Harvesting the Unborn: The Ethics of Embryo Stem Cell Research

Scott Klusendorf, Stand to Reason

Overview:
Funding research that deliberately destroys one human being so another may benefit is not only a serious moral wrong; it is unnecessary. There is no credible evidence that embryonic human beings must lose their lives in order to save ours. Contrary to what has been repeated again and again, human embryos are not the only source for stem cells. Startling new evidence indicates that adult stem cells are not only effective alternatives to destructive embryo research, but are better at battling disease. We can extract these adult stem cells without killing the donor. In short, the choice between medical progress and moral principle is a false dilemma. We can pursue the cure of disease in morally acceptable ways.

I. **Introduction**: Last September, my 10 year-old son Jeffrey went to the hospital emergency room after a painful Razor Scooter accident. While awaiting treatment for a broken hand, he noticed the hospital staff assisting a woman born without legs. Wiping aside his own tears, he said "Dad, that lady has no legs, but she's still a person."

   A. This was indeed comforting to me as a parent, as my kids are growing up in a culture that thinks human beings are nothing more than the sum total of their physical parts and properties. At best, they are complex computers.

   B. **Paul Churchland**: When computers can function at the same level as humans, only a racial bigot would deny them full rights of personhood.[1]

II. **Topic**: Harvesting the Unborn: the Ethics of Embryo Stem Cell Research. The basic philosophical question before us tonight is this: Are human beings intrinsically valuable, as my son Jeffrey observed at the emergency room, or are they nothing more than the sum total of their physical parts? If we are the sum total of our physical parts, how many must you have to qualify as a person? And who will decide if you qualify?

III. **Significance**: These questions are critical, because what's clear to a 10-year old—namely, that human persons cannot be defined by their physical parts--has been lost on some of the most distinguished minds of our day. This is nothing new. For over 200 years, Americans have wrestled with the question: How are we going to define human personhood? Are we going to define it in ways that include the most vulnerable members of the human family or are we going to exclude those who stand in the way of something we want? The debate over **embryonic stem cell research** is an extension of that struggle.

---

[1] Philosopher J.P. Moreland cites Churchland in his lecture "The Case for the Existence of the Soul," Biola University Apologetics Lecture #TC9120, June 1, 2000.

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

A. Remarkable **U.S. Senate hearing** (9/2000): At issue—In our quest to cure disease, should federal tax dollars be used to fund destructive research on human embryos? Should we, in other words, fund research that destroys a human embryo for the express purpose of extracting its stem cells to benefit patients suffering from degenerative diseases?

1. Senator **Tom Harkin**: The embryos in question are no bigger than the period at the end of a sentence. They do not have the capacity to become a human being. It is morally wrong to oppose funding.[2]

2. **Mary Tyler Moore** (suffering from juvenile diabetes): "The embryos that are being discussed, according to science, bear as much resemblance to a human being as a goldfish. We're dealing with flesh and blood people now who feel and deal with real debilitation right now and our obligation is to those who are here."[3]

3. **Harkin's & Moore's rationalization**: The embryo doesn't look human like us, therefore it's not. This is the logic of racial bigots who use pejorative language to dehumanize those they wish to exploit. The issue is not what an entity looks like, but what it is. The bearded lady and the Elephant Man (John Merrick) did not look human but were, while mannequins in storefronts often appear human but are not. The fact is that a goldfish will always remain a goldfish while the human embryo—if not wantonly killed—will become a fetus, newborn, toddler, and adult just like Harkin and Moore. Only those exploiting others care about looks.

