

Abortion and Ectogenesis: Moral Compromise

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary philosophical literature on abortion primarily revolves around three seemingly intractable debates, concerning the (1) moral status of the fetus, (2) scope of women's rights and (3) moral relevance of the killing/letting die distinction. The possibility of ectogenesis—technology that would allow a fetus to develop outside of a gestational mother's womb—presents a unique opportunity for moral compromise. Here, I argue those opposed to abortion have a *prima facie* moral obligation to pursue ectogenesis technology and provide ectogenesis for disconnected fetuses as part of a moral compromise.

ABORTION AND ECTOGENESIS: MORAL COMPROMISE

There are three debates at the heart of the contemporary philosophical literature on abortion, concerning (1) the moral status of the fetus, (2) the scope of a woman's right to decide what happens in and to her body¹ and (3) whether the distinction between killing and letting die makes some abortions substantively less objectionable than others. Unfortunately, these debates have been somewhat intractable, and hope for consensus elusive. However, the possibility of *ectogenesis*—the use of a technology that would allow for a fetus to develop outside of a gestational mother's womb—presents a unique opportunity for moral compromise that would provide a practical end to the debate over the moral permissibility of abortion.

A *compromise* is a means to resolve a disagreement in which all parties make concessions. A *moral compromise*, then, is a means to resolve a moral disagreement through concessions. A moral compromise need not require one or more parties to compromise their moral beliefs by acting in a way that they believe to be immoral, though some moral compromises might.

This discussion will focus on *clean moral compromises*, or moral compromises in which the concessions require each party to act in ways the party believes to be morally acceptable (though perhaps *supererogatory*, or beyond what is otherwise morally required) or believe to fall within one's rights. In contrast, *dirty moral compromises* would be moral compromises in which concessions require one or more party to act in ways the party believes to be *prima facie* morally unacceptable or in a way they do not believe they have the right to act.

This discussion is divided into three sections. The first section explores the three debates at the center of the abortion controversy. The second considers the possibility of using ectogenesis as an alternative to abortion. While scholars focus on subtle and complex questions about identity, rights and action, laymen often focus on more

worldly matters—notably the economic costs associated with pregnancy, healthcare and raising a child. I argue that ectogenesis, coupled with financial safeguards, can serve as the foundation for a moral compromise. The final section discusses the practical moral implications of this prospective compromise—notably a *prima facie* moral obligation to pursue ectogenesis technology—as well as similar options available to those looking to prevent abortions.

I. Three debates

The first debate at the heart of the contemporary abortion controversy concerns the moral status of the fetus. Most opposition to abortion turns on the belief that a human fetus, from the moment of conception (or soon afterwards), and has a moral status comparable to an adult human person; abortion critics believe fetuses are human organisms,² rational substances,^{3–6} have a possible future it would be wrong to deprive them of^{7–9}. Others argue that abortion is acceptable because the moral status of fetuses early in pregnancy is trivial—they are not persons,^{10–12} or otherwise lack some feature that gives them moral significance.¹³ Some advocate that fetuses have a partial moral status,¹⁴ but given the substantive difference between the extremes, its not clear what such a position would entail—other than, perhaps, that fetuses are second-class citizens.

Debate over the moral status of the fetus has been somewhat intractable for two reasons; the first is ambiguity over the terms 'human' and 'person', with philosophers often using these terms interchangeably to refer to a biological, psychological and/or moral category. The second concerns the difficulty of tracking identity over time; many people believe that they are numerically identical to the single-celled zygote that came into existence at conception, despite obvious, substantive differences in appearance, biology and capabilities. While philosophers tend to agree that identity must survive some changes over time, there is a similar agreement that identity does not survive all changes, yet the changes between zygote and adult human person are myriad and radical. Still, the prospect of drawing a line somewhere between conception and infancy, let alone adulthood, seems arbitrary. Philosophers even disagree with regard to the extent to which personal identity is relevant to the abortion debate.^{15–18}

