



## Whose View of Life?

*Jane MAIENSCHEN*

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Saving lives versus taking lives: These are the stark terms in which the public regards human embryo research--a battleground of extremes, a war between science and ethics. Such a simplistic dichotomy, encouraged by vociferous opponents of abortion and proponents of medical research, is precisely what Jane Maienschein seeks to counter with this book. *Whose View of Life?* brings the current debates into sharper focus by examining developments in stem cell research, cloning, and embryology in historical and philosophical context and by exploring legal, social, and ethical issues at the heart of what has become a political controversy.

Drawing on her experience as a researcher, teacher, and congressional fellow, Jane Maienschein provides historical and contemporary analysis to aid understanding of the scientific and social forces that got us where we are today. For example, she explains the long-established traditions behind conflicting views of how life begins--at conception or gradually, in the course of development. She prepares us to engage a major question of our day: How are we, as a 21st-century democratic society, to navigate a course that is at the same time respectful of the range of competing views of life, built on the strongest possible basis of scientific knowledge, and still able to respond to the momentous opportunities and challenges presented to us by modern biology? Maienschein's multidisciplinary perspective will provide a starting point for further attempts to answer this question.

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Reviews of this book:

At what point does an embryo or fetus become 'human'? This question is at the core of today's battle over

stem cell research, and that battle, Maienschein believes, is central to questions about the respective roles of science and morality in a democracy. Maienschein, director of the Center for Biology and Society at Arizona State University, puts the question of when life begins in historical and philosophical context....This book should be required reading for anyone trying to understand the scientific and ethical issues that will dominate medicine in the next quarter century.

--Publishers Weekly

Maienschein brilliantly brings to the debate a variable absent in most discussions of the subject-- history...[She] offers an insider's view on several fronts. A well-established academic whose field is the history of developmental biology, she is also a former Congressional fellow, and thus is well placed to deplore politicians' strategic invocation of the phrase 'sound science' to support their a priori ideological positions. Her mantra is that good ethics begin with good facts, such as the fact that differentiated cells appear and have the capacity to experience sensation only after fourteen days; that the heart beats only after twenty-two days; that organisms at birth are the product of both genes and the womb environment, which interact in an endless feedback loop; that societies have in the past drawn the line on where life begins at myriad points and will continue to do so as science and our tools shift our understanding of what life is. In short, her message is that, in a democratic pluralistic society, we must use facts and the lessons of history rather than gut instincts...to navigate a course that is respectful of competing views while rising to the challenges of biomedicine.

--Michele Pridmore-Brown, Times Literary Supplement [UK]

The debate in America over abortion and research with human embryos is so polarized that it is easy to forget that...

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