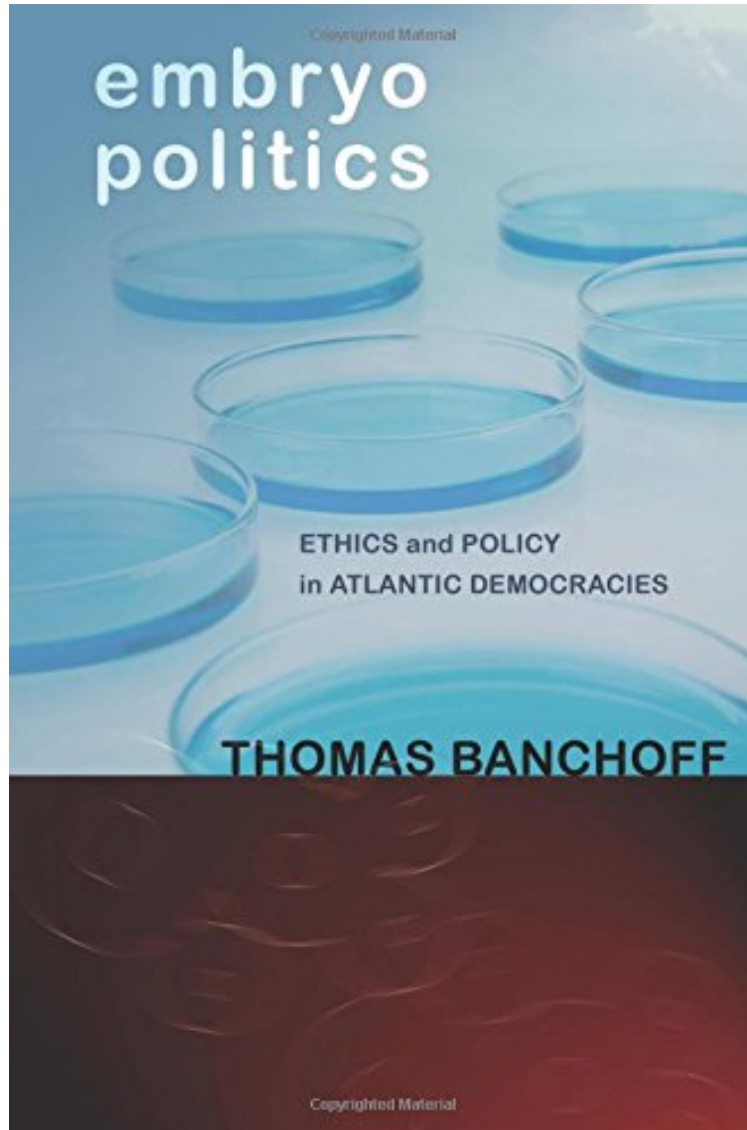


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Embryo Politics: Ethics and Policy in Atlantic Democracies

Thomas Banchoff

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Thomas Banchoff : Embryo Politics: Ethics and Policy in Atlantic Democracies before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Embryo Politics: Ethics and Policy in Atlantic Democracies:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Four Unique Policy Streams By Virginia C. Hughes Banchoff presents historical breakthroughs in science and subsequent political discourse that is rich in detail of embryonic stem cell policy in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and France beginning with the first attempts at fertilizing an egg in the tumultuous year of 1968. This is a four chapter book that parallels policy making after each major