The second debate shaping the contemporary abortion literature is over the scope of human rights, resting comfortably on the argument from Judith Jarvis Thomson's influential 'A Defense of Abortion'.¹ Thomson begins by assuming what the anti-abortion theorist argues—that a fetus is a person, with full moral status, from conception, such that it has a right to life. However, it is uncontroversially



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true that women have a right to bodily autonomy. Some philosophers read this as a right to property^{19 20}—that one owns one's body, but it makes more sense to interpret this as a right to liberty²¹—the right to decide how to live one's life. Thomson argues the fetus's (assumed) right to life is not in conflict with the woman's right to liberty; as the right to life is not the right to be given what it needs to survive, or to use the mother's body without her permission. To illustrate this, she asks the reader to consider the following case:

Violinist: The Society of Music Lovers kidnaps you and attaches your circulatory system to a famous, innocent, unconscious violinist suffering from a kidney ailment that will kill him unless he remains connected to your kidneys for nine months.¹

Although it would be kind of you to stay attached, Thomson argues that you have no obligation to do so. It is not enough to show a fetus has a right to life, she argues, rather the antiabortion theorist must show the woman has a moral obligation to allow the fetus to remain inside her body. Some antiabortion theorists have attempted to fill this gap,^{22–24} while others argue the violinist case is misleading.^{25 26}

While there is some intractability with regard to how philosophers talk about (and/or ignore) Thomson's argument, the argument concerns the scope of our rights, not what the morally right thing to do is. For example, my property right in my car gives me the right to set it on fire, but it would still be immoral (as well as foolish) for me to do so. By the same token, even in Thomson has shown that our right to liberty gives us the right to abortion, this does not mean that abortion is morally acceptable in any individual case, let alone in the most cases.

The third debate crucial to the abortion controversy is that of the difference between killing and letting die. Although some philosophers believe that there is no moral difference between killing and letting die,^{27–30} many philosophers believe there is such a difference and that this difference makes all the difference; killing others violates their right to life, but merely letting others die does not.

First, notably, this suggests a morally significant difference between killing abortions—abortions that kill the fetus in the womb—and disconnect abortions—abortions that 'merely' let the fetus die by removing it from the womb. This distinction could serve as the foundation for a rather interesting moral compromise, as it seems antiabortion theorists who believe there is such a difference do not necessarily oppose women getting abortions, only how they get abortions—abortions by disconnect are acceptable. Though disconnect abortions may be inhumane and/or medically risky, this may be a price worth paying to guarantee every woman has timely and (relatively) safe access to abortion. We can summarise this compromise as follows:

Moral compromise 1: agree to let die

Moral disagreement: Disagreement over the moral and legal acceptability of induced abortion.

Prochoice concession: Prochoice theorists agree to exclusively pursue (relatively risky) disconnect abortions over (relatively safe) killing abortions.

Antiabortion concession: Antiabortion theorists agree to withdraw legal and moral objections to induced (disconnect) abortion.

This strikes me as a clean moral compromise; though disconnect abortions carry more medical risk for the woman than killing abortions, undertaking such a risk seems to fall within the woman's rights. Similarly, if disconnect abortions are acceptable on the antiabortion view, then withdrawing their opposition to disconnect abortions is morally acceptable (although this would

make the failure of antiabortion theorists to make this distinction out to be suspect).

Second, recently philosophers have argued that antiabortion theorists neglect their moral obligation with regard to human fetuses.^{31–35} Evidence suggests that many more human fetuses die of spontaneous abortion than induced abortion,^{36 37} yet antiabortion theorists focus on a relatively small problem while ignoring a much larger problem. Opposition to abortion turns on the belief that fetuses have full moral status (or something comparable to it) from conception (or soon afterwards); thus, even if killing via induced abortion is far worse than letting die via spontaneous abortion, death by spontaneous abortion is still something to be concerned about. Some antiabortion theorists are open to the possibility that they should pay more attention to the problem of spontaneous abortion.³⁸

Similarly, in vitro fertilisation (IVF) often produces surplus embryos that are then frozen or discarded; left in limbo or left to die. If antiabortion theorists genuinely believe such fetuses have the same moral status as you or I, one would expect greater interest in advocating more people become surrogate mothers for these embryos.

