

|| *Bioethics and the Law* ||

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In honor of my mother, in memory of my father,
and in joyful gratitude for Aaron and our
daughters, Ahuva, Shoshana, and Nava

JLD

To my parents, in appreciation of their
steadfast support, and to Paul, Max,
Summer, and Charlie, for their exuberance

LS

|| *Preface* ||

Many topics of concern to bioethicists have occasioned passionate debate and have resulted in widely divergent responses from both professional bioethicists and from the wider society. Bioethics brings scholars and practitioners into the center of a number of pervasive, often emotional, social and moral debates, debates about such issues as abortion, stem-cell research, and assisted suicide. Many such debates involve questions about the meaning of personhood and the ways in which persons should be respected or cared for, as they seek health for themselves and others and as they make decisions about reproduction and death. Such debates implicate people's deepest concerns about how to live and about how to understand and relate to other people.

In light of this, it should not be surprising that the study and practice of bioethics often require an interdisciplinary approach. For lawyers working in the field, bioethical questions are often located in a space between law and some other profession or discipline (e.g., medicine, nursing, public health, philosophy, economics, psychology). This book provides students with articles and references that will assist them in exploring the interdisciplinary context of bioethical debate. At the same time, the book, constructed primarily to teach bioethics to law students, frames each issue in light of judicial, legislative, and regulatory rules that may, as a practical matter, channel or limit options available to those attempting to resolve bioethical conundrums.

We have not shied away from the excitement, at times even volatility, that divergent viewpoints bring to the field. At the same time, we have aimed to provide a "balanced" presentation of bioethics. We have worked to achieve that balance by including a variety of controversial perspectives. We have not, in short, included many "neutral" readings in this book. Rather we have included provocative readings, and have aimed to achieve balance by challenging each reading with another, contrasting perspective, or with a series of questions placed after the reading. We hope this approach will stimulate classroom discussion and help students shape their own responses to the dilemmas that bioethicists ponder and to the disputes that lawyers involved with bioethical questions may be asked to help resolve.

For the most part, we have organized the materials around the development of the human “lifespan.” After Part I, which presents concepts basic to bioethical inquiry, much of the book follows issues as they develop from before birth, through childhood, adulthood, and old age, through dying and death. Bioethical questions specific to both children and older people are covered in separate chapters, reflecting the emphasis in contemporary Western society on the relevance of age in defining personhood. Responses to bioethical questions about a 30-year-old may not be deemed appropriate in responding to similar questions about an 8-year-old or about a 98-year-old. The chapters that reflect stages in the human lifespan include those in Part II (“Assisting and Monitoring Reproduction,” “Children,” and “Avoiding Reproduction”) and those in Part IV (“Aging,” “Dying,” and “Death”).

Part III is devoted to a set of topics not specific to one part of the lifespan or another. Some of the topics in this Part (e.g., human subject research) are generally covered in bioethics courses. Others, however, are not. We have, for instance, included chapters focused on financial and ideological conflicts of interest, access to health care, and public health because each of these topics encompasses basic questions about justice and health care.

In sum, the lifespan approach provides a useful organizing framework, and the inclusion of materials about conflicts of interest, access to health care, and public health will broaden students’ understanding of what constitutes a “bioethical” question. Finally, we believe that the result of the decision to include provocative viewpoints is a collection of fascinating, often colorful readings that together permit an in-depth, piercing, and critical look at the assumptions, traditions, and alternative approaches that constitute bioethical inquiry. Reading this book and studying the topics it presents are likely to be challenging. But the process will, we hope, never be boring.

We are grateful for the help of many student researchers. Among these, particularly significant assistance was provided by Kathy Dieterich (Hofstra University School of Law 2005), Roshni Persaud (Hofstra University School of Law 2004), Amie Rice (Florida State University College of Law 2005), and Rick Savage (Florida State University College of Law 2006). We are grateful to Cindie Leigh, Reference Librarian, Hofstra University School of Law, for her generous and intelligent assistance. We are also appreciative to our secretarial associates, Teri Caruso (Hofstra University School of Law), Megan Hensley (Florida State University College of Law), and Craig Hartman (Florida State University College of Law). We thank Richard Mixter, Eric Holt, and Troy Froebe of Aspen Publishers for their consistent help and encouragement in shaping this book, along with the several anonymous reviewers who offered many helpful and insightful comments on previous drafts. We both also thank our respective schools, Hofstra University School of Law and Florida State University College of Law, for their continuing support of our scholarly and teaching endeavors.

Janet L. Dolgin
Lois L. Shepherd

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|| *Summary of Contents* ||

<i>Contents</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xxxi</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xxxiii</i>
PART I.	<i>Bioethics: Basic Concepts</i>
1.	<i>Law, Medicine, and Philosophy</i> 3
2.	<i>Autonomy and Bodily Integrity</i> 47
3.	<i>Life</i> 115
PART II.	<i>The Early Years</i>
4.	<i>Assisting and Monitoring Reproduction</i> 167
5.	<i>Children</i> 269
6.	<i>Avoiding Reproduction: Sterilization, Contraception, and Abortion</i> 349
PART III.	<i>Across the Lifespan</i>
7.	<i>Human Subject Research and Experimental Health Care</i> 405
8.	<i>Conflicts of Interest, Profits, Commerce</i> 465
9.	<i>Access to Health Care</i> 543
10.	<i>Public Health</i> 615
PART IV.	<i>The Later Years</i>
11.	<i>Aging</i> 677
12.	<i>Dying</i> 731
13.	<i>Death</i> 833
<i>Appendix A</i>	<i>861</i>
<i>Table of Cases</i>	<i>871</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>875</i>

|| Contents ||

Preface
Acknowledgments

xxxi
xxxiii

PART I BIOETHICS: BASIC CONCEPTS

— 1 —

|| Law, Medicine, and Philosophy || 3

A. HISTORY OF BIOETHICS AND “BIOLAW”	4
Charity Scott, Why Law Pervades Medicine: An	
Essay on Ethics in Health Care	7
Notes and Questions	12
B. PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES INFORMING BIOETHICS	13
1. Philosophical Ethical Theory	14
2. Utilitarianism	14
3. Kantianism	16
4. Liberal Individualism	17
5. Communitarianism	18
6. Ethics of Care	18
7. Bioethics Principles	19
8. “Critical Perspectives”	20
Rosemarie Tong, Feminist Approaches to Bioethics	21
Notes and Questions	25
C. RELIGION AND BIOETHICS	26
Report and Recommendations of the National	
Bioethics Advisory Commission, Cloning Human	
Beings	26
Notes and Questions	28
Challenging Issues: Applying Ethical Theory	30
D. ETHICS OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND THE	
“BIOETHICS OF BIOETHICS”	31
1. Formalized Medical Ethics	31
Hippocratic Oath	31
Notes and Questions	32