

The Nonindividuation Argument Against Zygotic Personhood

L. M. Guenin
guenin@hms.harvard.edu

1. The argument

- (1) A necessary condition for an entity to be a person is that it be a human individual.
- (2) An early embryo is not a human individual.
- (3) Therefore an early embryo is not a person.

2. Individuation

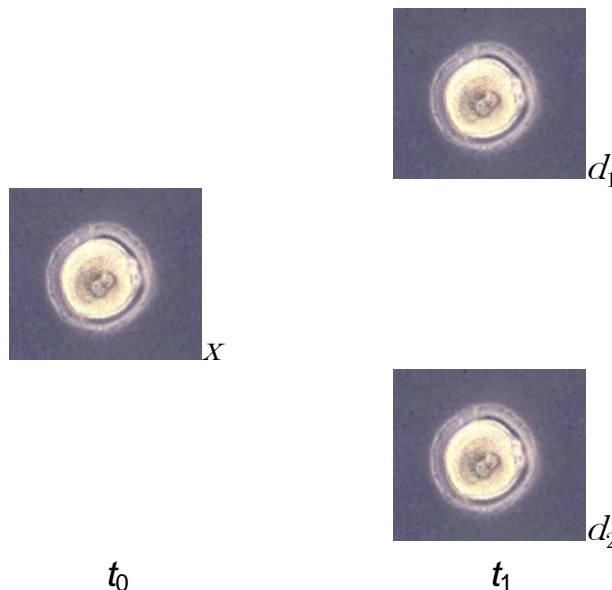
- (i) Relation of universals to apparent particulars
- (ii) Achievement of particularity
- (iii) *Discrete particularization*
- (iv) Discrete particularization sans distinctness
- (v) Differentiation
- (vi) Epistemic process

3. Three subarguments that an early embryo is not a human individual

3(a) *Divisibility*

- [a1] An individual is not divisible into surviving individuals of the same kind as itself.
- [a2] A human individual is not divisible into surviving individuals of the same kind as itself.
- [a3] An early embryo is divisible into surviving early embryos.
- [a4] Therefore an early embryo is not a human individual.

3(a)[i] *Refutation: mitosis*



3(a)[ii] *Revised premises*

[a1'] An individual is not divisible without change in itself into surviving beings of the same kind and quantitative extent as itself.

[a2'] A human individual is not divisible without change in itself into surviving beings of the same kind and quantitative extent as itself.

[a3'] An early embryo is divisible without change in itself into surviving early embryos of the same quantitative extent as itself.

[a1''] A being divisible into surviving beings of the same kind as itself cannot be or correspond to a person.

3(b) *Purported lack of coherent life history*

(bi) The embryo survives as and is identical to one but not both of the twins.

(bii) The embryo survives as and is identical to each of the twins.

(biii) The embryo does not survive.

3(c) *Totipotency of constituent blastomeres*

4. Seeking other support for the nonindividuation argument

4(a) *Accounts of Individuality*

4(b) *Multiple biological kinds of which to be a human unit*

4(c) *Other arguments*

4(d) *No appeal to theological premises*

5. Where matters stand upon failure of nonindividuation argument

5(a) *The moral debate concerning embryo use*

5(b) *The fourteen-day rule*