Furthermore, prior to cell specialisation, twinning and chimerism can occur. In *twinning*, the mass of totipotent cells divides into two or more masses each capable of developing into a unique human organism; while in *chimerism*, two or more masses of cells merge to form a single mass of cells. Both twinning and chimerism seem to involve the death of one or more fetus, and are thus *prima facie* morally objectionable if one believes fetuses have moral status at that stage.

Third, even if the distinction between killing and letting die is relevant, this would only be relevant for those antiabortion theorists seeking abortion themselves; after all if the antiabortion theorist allows someone else to kill a fetus, then the antiabortion theorist 'merely' lets that fetus die.

In his book, *Defending Life*, Beckwith notes in his opening chapter that 'Inevitably, either my opponent or a member of the audience will make the assertion, 'Don't like abortion, don't have one', followed by rousing applause...' (2007, 3)⁴ Beckwith chalks this response up to moral relativism; but it is more charitable to interpret this as a Thomson-style rights claim—everyone has a right to decide what happens to their body, so the only say you have in abortion is whether or not you can have one. However, we might also interpret this claim as turning on this nuanced view of killing and letting die—killing is morally wrong, but letting die is not. Inducing abortion yourself is killing but allowing others to induce abortion is letting die; if you think induced abortion is wrong because it is killing, do not get one yourself.

The intractability of this debate, I think, arises from two sources—first, the relative complexity of the acting/refraining debate in general, and second, ignorance and misinformation about life at the earliest stages of pregnancy.

II. Moral compromise and ectogenesis

Ectogenesis refers to the development of a fetus outside of a gestational mother's womb. The technology for human ectogenesis does not yet exist, but it is theoretically possible to develop an artificial womb that would provide the same environment and stimuli as a human uterus. *Full ectogenesis* would be the process of developing a fetus from conception (or soon afterwards) to infancy, using embryos created through IVF or a similar process. Many philosophers have raised pressing ethical concerns about the use of surrogate mothers^{39–43} that full ectogenesis technology would help to address.

Partial ectogenesis would be the process of using artificial methods to allow for the partial development of a fetus. This section will consider the possibility of using partial ectogenesis on a fetus that has been disconnected from its gestational mother's uterus mid-pregnancy. Partial ectogenesis technology could allow women whose lives are in danger due to pregnancy to disconnect their fetus, thereby acting to save their life without sacrificing the life of their fetus. Many antiabortion theorists are willing to make an exception and allow abortions when the mother's life is in danger, but if partial ectogenesis was available, physicians could reliably save both mother and fetus. This alone, I think, is reason for antiabortion theorists to pursue ectogenesis technology.

While there is reasonable disagreement about the morality of abortion, there is no comparable disagreement about the morality of ectogenesis; the technology would allow for greater reproductive freedom, prevent exploitation of surrogate mothers and provide an alternative to abortion in cases where the mother's life is in danger. This lack of reasonable opposition to ectogenesis suggests ectogenesis research may be a prudential moral investment.

In order to best evaluate ectogenesis as an alternative to abortion, it will be practical to make three assumptions that will assuage certain concerns of antiabortion and prochoice theorists.

First, assume that ectogenesis technology is safe for the fetus (comparable to that of natural pregnancy). Many antiabortion theorists characterise their position as defending life, so if ectogenesis was more risky than natural pregnancy, antiabortion theorists could argue women have an obligation to choose the safer route for the child. This assumption is meant to assuage this concern.