   - "**Man in the Zoo**"—In 1906, at the Bronx Zoological Gardens (in the Monkey House) followers of Charles Darwin displayed an African Pygmy named Ota Benga in a cage with an Orangutan. Forty thousand people in one day converged to witness the so-called "missing link" between ape and man. According to an appalling *New York Times* description, "[T]he pygmy was not much taller than the orangutan and one had a good opportunity to study their points of resemblance. Their heads are much alike and both grin in the same way when pleased." A black pastor, James H. Gordon, objected to the display. "Our race, we think, is depressed enough without exhibiting one of us with the apes. We think we are worthy of being considered human beings, with souls."[4]

---

[2] Judy Packer, "Support Urged for Human Embryo Stem Cell Research," *Post-Gazette*, December 3, 1998. http://www.post-gazette.com/healthscience/19981203cell2.asp
See also, "Stars Urge Stem Cell Research Funding," AP, September 14, 2000. Cited in *USA Today*. http://www.usatoday.com/life/health/embryo/lhemb014.htm;

[3] "Stars Urge Stem Cell Research Funding," AP, September 14, 2000. Cited in *USA Today*, http://www.usatoday.com/life/health/embryo/lhemb014.htm

[4] Geoffrey Ward, "Man in the Zoo," *American Heritage*, October, 1992, p. 12. See a biosketch of Ota Benga at http://www.concentric.net/~pvb/otasyn.html

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

- **TIME** Magazine reports (August 23, 1999) that many neo-nazi members of the hate group Aryan Nation believe that non-whites are "mud people on the level of animals."[5]

- **South African heart transplant victim** (1967)—doctor removed a black woman's beating heart and placed it into the chest of a white man. Why was this done in South Africa? Because apartheid allowed South Africa's medical profession to place a lesser value on the lives of black patients. Hence, taking the heart of a comatose black woman to save the life of a white male was morally acceptable.[6]

4. Nor have **women** and children escaped these tragic, dehumanizing comparisons:

   - **Gustave Le Bon**, Darwin disciple and father or social psychology, compared the brains of women to those of savages and gorillas:

     > [Even in] the most intelligent races [there] are large numbers of women whose brains are closer in size to those of gorillas than to the most developed male brains. This inferiority is so obvious that no one can contest it for a moment; only its degree is worth discussion...Women represent the most inferior forms of human evolution and...are closer to children and savages than to an adult, civilized man. They excel in fickleness, inconstancy, absence of thought and logic, and incapacity to reason. Without a doubt, there exists some distinguished women, very superior to the average man, but they are as exceptional as the birth of any monstrosity, as for example, of a gorilla with two heads. Consequently, we may neglect them entirely.[7]

   - Author **Henry Miller** used pejorative language to describe women as parasites who cannot survive on their own and who exploit, absorb, and devour their male hosts. He depicts a woman's relationship to a man this way: "She clung to me like a leech."[8]

   - **Marquis de Sade's** novels are riddled with parasitic references to women. Just before subjecting his female victim to an odious diet of

---

[5] Frank Gibney, "The Kids Got in the Way," *Time Magazine*, August 23, 1999. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,29471-1,00.html

[6] Cited in Mark Hume, "Taking a Life to Save a Life," *National Post*, March 2, 1999. For summary, see http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/1999/march/990303.html

[7] Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981) pp. 104-5. Order at www.amazon.com

[8] Henry Miller, *Sexus* (New York: Grove Press, 1965) p. 229; cited in William Brennan, "Female Objects of Semantic Dehumanization and Violence," *Studies in Pro-Life Feminism*, Spring, 1995, http://www.fnsa.org/v1n3/brennan.html

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

sexual perversion and violence, a male character in one of his novels states: "Would a man devoured by vermin allow them to feed upon him out of sympathy? In our gardens, do we not uproot the parasitic plant which harms useful vegetation?"[9]

- **Dr. Warren Hern**, author of *Abortion Practice*, the medical teaching text that trains doctors to perform abortions, defines unwanted pregnancy as a *disease*, a "parasitic illness" for which the treatment of choice is abortion.[10] Without a hint of irony, Dr. Hern is defining his victim class exactly the way Hitler did his. "Parasite" was precisely the term Hitler used to dehumanize Jews in his grotesquely anti-Semitic *Mein Kampf*. Elsewhere, he called Jews *Bacillus*—a systemic disease to be eradicated. His speech in Wilhelmshaven, 1 April, 1939, is a case in point: **"**Only when this Jewish bacillus infecting the life of peoples has been removed can one hope to establish a co-operation amongst the nations which shall be built up on a lasting understanding."[11]

