A Christian Perspective on the Pro-Life/Pro-Choice Debate

Lecture 3 – Review of Lectures 1 & 2

- Current war on children
- Canadian Law Contradictory:
  - Unborn recognized as child
  - Must protect/provide for child
  - But abortion is legal!
  - Child becomes human at birth
- Standard definitions
  - “pregnant”, “baby”, “fetus”
- Embryology textbooks
  - Human life at conception
  - Documentaries
  - In utero surgeries
- Peering into the womb
  - Behavior and development of preborn babies
  - Neural activity (associated with thinking, performing a task)

Collins, N., “Introspection brain networks fully formed at birth,” New Scientist, 1 November 2010:

“Could a fetus lying in the womb be planning its future? The question comes from the discovery that brain areas thought to be involved in introspection and other aspects of consciousness are fully formed in newborn babies.”

https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/11/101101151308.htm:
“Our study shows that babies’ brains are more fully formed than we thought. More generally, we sometimes expect to be able to explain the activity we can see on brain scans in terms of someone thinking or doing some task.”
Tragic sonogram shows moment dying twin holds hands with his unborn sister

- Ian and Brittani McIntire were heartbroken to learn one of their twins would not survive
- Doctors found that little Mason has a hole in his heart, is developing more slowly than his sister, and has brain abnormalities
- Six week sonogram shows the tiny twin boy clapping hands with his unborn sister
- Picture is a comfort to the family who may never meet their son to know 'he won't be alone' if he dies in the womb

By HANNAH PARRY FOR DAILYMAIL.COM
But as their pregnancy went on, their shock and excitement quickly turned to tragedy. Their unborn son is facing severe medical issues — while his twin sister weighs two pounds, he’s only at nine ounces.

Their son may make it to delivery, but his only option is heart surgery. The parents say doctors aren’t recommending it because the baby is also dealing with brain development concerns.


Note: This news story with pictures was reported on in many major news outlets (ABC; People.com; Global News; Daily Mail; USA Today; Huffington Post; FOX News; NY Daily News; CNN.com)

I cannot find anything that calls the photo into question. The question I have is how fraternal twins (who are normally in two different sacks) could possibly hold hands. I will try to do more research on this to confirm that the story is legitimate. It probably is, but whatever the case, the secular media’s reporting on it is instructive: they continually refer to the twins as “brother and sister” and they speak of the dying little boy as the parents “son.” This language fits well with the pro-life position; it does not comport with the idea that the developing entity inside the mother is a non-human being or just part of the mother’s body.
Dizygotic twins may be of the same sex or different sexes and are not any more alike than brothers or sisters born at different times. Dizygotic twins always have two chorions and two amnions, but the chorions and the placentas may be fused.

Figure 29.33. The formation of dizygotic twins. Twins of this type are not identical (fraternal) and may have separate or fused placentas. Photo of fraternal twins at 11 weeks.
The results suggest that twin fetuses are aware of their counterparts in the womb, that they prefer to interact with them, and that they respond to them in special ways. Contact between them appeared to be planned—not an accidental outcome of spatial proximity, says study co-author Cristina Becchio of Turin. “These findings force us to predate the emergence of social behavior,” she says.

The fact that fetuses can control their actions in the womb is not a surprise. Co-author Vittorio Gallese, a neuroscientist at Parma, and his collaborators previously showed that fetuses display skilled movements by the fifth month of gestation. Becchio speculates that the presence of a twin may accelerate motor development.
The article is clear that a person’s development is on a continuum; even a teenager’s brain is not fully developed (parents already know this! JK)

The idea that babies can be aborted because they are not fully developed must now appear absurd and arbitrary. On this logic, one could justify killing a newborn, a toddler, a teenager, and in accordance with what this article is telling us, even a person in their 20’s whose brain is still not fully developed.

Incidentally, a lady in our class mentioned that her adult son (in his 20’s) has suffered traumatic brain damage. She was told by the doctors that recovery is likely because her son’s brain is still developing.
Notice once again that the development baby is referred to as “a tiny human.”