Second, assume that the medical risk of disconnecting and removing the fetus from the mother's womb is comparable to that of induced abortions that kill the fetus. This assumption is designed to remove the prochoice concession from moral compromise 1; this is to say that if we assume disconnecting and removing the fetus is morally comparable to induced abortions that kill the fetus, then the woman has no medical reason to choose one over the other, so in cases where the fetus dies, there is no reason for the mother to choose a killing abortion over a disconnect abortion.

However, the advent of ectogenesis technology might threaten reproductive autonomy. Many prochoice theorists do not believe that fetuses are persons from conception; that early abortions do not involve the death of anything of moral significance. Most of us believe that we have the right to refrain from having children if we so choose; as such a woman might exercise this right to reproductive liberty by choosing to kill the fetus before it becomes person.

Some women might fear that if they choose to disconnect the fetus, rather than kill the fetus in the womb, antiabortion theorists will abscond with the fetus and use ectogenesis to let it develop into a person.

Though many antiabortion theorists do not argue that the right to abortion is the right to secure the death of their child once that child has become a person,^{1 12} Räsänen contends that parents might have that right under some conditions, arguing that to give up the right to kill one's fetus would undermine not only the right to procreative autonomy, but also the rights to genetic privacy and property, as well as cause psychological distress, as they feel they are letting down their biologically related children.¹⁴ Others disagree with this assessment,⁴⁴ but this debate suggests the advent of ectogenesis would not render moral compromise 1 merely one sided.

Third, assume that parents have both the right to transfer their parental obligations to other willing and able parties, such as the state. The purpose of this assumption is to allow another party, such as the state, to mitigate concerns regarding parental obligations and financial concerns associated with parenthood. Note that just because one has the right to transfer parental obligations does not make it morally good to do so. However, the right and opportunity to transfer parental obligations to others can reasonably be expected to better children's lives.

These assumptions alone would not resolve the moral disagreements in the abortion debate, but they can help us focus on possible moral compromises that ectogenesis might make available.

In light of the first assumption, were prochoice theorists to agree to give up their right to induced abortion and instead opt for disconnecting the fetus and placing it in ectogenesis, then antiabortion theorists would achieve their primary moral goal of stopping induced abortion (both induced abortions that kill and those that 'merely' let die). Prochoice theorists believe they have a right to decide what happens to and in their bodies, so such an agreement would not require them to act in a way they believe to be immoral, all else being equal, so such an agreement would be consistent with a clean moral compromise.

What could the prochoice theorist get in return for this concession? Two factors that many people consider when deciding abortion come to mind—(1) procreative liberty and (2) financial concerns.

Many prochoice theorists may wish to pursue induced abortion over ectogenesis as a means to exercise their procreative liberty; this is to say that a woman may not wish to become a mother to a child, so she might wish to abort the fetus before she believes it becomes a person. If this woman was to agree to ectogenesis, then she cannot avoid becoming the biological mother to resulting child; however, she need not become its moral parent (by this, I mean to pick out more or less the moral characteristics typically associated with becoming a legal guardian); instead she might reasonably offer the child up for adoption, or let it become a ward of the state.

There are drawbacks to giving up one's biological children (or fetuses) in this way. As Räsänen notes, this may cause psychological distress to biological parents, who may (erroneously) feel as though they have failed their children.¹⁴ Similarly, I fear there is a negative emotive context associated with giving up custody of one's children; people often equivocate between it and abandonment; but when parents abandon their children, their children are left uncared for, while when parents cede custody to other willing and able caretakers, the child is cared for.

While some prospective parents choose induced abortion to avoid becoming a parent, others report choosing it to avoid the financial concerns associated with pregnancy and parenthood; raising children is difficult and some women may be open to the joys of parenthood but still reasonably opt to pursue induced abortion over ectogenesis, preferring to kill the fetus before it becomes a person, rather than allow someone else to raise their biological child.