- **Planned Parenthood ad**— "Babies are loud, smelly, and expensive, unless you want one."[12]

- **Philip Wylie**, in his book *The Magic Animal*, writes that the being brought into existence at fertilization is "protoplasmic rubbish" or a "gobbet of meat."[13]

- **Carl Sagan**, in a crude attack piece featured in *Parade Magazine,* mocked unborn children as animals, comparing them unfavorably with parasites, segmented worms, fish, amphibians, tadpoles, reptiles, and pigs. Dr. Sagan's language was as hateful as that of any racist.[14]

- **University of Edinburgh**: Just when you thought it couldn't get worse, the *Journal of Medical Ethics* reports on research from the University of Edinburgh where ten week developing baby girls will be killed inutero so that the eggs from their ovaries can be stripped from

---

[9] Marquis de Sade, *The Complete Justine: Philosophy in the Bedroom and Other Writings*, compiled and translated by Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse (New York: Grove Press 1965) p. 647; cited in Brennan, ibid, http://www.fnsa.org/v1n3/brennan.html

[10] Warren Hern, *Abortion Practice* (Philadelphia: J. Lipponcott, 1990) pp. 8-10, 12. Order at 303-447-1361.

[11] N H Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitle*r (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942) volume I, p. 743, http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide/statements.htm

[12] Advertisement cited in *The Burnsville/Lakeville Sun-Current*, October 16, 1996.

[13] Philip Wylie, *The Magic Animal* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968) p. 272. Cited in William May, "The Sacredness of Life: An Overview of the Beginning," *Linacre Quarterly*, 1996. http://www.culture-of-life.org/aborcull_may_thesacrednessoflife.htm

[14] Carl Sagan and Ann Dryan, "Is it Possible to be Pro-Life and Pro-Choice," *Parade Magazine*, April 12, 1990. www.parade.com

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

their bodies and implanted into women unable to conceive.[15] These are the same baby girls we are told are nothing more than tissue blobs, but now we discover that by ten weeks gestation, they are so fully formed that they produce eggs capable of fertilization outside the womb. We are forcing motherhood on baby girls whose personhood we are denying. We are saying these unborn entities are not people, but we are forcing them to become mothers.[16]

5. **In short**, we used to discriminate on the basis of skin color and gender, but now, with ESCR, we discriminate on the basis of size, level of development, location, and degree of dependency. We've simply swapped one form of discrimination for another.

B. **Definitions**: Before discussing the moral question of embryo stem cell research, let's clarify a few key terms:

1. Definition: **Stem cells** are fast growing, unspecialized cells that can reproduce themselves and grow new organs for the body. All 210 different types of human tissue originate from these primitive cells. Because they have the potential to grow into almost any kind of tissue, including nerves, bones, and muscle, scientists believe that the introduction of healthy stem cells into a patient may restore lost function to damaged organs. Human embryos have an abundant supply of stem cells which scientists are eager to harvest.

2. Definition: **Embryonic stem cell research** (ESCR) involves striping 14 day-old human embryos of their stem cells so that they can be transplanted into the bodies of those suffering from illness. Extracting the cells kills the human embryo, reducing it to nothing more than research fodder.

3. Definition: **Therapeutic cloning** involves creating an embryo that is a genetic clone of the patient and using that embryo as a source for stem cells, which would guarantee that the resulting tissue is not rejected by the patient's body. The cloning technique is called **Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer**.

4. How SCNT works: First, an unfertilized egg is taken from a woman and its nucleus is removed. Genetic material (DNA) from the patient is then placed inside the vacated egg. Chemicals are added and a spark of electricity jolts the cell into dividing and growing into a clone. This process gave us "Dolly," the first cloned sheep.

---

[15] Jonathan Berkowitz, "Mummy Was a Fetus: Motherhood and Fetal Ovarian Transplantation," *Journal of Medical Ethics,* 1995; 21: 298-304.