Keep Calm and Carry On

Don’t eat sushi. Don’t drink alcohol. Ditto for coffee. Steer clear of hot tubs. Your hormones may make you feel like you’re on a metaphorical roller coaster, but you should not get on a literal one. Pregnant women have grown used to enduring the ever-lengthening list of stuff they need to avoid to ensure a safe and healthy birth. Now, a study suggests stress—one of the most natural reactions a mother can have while walking around with a tiny human inside their womb—can be harmful to their baby, possibly wiring the fetal brain for worry and anxiety permanently.

Dr. Elysia Davis and her colleagues at the University of Denver have spent years studying the effect pregnant women’s stress
May be one of the best things for their unborn babies.

Reactions have on the fetus. One hormone Davis has focused on is cortisol, which the body produces and passes through the placenta to the unborn child. “Cortisol plays an important role in regulating the maturation of the fetus, such as lung development,” says Davis. “These stress systems in the body aren’t just there to cause damage or harm us.” A pregnant woman can expect her cortisol level to naturally increase by two to four times. But when they studied expecting mothers with cortisol levels consistently higher than normal early in the pregnancy and their newborns, Davis and her colleagues made a startling discovery: The infants displayed a much higher sensitivity to stress than other babies. “After birth, every baby gets its blood drawn by the hospital,” says Davis.

Abies start moving before they even enter the world. “Fetuses are moving what will become their limbs from six weeks on,” says Dr. Karen Adolph of New York University’s Infant Action Lab. As a newborn begins to master basic motor skills and grows from a soft, squirming ball of cute to a rolling, crawling—and eventually walking—person,
In terms of touch receptors, a baby begins losing the sense of touch right from the start. “Even before we’re born, we start losing receptors,” says Bensmaia. But while the baby may lose more and more touch receptors, the brain’s ability to tell the differences between textures only improves with age. While a 10-month-old infant may not possess a touch discerning enough to tell silk from polyester, a 10-year-old’s tactile sense is operating at peak efficiency.

One sound infant ears seem programmed to recognize is the sound of their mother’s voice, which they first begin listening to in utero. “The voice is received through bone conduction and is very important to the baby,” says Trehub. A baby’s brain can actually identify a pitch pattern unique to their mother’s speech, and studies have shown a baby is also able to distinguish their mother’s voice from those of other women. It’s just another sign of the unshakable bond between mother and child.

“The flavors from what the mother eats and drinks transfer to the fetus through the surrounding amniotic fluids, and the baby is getting information about what food the mother likes and what will be available for the baby to eat.” In a study supervised by Marcela Schmeidler, the author found.

Notice that the article assumes continuity of person; we were in our mother’s wombs.

Programmed to recognize—this article speaks as though there is intentionality to our cognitive faculties. This kind of language fits the Christian worldview, but not the atheistic evolutionist’s.

Also notice that the infant is listening inside the womb. Living entities listen; not-living, impersonal objects and forces cannot listen to anything!

“The baby is getting information”—again sounds like a living person in there, not an impersonal growth or mere extension of the mother’s body.
Again, the article is speaking of the unborn child as a living entity that is interacting with the world in ways an impersonal force or object cannot. Here the child is said to smell its surroundings.

Greene. The part of the brain responsible for processing smell, called the olfactory bulb, sits on the bottom of the frontal lobe and starts coming online six weeks after conception, allowing the fetus to smell the surrounding amniotic fluid. The molecules carrying the mother’s scent, as well as the odors of anything the mother eats or smells, pass through the placenta and familiarize the unborn baby with the smells of home. Like the rest of us, the fetus finds some of these smells more pleasant than others. “There have been some studies where researchers were looking at a fetus on an ultrasound and someone walked by with a cigarette,” says Greene. “The unborn baby actually made a grimace.”

One scent the baby loves and immediately homes in on after birth is the smell of the mother’s milk. Around an hour after birth, most babies will start smacking their lips, ready for the first postnatal meal. The newborn uses the most powerful and developed sense available, smell, to first sniff any remaining amniotic fluid on its hand and then follow that scent to the mother’s breast. As the infant ages, the sense of smell advances in leaps and bounds. By smell, a