The good news for antiabortion theorists is that it is *prima facie* possible for antiabortion theorists to address these concerns without violating their moral beliefs, leading to a clean moral compromise. Both of these prochoice concerns can be addressed through either government intervention or individual charity.

Let's begin by looking at the government intervention option. Many antiabortion theorists already want the state to recognise human fetuses as persons from conception, and to take action to protect fetal lives. Many theories of government contend that

the state has a *prima facie* moral obligation to protect the lives of its citizens,^{45 46} so it is not unreasonable to advocate that a government take steps to provide adequate, affordable healthcare for its citizens; notably a system where the state pays for healthcare would address women's concerns over the high cost of pregnancy care. Similarly, the state might adopt safe haven laws that allow parents that are unwilling or unable to take care of their children to cede custody to the state. Lastly, antiabortion theorists might advocate that the government pay parents for raising children; not unlike existing stipends many governments pay to parents who adopt children.

If antiabortion theorists are genuinely interested in defending life; universal healthcare, safe haven laws and universal parental assistance are good ways to achieve that end independently of the impact they would have on the abortion debate, and does not seem to require antiabortion theorists to compromise their moral values. Thus, we can summarise this prospective moral compromise as follows:

Moral compromise 2: state assistance

Moral disagreement: Disagreement over the moral and legal acceptability of induced abortion.

Prochoice concession: Prochoice theorists agree to opt to (safely) disconnect the fetus, rather than kill it in the womb, and allow it to develop through ectogenesis, sacrificing some of their procreative liberty and risking psychological harm.

Antiabortion concession: Antiabortion theorists pass government laws that: (1) alleviate the financial burdens of pregnancy by paying for it or ectogenesis, (2) alleviate the financial burdens of parenthood and (3) allow for biological parents to transfer their parental obligations to the state.

Though this would be a clean moral compromise, it rests on the antiabortion theorists' capacity to pass sweeping legislation that includes massive government spending. While such spending could reasonably be paid for through an increase in taxation, many people who sit out of the abortion debate might oppose such an increase, even if prochoice and antiabortion theorists reasonably agreed to such an increase. (After all, it would be quite odd for the antiabortion theorist to argue that life is worth defending, but not if it comes out of his paycheck.)

Suppose, though, that the state is unwilling or unable to pass such legislation. It strikes me that it makes no difference to the prochoice theorist who addresses the parental and financial concerns. To this end, antiabortion groups might reasonably seek to address these concerns through private means.

Antiabortion group members could volunteer to take over parental obligations from biological parents who do not wish to raise a child. Similarly, they could offer to pay for the ectogenesis of parents who otherwise could not afford it, but still wish to raise a child. Finally, to alleviate practical financial concerns, antiabortion groups support private companies that adopt policies meant to protect parents, such as guaranteed work for parents, as well as medical leave for pregnant employees. Though antiabortion theorists may not believe they have an obligation to provide such services, there can be no question that they have the right to do so, should they so choose. As such, these proposals are consistent with a clean moral compromise.

Moral compromise 3: personal responsibility

Moral disagreement: Disagreement over the moral and legal acceptability of induced abortion.

Prochoice concession: Prochoice theorists agree to opt to (safely) disconnect the fetus, rather than kill it in the womb, and

allow it to develop through ectogenesis, sacrificing some of their procreative liberty and risking psychological harm.

Antiabortion concession: Antiabortion theorists agree to personally: (1) Alleviate the financial burdens of pregnancy by paying for it or ectogenesis, (2) alleviate the financial burdens of parenthood by guaranteeing flexible work to parents and (3) adopt unwanted fetuses and children.

Should antiabortion theorists offer these concessions? One could argue that antiabortion theorists have no such obligation to; that it's sufficient for women to choose disconnect abortions over induced abortions, and if we assume that disconnecting the fetus is medically comparable to killing it in the womb, then there is no medical or moral reasons for a woman to choose a killing abortion over a disconnect abortion.