[16] For a pro-life feminist perspective on this, see Angela Kennedy, "Great Britain's Debate Over the Utilization of Fetal Ova," *Studies in Pro-Life Feminism* (Summer, 1995), http://www.fnsa.org/v1n3/kennedy.html

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

5. Morality of cloning: In brief, the morality of cloning is not about *how* an embryo comes into existence, but how we treat it once it's conceived. In other words, the real moral concern is not that we are cloning *perse*, but *why* we are cloning: to use the embryo's body parts to benefit others. It's our inhumane treatment of the embryo that makes cloning wrong.[17]

C. **History of US involvement in ESCR**: The current debate over embryo research began in August 1993 when the National Institutes for Health (NIH) requested panel discussions for the purpose of issuing ethically and legally appropriate guidelines for the controversial research.

1. In an a bizarre twist of logic, the panel concluded that embryos are entitled to "profound respect, but this does not necessarily encompass the legal and moral rights attributed to persons."[18] Put simply, we should profoundly respect human embryos, but we may kill them to benefit others. The convoluted logic of the panel troubled many ethicists, including some that generally support abortion. Daniel Callahan of the Hastings Institute writes, "I have always felt a nagging uneasiness at trying to rationalize killing something for which I have profound respect."[19]

2. In response to the panel's distorted logic, Congress outlawed federal funding for harmful embryo research in 1996 and has maintained that prohibition. The ban is broad based and specific: Funds cannot be used for "research in which a human embryo or embryos are destroyed, discarded, or knowingly subjected to risk of injury or death." The intent of Congress is clear: If a research project requires the destruction of human embryos, then it is illegal to use federal funds for the project.

3. In clear defiance of the law, the Clinton Administration, working through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), authorized federal funds for destructive embryo research. The NIH argued that public funds would not be used to destroy the embryos, only to conduct research after the embryos are killed. This is incoherent reasoning. The deliberate killing of a human embryo is an essential component of the proposed federal research. Without the destruction of the embryo, research is impossible. The NIH's determination to pursue human embryo research show contempt for, and defiance of, the legislative will of the U.S. Congress. [20]

---

[17] See Greg Koukl, "Christians are Getting Upset About Cloning for the Wrong Reasons," *Solid Ground* (May/June 1997), http://www.str.org/free/solid_ground/SG9705.htm, and "Can a Soul be Cloned?" *Solid Ground* (March/April 1998), http://www.str.org/free/solid_ground/SG9803.htm

[18] *Report of the Human Embryo Research Panel* (Washington DC: National Institutes for Health, September 27, 1984. http: www/nih.gov

[19] Daniel Callahan, "The Puzzle of Profound Respect," Hastings Center Report 25, January 1995, http://www.thehastingscenter.org/publications.htm

[20] Sam Brownback, "The Embryo-cell Battleground," *Philadelphia Inquirerer*, August 27, 2000, http://www.phillynews.com/content/inquirer/2000/08/27/opinion/brownback27.htm

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

4. Nonetheless, **TIME magazine** reports that scientists in Great Britain and the U.S. have pledged to create headless human clones (within 10 years) whose body parts can be harvested to treat the sick.[21]

D. Science fiction? Guess again.

1. **The British Parliament** (December 19, 2000) modified the Human Fertilization and Embryology Act of 1990 to allow the cloning of human embryos specifically for destructive research. Supporters of the new law insist it contains a strict prohibition against cloning human beings. That "strict" prohibition is simply that ALL cloned embryos must be killed before they have a chance to develop into more mature human beings. In other words, under the new law, human lives may be created using cloning technology only when the creators agree, under threat of law, to destroy the embryonic child. That is the so-called safeguard that allegedly prevents the cloning of human beings.[22]

2. Back in the United States, **Jack & Lisa Nash** conceived a baby boy (Adam) for the express purpose of donating his cells to his older sister, who suffers from Fanconi Anemia—a fatal hereditary disease. They conceived in vitro 15 embryos, only one of which had the right genetic match. It was implanted in Mrs. Nash while the other 14 were discarded. Nine months later, Lisa Nash gave birth to Adam while the stem cells from his umbilical cord were implanted into his sister. Adam was conceived not as a son, but as a medical treatment. Fortunately for him, he made the grade. His 14 siblings were not so lucky.[23]

