fact that the argument comes down to the fact that the birth of the child is not morally significant.

They propose two justifying arguments:

First: “The moral status of an infant is equivalent to that of a fetus, that is, neither can be considered a ‘person’ in a morally relevant sense.”

Second: “It is not possible to damage a newborn by preventing her from developing the potentiality to be a person in the morally relevant sense.”

Thus: “The moral status of an infant is equivalent to that of a fetus in the sense that both lack the properties that justify the attribution of a right to life to an individual.”

Those assertions are as chilling as anything yet to appear in the academic literature of medical ethics. This is a straightforward argument for the permissibility of murdering newborn human infants. The authors make their argument with the full intention of seeing this transformed into public policy. Further, they go on to demonstrate the undiluted evil of their proposal by refusing even to set an upper limit on the permissible age of a child to be killed by “after-birth abortion.”

These “medical ethicists” argue that a traditional abortion is a preferred option, but then state:

“Abortions at an early stage are the best option, for both psychological and physical reasons. However, if a disease has not been detected during the pregnancy, if something went wrong during the delivery, or if economical, social, or psychological circumstances change such that taking care of the offspring becomes an unbearable burden on someone, then people should be given the chance of not being forced to do something they cannot afford.”

Nothing could possibly justify the killing of a child, but these professors are so bold as to argue that even “economical, social, or psychological circumstances” would be sufficient justification.

This article in the *Journal of Medical Ethics* is a clear signal of just how much ground has been lost to the Culture of Death. A culture that grows accustomed to death in the womb will soon contemplate killing in the nursery. The very fact that this article was published in a peer-reviewed academic journal is an indication of the peril we face.

For years now, pro-life activists have been lectured that “slippery slope” arguments are false. This article makes clear the fact that our warnings have not been based in a slippery slope argument, but in the very reality of abortion. Abortion implies infanticide. If the unborn child lacks sufficient moral status by the fact that it is unborn, then the baby in the nursery, it is now argued, has also not yet developed human personhood.

The publication of this article signals the fact that a medical debate on this question has been ongoing. The only sane response to this argument is the affirmation of the objective moral status of the human being at every point of development, from fertilization until natural death. Anything less than the affirmation of full humanity puts every single human being at risk of being designated as not “a person in the morally relevant sense.”

Something very deadly this way comes. This argument will not remain limited to the pages of an academic journal. The murderous appetite of the Culture of Death will never be satisfied.

I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at mail@albertmohler.com. Follow regular updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler

Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva, “After-Birth Abortion: Why Should the Baby Live?,” *Journal of Medical Ethics*, February 23, 2012.

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