



A Theory of Unborn Life: From Abortion to Genetic Manipulation

Anja J. Karnein

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In light of new biomedical technologies, such as artificial reproduction, stem cell research, genetic selection and design, the question of what we owe to future persons-and unborn life more generally-is as contested as ever. In *A Theory of Unborn Life: From Abortion to Genetic Manipulation*, author Anja J. Karnein provides a novel theory that shows how our commitments to persons can help us make sense of our obligations to unborn life. We should treat embryos that will develop into persons in anticipation of these persons. But how viable is this theory? Moreover, what does it mean to treat embryos in anticipation of the future persons they will develop into?

Exploring the attractiveness of this approach for Germany and the U.S. - two countries with very different legal approaches to valuing unborn life-Karnein comes to startling conclusions to some of today's greatest ethical and legal debates. Under Karnein's theory, abortion and stem cell research are legitimate, since embryos that do not have mothers willing to continue to assist their growth have no way of developing into persons. However, Karnein also contends that where the health of embryos is threatened by third parties or even by the women carrying them, embryos need to be treated with the same care due to the children that emerge from them. In the case of genetic manipulation, it is important to respect future persons like our contemporaries, respecting their independence as individuals as well as the way they enter this world without modification. Genetic interventions are therefore only legitimate for insuring that future persons have the necessary physical and mental endowment to lead independent lives so as to be protected from being dominated by their contemporaries. Evincing polarization and dogma, Karnein's clean, philosophically-driven analysis provides a sound ethical foundation for the interpretation of any variety of legal dilemmas surrounding unborn life.

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