**BIOETHICS OF ABORTION**

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The matter of abortion, the quintessential bioethics topic, raises intensely personal issues for many people. It is a polarising and divisive issue that raises discussions about morals, science, medicine, sexuality, autonomy, religion, and politics. A central matter is deciding what we can say about unborn children, initially known as embryos and later, foetuses. What is their moral status – how much do they matter, and what are our obligations towards them? The matter of 'personhood' arises, as a philosophical and legal discussion about what rights to grant them.

'Personhood' aside, what is our relationship to them, all of us as members of the human family? Should their lives be protected, or should their mothers be allowed to make decisions about killing or protecting them? If killing is allowed, under what circumstances may it take place? If their lives are not protected, what kind of crime is it to perform an abortion on a woman without her consent, or to cause her to suffer a miscarriage?

The ethical aspect of abortion is related but distinct from the legal. Whether or not it is moral, should abortion be legal? Generally prohibited but with some exceptions? Should it be regulated? Publicly funded? Should doctors and nurses be able to object according to their conscience?

A less prominent but still important debate focuses on the reasons why women might seek abortion. Is it at all times a free choice, or are women responding to coercion in any way? Is it a free choice to seek abortion in desperation because of poverty, violence, or lack of support? What should be the community and policy response to women who feel unable to give birth to their children? And what is the role of the father in decisions about abortion?

At present, these issues are very important and actual and have an interest not only physicians, but also for other professionals. Therefore it is necessary to solve not only legal but also ethical issues of abortion.