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morally right to initiate the technical procedures required for the removal of organs for transplant.

6. Another question of great ethical significance is that of *the allocation of donated organs* through waiting-lists and the assignment of priorities. Despite efforts to promote the practice of organ-donation, the resources available in many countries are currently insufficient to meet medical needs. Hence there is a need to compile waiting-lists for transplants on the basis of clear and properly reasoned criteria.

From the moral standpoint, an obvious principle of justice requires that the criteria for assigning donated organs should in no way be "discriminatory" (i.e. based on age, sex, race, religion, social standing, etc.) or "utilitarian" (i.e. based on work capacity, social usefulness, etc.). Instead, in determining who should have precedence in receiving an organ, *judgements should be made on the basis of immunological and clinical factors*. Any other criterion would prove wholly arbitrary and subjective, and would fail to recognize the intrinsic value of each human person as such, a value that is independent of any external circumstances.

PONTIFICAL ACADEMY FOR LIFE

Declaration on the Production and the Scientific and Therapeutic use of Human Embryonic Stem Cells

This document seeks to contribute to the debate on the production and use of *embryonic stem cells* [ES cells] which is now taking place in scientific and ethical literature and in public opinion. Given the growing relevance of the debate on the limits and liceity of the production and use of such cells, there is a pressing need to reflect on the ethical implications which are present. . . .

Ethical Problems: Given the nature of this article, the key ethical problems implied by these new technologies are presented briefly, with an indication of the responses which emerge from a careful consideration of the human subject from the moment of conception. It is this consideration which underlies the position affirmed and put forth by the Magisterium of the Church.

The **first ethical problem**, which is fundamental, can be formulated thus: *Is it morally licit to produce and/or use living human embryos for the preparation of ES cells?*

The answer is negative, for the following reasons:

1. On the basis of a complete biological analysis, the living human embryo is - from the moment of the union of the gametes - a *human subject* with a well defined identity, which from that point begins its own *coordinated, continuous and gradual development*, such that at no later stage can it be considered as a simple mass of cells.

2. From this it follows that as a *human individual* it has the *right* to its own life; and therefore every intervention which is not in favour of the embryo is an act which violates that right. Moral theology has always taught that in the case of *Ajus certum tertii*" the system of probabilism does not apply.

3. Therefore, the ablation of the inner cell mass (ICM) of the blastocyst, which critically and irremediably damages the human embryo, curtailing its development, is a *gravely immoral* act and consequently is *gravely illicit*.

4. *No end believed to be good*, such as the use of stem cells for the preparation of other differentiated cells to be used in what look to be promising therapeutic procedures, *can justify an intervention of this kind*. A good end does not make right an action which in itself is wrong.

5. For Catholics, this position is explicitly confirmed by the Magisterium of the Church which, in the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, with reference to the Instruction *Donum Vitae* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, affirms: *A*The Church has always taught and continues to teach that the result of human procreation, from the first moment of its existence, must be guaranteed that unconditional respect which is morally due to the human being in his or her totality and unity in body and spirit: The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life" (No. 60). . . .

In conclusion, it is not hard to see the seriousness and gravity of the ethical problem posed by the desire to extend to the field of human research the production and/or use of human embryos, even from an humanitarian perspective.

The possibility, now confirmed, of using **adult stem cells** to attain the same goals as would be sought with embryonic stem cells - even if many further steps in both areas are necessary before clear and conclusive results are obtained - indicates that adult stem cells represent a more reasonable and human method for making correct and sound progress in this new field of research and in the therapeutic applications which it promises. These applications are undoubtedly a source of great hope for a significant number of suffering people.

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