**Introduction to The Breastfeeding Dilemma Virtual Workshop**

Hello and welcome to The Breastfeeding Dilemma Virtual Workshop! My name is Fiona Woollard and I am an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southampton. I work in the Philosophy of Pregnancy and Early Motherhood.

The first Breastfeeding Dilemma Workshop was held in London on the 23rd of March 2016. The Breastfeeding Dilemma arises because of two facts. There is growing recognition of the benefits of breastfeeding, leading to an influential support movement. This is good. However, many mothers now report an overbearing pressure to breastfeed. If they decide not to breastfeed, they feel required to repeatedly justify this decision – to medical professionals, friends, relatives and even strangers. Many women who attempt to breastfeed and are unable to do so report encountering similar judgement while struggling with their own guilt. Occurring when women are highly vulnerable, this can have devastating effects.

On the other hand, many women who want to breastfeed are let down by lack of skilled help, information and social support.  8 out of 10 women who stop in the first six weeks would have liked to continue for longer.

How do we support and encourage breastfeeding, without subjecting those who are unable, or choose not to, breastfeed to shame and guilt?  This is the Breastfeeding Dilemma.

The aim of the first workshop was simple: to bring together academics, policy makers, medical professionals, parental support organisations, members of the media, mothers and members of the public to address the Breastfeeding Dilemma. We explored philosophical mistakes in the way we talk and think about infant feeding choices and the impact pressure to breastfeed can have on maternal health and the experience of new motherhood.

However, there were many people who wanted to attend the Breastfeeding Dilemma but were unable to do so. By popular demand, we decided to put together a virtual workshop.

The original workshop consisted of four talks. Unfortunately, technical difficulties mean that we don’t have recordings for all of the talks. However, there is a mixture of materials available.

Please feel free to browse through as much or as little as you like, before joining us on the discussion blog.