---

[21] See Charles Krauthammer, "Of Headless Mice and Men," *Time Magazine*, January 19, 1998
http://www.time.com/time/magazine/1998/dom/980119/essay1.html
See also "Will Headless Human Clones Grow Organs in 10 years?" AP, October 19, 1997.
http://www.thekingsnetwork.com/stopftr/ftrnew25.htm

[22] See the following press accounts of the British Parliament vote—Phillip Webster, "MPs Give Go Ahead for embryo Research," *London Times*, December 20, 2000,
http://www.thetimes.co.uk./article/0,,2-53953,00.html;
George Jones, "MPs Vote for Research on Human Embryos," *London Telegraph*, December 20, 2000,
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/et?ac=004079435342763&rtmo=fslYrNws&atmo=fslYrNws&pg=/et/00/12/20/nclon20.html;
Lorraine Fraser and Jonathan Petre, "Church of England Says Cloning is Morally Acceptable," *London Telegraph,* December 3, 2000,
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/et?ac=004079421326377&rtmo=VDJ3gfgK&atmo=rrrrrrrq&pg=/et/00/12/3/nclon03.html;
"UK Approves Cloning and Stem Cell Research," *Pro-Life Infonet*,
infornet@prolifeinfo.org
David Reardon, "British Government Orders the Slaughter of Innocents," *Pro-Life Infonet*, 12/20/2000,
http://www.infonet@prolifeinfo.org

[23] For press accounts of this story, see Ellen Goodman, "Customizing Our Kids," *The Washington Post*, October 5, 2000,
http://www.postwritersgroup.com/archives/good1005.htm
See also Rick Weiss, "Test-tube Baby Born to Save Sister, *Detroit News*, October 3, 2000,
http://detnews.com/2000/health/0010/03/a05-129288.htm

IV. **Thesis**: Having said all that, the truth is that Senator Harkin and Mary Tyler Moore are absolutely correct. We shouldn't worry about creating human embryos for destructive research if that research benefits others. We shouldn't interfere with the quest for cures. Nor should we be troubled by parents that conceive a child strictly as a medical treatment or fret over researchers that strip ovaries from 10-week female fetuses, forcing them to become mothers. I will concede that none of these things are morally problematic—IF. IF What? IF the embryos destroyed by such research are not human persons.

This is why I'm puzzled by President Clinton's condemnation of cloning human embryos for spare parts. He writes: "Each human life is unique, born of a miracle that reaches beyond laboratory science. I believe we must respect this profound gift and resist the temptation to replicate ourselves."[24] However, if the embryos in question are not human persons, why not destroy them to benefit others? And if it's wrong to clone human embryos because it shows disrespect for the gift of life, why is it morally permissible to kill these same embryos (and later, fetuses) through legal abortion up until the moment of birth? It's beyond ironic that the President would trouble himself with the treatment of cloned embryos while wholeheartedly sanctioning the destruction of third-trimester fetuses through partial-birth abortion. His political posturing on the matter is incoherent, at best.

The purpose of this lecture is to clarify the moral confusion expressed by the President (and others) and to argue that the case for ESCR is seriously flawed for the following reasons.

A. It assumes a parts view of human persons, confusing functioning as a person with being one.

B. It equivocates on the question of personal identity.

C. It is intellectually dishonest. It pits science against faith in manner that distorts both.

D. It ignores moral considerations.

E. Its alleged moral neutrality is not neutrality at all, but complicity in the act of destroying one human being so that another may benefit.

