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## **Introduction: Feminism, Autonomy & Reproductive Technology**

The three of us met in May 2009 in Eugene, Oregon while presenting on the same panel at an interdisciplinary conference on pregnancy, childbirth and mothering. Although our individual approaches to the topic differed it soon became clear that we all felt compelled to pursue the topic of autonomy and technology in childbirth beyond the scope of the conference. Some months later we continued this conversation over email and decided to seek a journal venue for our work along with related work from other authors. We were thrilled that Techné accepted our request for a special issue. The journal's multidisciplinary approach made it an ideal venue for our collection.

As we discovered while working together, our interest in issues regarding women's reproduction arose from a mixture of scholarly and relevant personal experiences. We imagine the same holds true for the other authors in this collection. After some reflection we resolved to title our call for papers and our special issue *Feminism, Autonomy & Reproductive Technology*. It seemed to reflect, in equal measure, our feminist focus on challenging contemporary norms and values concerning autonomy and the meaning and use of reproductive technology in childbirth. We were pleased to receive many outstanding submissions from around the globe. The ones we chose to publish seemed to provide the best coverage of a broad range of relevant topics for the readership of Techné.

Dana Belu opens this issue of Techné with a phenomenological interpretation of technological and natural childbirth in her paper "Nature and Technology in Modern Childbirth: A Phenomenological Interpretation." The article includes a brief overview of the development of modern reproductive technology. Belu's approach appeals to Heidegger's phenomenology of technology to claim that both types of childbirth reflect norms Heidegger associates with modernity, namely order, control, and efficiency. The article introduces an original point of view in contemporary feminist discourse on the meaning of childbirth as techné. The theme of cultural meaning is continued, albeit from a different perspective, in "Mandatory Ultrasound Laws and the Coercive Use of Informed Consent" by Cynthia C. Coe and Matthew C. Altman. The authors present an account of the cultural meaning invested in the concept of a fetus as a person and of a pregnant woman as a mother. The authors' analysis of cultural expectations reveals that mandatory ultrasound laws undermine women's autonomy through misleading and coercive elements implicit in requesting women to view their fetus' ultrasounds.

Feminist analyses of socially constructed norms and values affecting the choice to pursue technology are the focus of the following two articles. Tanya Cook's paper, "Hooked Up: How Electronic Fetal Monitoring Affects Maternal Agency and Maternal Autonomy," explains how widespread use and social acceptance of electronic fetal monitoring (EFM) as a scientific tool restricts autonomy and agency by privileging the status of the fetus as patient and delegitimizing embodied experiences of childbirth. Recognizing the social and technological construction of EFM on Cook's view is essential to reclaiming autonomy in childbirth. Sylvia Burrow presents "Reproductive Autonomy and Reproductive Technology" as a feminist critique of social pressures increasing women's perceived need to use reproductive technology during labor and birth. Routine, normalized use of reproductive technology creates a technological imperative that compromises women's ability to refuse the use of technology and hence undermines women's ability to choose an elective cesarean or avoid an emergency cesarean. To counter such limitations to autonomy Burrow encourages cultivation of self-trust and self-confidence, each of which is integral to autonomy as both embodied and relational.

The final two papers of this special issue point out philosophical implications of contemporary discourse and narrative representing birth and birthing women from a feminist perspective. Elizabeth Soliday identifies threats to maternal autonomy in current obstetrics through representative narratives following birth after cesarean. Her paper “Autonomy in Maternal Accounts of Birth After Cesarean” examines decision making about possible vaginal birth after an earlier cesarean in order to show that consideration of women’s birth experiences are central to maternal autonomy, yet conspicuously absent from the evidence base that informs models of medical decision making. Damien Riggs and Clemence Due conclude this special issue with a discursive analysis of representations of surrogacy in New South Wales. These representations, they find, reveal normative understandings of surrogates that either value surrogates as the child’s “proper mother” or devalue surrogates as “bad mothers.” In “Representations of Surrogacy in Submissions to Parliamentary Inquiry in New South Wales” the authors draw attention to how public representations of surrogacy may undermine the capacity of potential users of surrogates to morally evaluate relevant rights and relationships.

Dana S. Belu – Guest Editor-in-Chief

Sylvia Burrow – Guest Editor

Elizabeth Soliday – Guest Editor

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