scientific contribution in the realm of embryonic stem cell research. The unit of analysis or countries selected were appropriate in diversity and scope; each country takes a different approach to the moral question of the embryo and balancing the potential contribution to medicine with bioethic imperatives. The United States legislature is focused on public funds, leaving the private sector to carry out research using state and private funds. The United Kingdom is in support of embryonic stem cell research given that it was first in their country where in vitro fertilization officially brought basic research to translational applications. Banchoff describes the Warnock committee findings in detail regarding status of the embryo and the 14-day time limit. In Germany, the Benda commission deliberates on research as the Warnock committee did, but it wasn't until the 1978 when the birth of Louise Brown did public outcry roll full steam on linking embryonic research with the Nazi legacy. While Germany has a restrictive law on abortion, that policy was never really linked to embryonic research policy as support for the Social Democrats and Green party; in contrast to the United States. In France, politicians focused on human dignity of the fetus and embryo and also used the Nazi legacy to sway the public against legislation that would allow embryonic stem cell research to thrive in France. An interesting point was brought up with the Benda commission, that is why was it not until 1978 that society started to speak out against research on embryos; perhaps the country was still in such turmoil it turned a blind eye or perhaps it was not on the public radar. Banchoff does a superb job of contrasting therapeutic cloning (and all of its synonyms) with reproductive cloning. Religious views of the major denominations and their effect on each country's policy is also described in detail realistically from Catholics to Protestants to Baptists to Muslims. The conclusion Banchoff reaches is that unlike some policies that can be transferred from state to state or country to country, each must decide for themselves the right policy for their country, for their polis, for their history. Well Done

Since the first fertilization of a human egg in the laboratory in 1968, scientific and technological breakthroughs have raised ethical dilemmas and generated policy controversies on both sides of the Atlantic. Embryo, stem cell, and cloning research have provoked impassioned political debate about their religious, moral, legal, and practical implications. National governments make rules that govern the creation, destruction, and use of embryos in the laboratory but they do so in profoundly different ways. In *Embryo Politics*, Thomas Banchoff provides a comprehensive overview of political struggles about embryo research during four decades in four countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. Banchoff's book, the first of its kind, demonstrates the impact of particular national histories and institutions on very different patterns of national governance. Over time, he argues, partisan debate and religious-secular polarization have come to overshadow ethical reflection and political deliberation on the moral status of the embryo and the promise of biomedical research. Only by recovering a robust and public ethical debate will we be able to govern revolutionary life-science technologies effectively and responsibly into the future.

"Banchoff's historical outline of these debates over embryo research and use is accurate and engaging, showing clearly how the different political backgrounds against which they took place shaped their later contours. He also addresses the difficult moral questions surrounding the moral status of embryos, how the law should respond to this status, and how these questions intersect with the need for biomedical progress where such 'progress depends on research on embryos. This is a very clear, well-written, engaging volume, and one that could be read with profit and interest by anyone curious about what is one of the most pressing debates of the moment. Summing Up: Highly recommended for all readership levels." *Choice* (January 2012) "As Thomas Banchoff notes in *Embryo Politics*, 'the human embryo only slowly emerged as an object of ethical controversy.' This lucid and well-written book relates a comparative history of this controversy in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and France." *Simon Cole, Technology and Culture* (April 2013) "Banchoff does not fall prey to the allures of science fiction and he avoids sensationalism, but his book is sensational. It is an exciting read and should generate a great deal of public interest because it sets out with clarity the many strands, both ethical and political, that make up in vitro fertilization (IVF), stem cell research and cloning." *Gail Grossman Freyne, Conscience* (Vol. XXXIII No. 1, 2012) "In *Embryo Politics*, Thomas Banchoff summarizes a very large amount of data to make a cohesive argument about embryo debates in four countries over forty years. It is a masterly accomplishment." *John H. Evans, UC San Diego* "Commentators have often noted that debates about embryo research are inherently political, but before now we have had no reliable guide to the contours and history of this politics. Thomas Banchoff has produced the definitive work, not only on embryo politics but also on the politics of bioethics generally. We are all in his debt." *Richard Ashcroft, Professor of Bioethics, Queen Mary, University of London, editor of Principles of Health Care Ethics* About the Author Thomas Banchoff is Director of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and Professor in the Department of Government and School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. He is the author of *The German Problem Transformed: Institutions, Politics, and Foreign Policy, 1945-1995*, editor of *Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics and Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism*, and coeditor of *Religion and the Global Politics of Human Rights and Legitimacy and the European Union: The Contested Polity*.