F. It downplays ethical alternatives to ESCR.

To summarize, I will argue that research that deliberately destroys one human being so another may benefit is not only a serious moral wrong; it is unnecessary. There is no credible evidence that embryonic human beings must lose their lives in order to save ours. We can treat the sick without killing the vulnerable. Contrary to what has been repeated again and again in the secular

---

[24] Commencement address by the President at Morgan State University, May 18, 1997, http://www.aegis.com/hivinfoweb/library/vaccines/goal9705.html

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

media, human embryos are not the only source for stem cells. Startling new evidence indicates that adult stem cells are not only effective alternatives to destructive embryo research, but are better at battling disease. In fact, the *British Medical Journal* goes so far as to state "The need for fetal cells as a source of stem cells for medical research may soon be eclipsed by the more readily available and less controversial adult stem cells."[25] In short, the choice between medical progress and moral principle is a false dilemma. We can pursue the cure of disease in morally acceptable ways.

A. **Flaw #1: Proponents of ESCR assume a "parts" view of human persons, confusing functioning as a person with being one.**

Michael Kinsley: "Opponents of stem-cell research believe that a microscopic clump of cells has the same moral claims as a fully formed human being. Opposition to stem-cell research is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the right-to-life argument. A goldfish resembles a human being more than an embryo does. An embryo feels nothing, thinks nothing, cannot suffer, and is not aware of its own existence." [**Quick note to self**: Avoid deep-sleep, general anesthesia, and accidents that could result in unconsciousness when near Mr. Kinsley!] "Yet opponents of stem-cell research would allow real people, who can suffer, to do so in service of the abstract principle that embryos are people too. If faith takes you there, fine. Reason can't.... That we each start out as something less than human, that the transformation takes place gradually, but that it's morally acceptable to draw a line somewhere other than the very beginning [is not] just acceptable, [it's] necessary. If faith tells you otherwise, listen. But don't mistake it for the voice of reason."[26]

Kinsley's functionalism asserts that human embryos do not look like us and are not developed enough to count. But are these good reasons to kill them?

1. **One can fail to function as a person and yet still be a person**. People under anesthesia or in a deep sleep cannot feel pain, are not self-aware, and cannot reason. Neither can those in reversible comas. But we do not call into question their humanity because we recognize that although they cannot function as persons, they still have the being of persons, which is the essential thing.

2. **One must *be* a person in order to function as one**. A person is one with the natural, inherent capacity to perform personal acts, even if that capacity is currently unrealized. In other words, one grows in the ability

---

[25] Deborah Josefson, "Adult Stem Cells may be Redifineable," *British Medical Journal*, January 30, 1999, http://www.bmj.com/cgi/reprint/318/7179/282/b.pdf
See also L. Hohannes, "Stem Cells from "Adults Have an Edge Battling Disease," *Wall Street Journal*, April 13, 2000, http://www.aegis.com/news/wsj/1999/WJ990401.html

[26] Michael Kinsley, "Reason, Faith, and Stem Cells," *Slate*, August 28, 2000, http://slate.msn.com/Readme/00-08-28/Readme.asp

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

to perform personal acts only because *one already is* the kind of thing that grows into the ability to perform personal acts, i.e., a person.

- Consider a man entering a room.[27] He can enter it gradually, be in halfway, and then enter it fully. During all stages of entering, *the man must first exist in total to do the entering*. Likewise, in order to enter the class of human beings known as human persons, the man must exist as well. Someone cannot be in the process of becoming a human person, since one must first exist in order to enter any process.

- We cannot say that the fetus becomes a person as it develops since it must first exist in order to do the developing. Put differently, *my* thoughts and my feelings cannot exist unless *I* first exist. I can exist without them—as would be the case if I were sleeping-- but they cannot exist without me.

3. **The rights of individuals in our society are not based on their current (actual) capacities, but on their *inherent* capacities**. This sounds complex, but we make this distinction all the time.

   - For example, no one doubts that newborn humans have fewer actual capacities than do **day-old calves**. Baby humans are rather unimpressive in terms of environmental awareness, mobility, etc. Yet this does not lead us to believe that the calf belongs in the nursery while the infant can be left in the barn. To the contrary, we understand that although the infant *currently* lacks many functional abilities, it nonetheless has the *inherent* capacity to function as a person. But if individual rights are grounded in one's current capacities, calves should enjoy a greater moral status than do newborns.[28]

   - People who are unconscious cannot presently function as persons, but they still have the inherent capacity to perform personal acts. That is why we do not kill them. From the moment of conception, the unborn human has the natural, inherent capacity to function as a person. What he lacks is the current capacity to do so. That he cannot yet speak, reason, or perform personal acts means only that he cannot yet function as a person, not that he lacks the essential being of a person.