For these theorists, moral compromise 1 is sufficient, as long as the woman does not kill the fetus, but 'merely' lets it die, then abortion is not problematic. Still, this seems rather uncharitable to antiabortion theorists who oppose all induced abortions, even those that 'merely' let the fetus die. Indeed, many antiabortion theorists characterise their position as defending life, so we might reasonably ask whether these theorists have an obligation to provide ectogenesis for abandoned, disconnected fetuses.

Of course, such theorists could echo Thomson, that the right to life is not the right to be given what one needs to survive, so antiabortion theorists have no moral obligation to provide ectogenesis, or care, for fetuses. But this *just is* the prochoice view, it would be quite odd to hear the antiabortion theorist adopt this view only when they are tasked to behave in the same way they ask pregnant women to behave.

Beckwith discusses a similar criticism, noting that some people ask why purported prolife theorists do not offer to adopt children that would otherwise be aborted. He characterises this as a form of *ad hominem* attack on antiabortion theorists, likening it to the following threat:

Unless you adopt my three children by noon tomorrow, I will put them to death. (125)⁴

He continues:

The fact that I may refuse to adopt these children does not mean that their parents are justified in killing them. (125)⁴

There are two substantive problems with this response. First, this begs the question regarding whether fetuses are persons; rather than a threat, the prochoice theorist might see this as an offer, akin to the one here:

Cabbage kids: You spot your neighbor placing three cabbages in her garbage and confront her about it. She responds, 'Hey, look, I know you believe cabbages are persons, so feel free to take these cabbages from my garbage and do with them as you see fit. Garbage pickup is at noon tomorrow, decide by then.'

In cabbage kids, you cannot reasonably be said to care about *protecting* cabbages if you let those cabbages go to the dump, now can you?

Second, Beckwith's analysis seems opportunistically narrow; focusing exclusively on the moral character of the woman making the threat, rather than discussing how to respond to the threat. Consider the following case:

Bad Man's Threat: One night, your neighbor breaks into your home late one night and explains 'I'm a bad man. With that out of the way, I'm going to kill these children unless you say you'll adopt them.'

How should you behave here? As in Cabbage Kids, it strikes me that you cannot reasonably be said to care about kids if you sit back and let the bad man kill them when all you need to do is say you'll adopt them. Indeed, given the coercive nature of the circumstances, it strikes me that your promise need not be

binding, that as soon as you're free you might reasonably turn the children over to child services; indeed, reasonable safe haven laws would allow you to do this even if you believe your promise is binding.

What makes the adoption question so compelling is that it illustrates an apparent hypocrisy in the antiabortion position; that they are asking others to do things that they are unwilling to do themselves. In a sense, many antiabortion theorists talk as though they are merely fair-weather defenders of life, willing to do whatever it takes to defend life... as long as it does not require a financial or parental commitment on their part.

To justify this asymmetry of responsibility, the antiabortion theorist requires an explanation for why its acceptable to ask parents to do what the prolife theorists seemingly refuse to. Marquis has proposed just such an explanation^{23 47} that parents have special moral obligations to their children, though this argument has its own problems⁴⁸ and antiabortion theorists rarely argue for this kind of view. If this asymmetry of responsibility is crucial to the current antiabortion movement, one would expect them to advertise it better, though to be fair 'Your body, your problem lady' does not make for compelling signage.

This kind of intransigence within the abortion debate is what makes the prospect of a moral compromise attractive—the best efforts on both sides have been unable to yield a consensus on either metaphysical views on identity or moral views on rights; yet both sides fear the other getting their way—with antiabortion theorists fearing the preventable loss of human life, and prochoice theorists fearing the trampling of their rights. Thus, if both sides can achieve their goals in exchange for morally acceptable sacrifices, then there is a *prima facie* moral obligation to pursue something like moral compromise 3, should ectogenesis be available and disconnecting the fetus be safe.

