



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on February 29, 2012

## Outrage Grows After “Ethicists” Push Legalized Baby Murder

Critics promptly denounced the conclusions as monstrous and barbaric. However, more than a few commentators acknowledged that the pro-infanticide argument simply represents the next logical step in the debate based on the “moral” reasoning underpinning legalized abortion.

The highly controversial paper — entitled “After-birth abortion: why should the baby live?” — was published by the *Journal of Medical Ethics*. The peer-reviewed journal, which has come under fire before for other unsavory proposals, styles itself “a leading international journal that reflects the whole field of medical ethics.”



The piece was written by two authors with ties to universities in Europe and Australia: Francesca Minerva with the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne, and Alberto Giubilini of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Milan. Both authors and the institutions they are affiliated with have come under increasing scrutiny as criticism of the infanticide arguments continues to build.

“Abortion is largely accepted even for reasons that do not have anything to do with the fetus’ health,” the abstract of the paper claims. Of course, abortion is not “largely accepted.” In fact, it remains restricted in most of the world, with the exception of the United States, parts of Western Europe, China, and a few other nations. But even where it is technically legal — especially in America — [opposition](#) to abortion is [fierce](#) and [growing](#).

According to the abstract, the paper purports to show that “both fetuses and newborns do not have the same moral status as actual persons[.] the fact that both are potential persons is morally irrelevant and adoption is not always in the best interest of actual people.” Using those premises and that line of reasoning, which critics called wildly flawed, the two “ethicists” reached the conclusion that murdering babies should be perfectly acceptable.

“The authors argue that what we call ‘after-birth abortion’ (killing a newborn) should be permissible in all the cases where abortion is, including cases where the newborn is not disabled,” explains the abstract, posted on the journal’s website. It was not clear at what age the authors believe exterminating the lives of children should no longer be allowed.

According to summaries of the paper in news reports, the authors apparently prefer the term “after-birth abortion” over infanticide. They also argued that the term “euthanasia” was not applicable to the murder of children because the rationale for killing was not necessarily the “interests” of the baby.

But the semantic gimmicks hardly placated outraged critics, who promptly attacked the reasoning and



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the conclusions. The scandal continued to grow after the journal's editor defended the publication of the paper in a [statement](#).

The authors cited babies with Down syndrome as possible candidates for execution: "Such children might be an unbearable burden on the family and on society as a whole, when the state economically provides for their care." But even the potential to put the "well-being" of a family at risk should be an acceptable reason to choose death, the authors argued, saying adoption could make parents "suffer [psychological distress](#)."

"The fact that they see adoption as something that would cause a mother emotional distress but not the murder of their own child just shows how sick these two people are," [noted](#) Cassy Fiano with the U.S.-based activist group Live Action, which supports protecting the right to life of pre-born children.

According to the two "ethicists," while unborn and newborn children "certainly are human beings," neither is actually a "'person' in the sense of 'subject of a moral right to life.'" They argued that the definition of "person" should include the ability to attribute value to one's existence — a radical shift that, if ever accepted, could have dire implications even beyond legalized infanticide.

"Merely being human is not in itself a reason for ascribing someone a right to life. Indeed, many humans are not considered subjects of a right to life," the authors alleged in the paper, citing children killed legally before birth and criminals facing capital punishment. When exactly a "potential person" becomes a "person" with a right to life should be settled by psychologists and neurologists, according to the authors.

Pro-life activists immediately slammed the paper, its authors, and the journal for attempting to justify killing children. More than a few noted that when the defense of life is based on arbitrary points in time — first or second trimester of pregnancy, for example — the reasoning will eventually lead to conclusions such as the one reached by the authors in question: that infanticide should be legal.

"Connect the dots. If it's good enough to take the life of an unborn child, it's good enough to take the life of [a] newborn for some [unspecified] period of time," [noted](#) Dave Andrusko with National Right to Life. "And having raced through that stop light, it's on to the next category of victims."

In another critical assessment of the paper, Matthew Archbold with the *National Catholic Register* noted that the pro-infanticide position is the inevitable extension of allowing people to become the arbiters of life. "Once you say all human life is not sacred, the rest is just drawing random lines in the sand," he [wrote](#). "It's almost a pro-life argument in that it highlights the absurdity of the pro-abortion argument."

Author and popular commentator Paul Watson [noted](#) that the paper and the fact that it was published in a respected journal was another example of how the medical establishment remains dominated by a "eugenicist mindset." He called it "shocking."

However, Watson pointed out, the practice of murdering children has its origins in the "barbaric eras of ancient history." And it is still practiced in some places today — most notably China, where the [brutal](#) communist dictatorship's "[one-child policy](#)" has contributed to the mass murder of millions of girls.

*Journal of Medical Ethics* editor Julian Savulescu — also a controversial figure who has made arguments critics [consider](#) repugnant — published a [response](#) to the wave of outrage and criticism on February 28. He noted that other "ethicists" had already defended infanticide, and that the authors proceeded logically from premises "which many people accept" to reach a conclusion "many of those people would



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reject.” Indeed.

“What is disturbing is not the arguments in this paper nor its publication in an ethics journal. It is the hostile, abusive, threatening responses that it has elicited,” Savulescu wrote, citing angry comments made at news sites. “More than ever, proper academic discussion and freedom are under threat from fanatics opposed to the very values of a liberal society.”

While advocacy of infanticide is often dismissed by civilized society as a diabolical idea held by a fringe movement that could never gain widespread acceptance, the reality is that it has already [started](#) to move into the mainstream. Consider that in the Netherlands, newborn babies can already be legally killed under certain circumstances — a fact the journal editor pointed to in his defense of the paper.

Even President Barack Obama [openly opposed](#) criminalizing murder of newborns who survived botched abortions. While serving in the Illinois State Senate, he actually played a [key role in killing legislation](#) that would have protected the right of babies not to be killed — after birth.

Of course, even the thought of murdering innocent babies — especially after they have already been born — makes most people cringe. But as critics of the pro-infanticide paper [pointed out](#), the idea of slowly killing people such as [Terri Schiavo](#) through dehydration gained legal approval only after making its debut in “ethics” journals.

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