III. CONCLUSION

Above, I have argued that both sides of the abortion debate have a *prima facie* moral obligation to pursue a moral compromise, as the opposing side getting their way would mean a significant moral loss for the other—for the antiabortion theorist, mass murder and for the prochoice theorist, the very loss of their bodily autonomy—the right to do with their body as they see fit. Fortunately, both worst-case scenarios can be avoided through clean moral compromises.

Which moral compromise should theorists pursue? It seems that this is entirely up to the antiabortion theorist. Some antiabortion theorists believe that killing is wrong, but letting die is acceptable. For such theorists, moral compromise 1 is available *right now*.

However, many antiabortion theorists talk as though they are interested in defending life, rather than just preventing killings, and thus believe they ought to oppose both killing and letting die abortions. This would seem to include both induced abortions (that kill the fetus and those that disconnect it to let it die) as well as preventable spontaneous abortions. Developments in ectogenesis would help to prevent both spontaneous abortions and provide an alternative to induced abortion, so such antiabortion theorists seem to have a *prima facie* strong moral obligation to pursue such technology, and should such technology exist, adopt something like moral compromises 2 or 3.

Unfortunately, current ectogenesis technology is not enough to save the lives of all fetuses separated from their gestational mother; but fortunately, the above analysis has highlighted that many women who would choose to induce abortion do so for financial and parental autonomy reasons that can be addressed

through other means even if ectogenesis is not currently viable. *Right now*, antiabortion groups are free to offer financial support and/or to adopt unwanted infants.

Indeed, to put it crassly, antiabortion groups could offer to bribe women who would otherwise get abortions, providing an extramoral incentive to do what the antiabortion theorist believes is morally obligatory and the prochoice theorist believes is not.

Though I suspect many women who would otherwise pursue induced abortion would take antiabortion groups up on their offers of assistance, and perhaps others continue their pregnancy in exchange for a bribe, many prochoice theorists might reasonably refuse, citing the additional medical risks and loss of bodily autonomy not present in moral compromises 1 through 3. This is to say that while there are compelling reasons why antiabortion theorists should offer such assistance, there are no such compelling reasons why every prochoice theorist ought to take them up on that offer.

But this should not deter real antiabortion theorists, as offering to pay for medical care, to find homes for children that would otherwise not be born, and yes—even bribing those who are already pregnant—are all morally acceptable actions that would reasonably be expected to yield less abortions and protect more lives. Similarly, antiabortion theorists might reasonably shift their legislative goals away from prohibiting induced abortions to providing universal healthcare, as while the former can reasonably be expected to lead to more deaths as desperate women try to perform illegal abortions outside of a medical setting, the latter can be reasonably be expected to ease the financial burden of gestational mothers... with the added bonus of saving the lives of many people who would otherwise go undiagnosed or untreated due to lack of access to affordable healthcare.

In closing, although the abortion debate may appear somewhat intractable, the possibility of ectogenesis offers an end in sight. The availability of ectogenesis would incentivise antiabortion theorists interested in the welfare of the fetus to strike a moral compromise with prochoice theorists, where prochoice theorists promise to choose to disconnect their unwanted fetuses while prochoice theorists agree to provide ectogenesis and arrange care for said disconnected fetuses. This compromise would effectively end the abortion debate, with both sides making a substantive, but strategic compromise—the prochoice theorist gives up property rights in their abandoned fetuses, risking psychological trauma associated with knowing they are the biological parents of a child they will never know, and perhaps taking on additional medical risks and limitations associated with disconnecting the fetus while the antiabortion theorist gives up... money; to paraphrase Thomson, acting as a good Samaritan and going out of their way, at some cost to themselves, to help someone they believe is in need.¹ That said, I have argued that antiabortion theorists need not wait for ectogenesis to act as good Samaritans, whether it be by advocating for altruistic government policies aimed at lessening the burden of pregnancy, or providing those services themselves.

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