   - This same emphasis on inherent (as opposed to actual) capacity is underscored in the accepted bio-ethical criteria for brain death. Say, for example, you have an automobile accident that leaves you in a

---

[27] Example from J.P. Moreland and Scott Rae, *Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000) p. 253. Order from www.str.org

[28] Francis J. Beckwith, *Politically Correct Death: Answering Arguments for Abortion Rights* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993) p. 110. Order from www.str.org.

coma. Some of your friends think your quality of life is gone and want to unplug life support. Others, like your parents, rally to stop them. What should be done? The law in this case is very specific. According to the Uniform Determination of Death Act written into the health and safety codes of each state, the deciding factor is not your current state of brain function, but your inherent state of brain function. For death to occur, there must be an "irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem." Hence, the reversibly comatose are never classified as "non-persons" under our existing legal system despite their current lack of brain function.

- Again, from the moment of conception the unborn entity has the inherent capacity to have a functioning brain. What it lacks is the current capacity. Hence, there is no ethical difference between it and the reversibly comatose, the momentarily unconscious, etc., who enjoy the protection of law despite their current inability to function as persons.

4. **Kinsley's functionalism results in savage inequality**. He writes: "An embryo feels nothing, thinks nothing, cannot suffer, and is not aware of its own existence. Yet opponents of stem-cell research would allow real people, who can suffer, to do so in service of the abstract principle that embryos are people too." Not to be outdone, ethicist **Peter Singer** of Princeton University takes Kinsley's rhetoric to its logical conclusion: infanticide. "Human babies are not born self-aware, or capable of grasping that they exist over time. They are not persons." Therefore, "the life of a newborn is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee."[29] The logic of both men is deeply flawed and troubling.

   - It is one thing to say that critical thinking distinguishes us as human persons. It is quite another to say that your right to live depends on how intelligent you are. Yet, if Kinsley and Singer are correct that rationality and self-consciousness define the morally significant person, then why shouldn't greater rationality make you more of a person? Consequently, the intellectually and artistically gifted would be free to maximize their pleasure at the expense of those less intelligent. The all-important question becomes, What kind of mind merits personhood and who gets to decide who qualifies? Do smart and articulate people have the right to define the small and vulnerable out of existence simply because they are in the way and cannot defend themselves? By embracing embryo stem cell research, Senator Harkin and Michael Kinsley have violated the very principle that once made the Democratic Party great: its basic commitment to protect the weakest and most vulnerable members of the human community. As stated earlier, we used to discriminate on the basis of skin color and gender. Now, we discriminate on the basis of size,

[29] Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, first ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) pp. 122-3.

level of development, and intelligence. We've simply swapped one form of discrimination for another.

- Furthermore, if their functionalist view is true, personhood could be expressed by a **bell curve** in which human beings move toward full personhood in their early years, reach full personhood during their middle years (when they reach their intellectual peaks), then gradually lose personhood as they age. Presumably, your rights as a person would increase, stabilize, and then decrease in the process.

- **Abraham Lincoln** once challenged an imaginary proponent of slavery by noting that there was nothing which could be said to question the humanity of blacks that would not also apply to many whites as well:

  > You say 'A' is white and 'B' is black. It is color, then: the lighter having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule, you are a slave to the first man you meet with a fairer skin than your own.
  >
  > You do not mean color exactly—You mean the whites are intellectually the superiors of the blacks, and therefore have the right to enslave them? Take care again: By this rule you are to be a slave to the first man you meet with an intellect superior to your own.
  >
  > But you say it is a question of interest, and, if you can make it your interest, you have the right to enslave another. Very well. And if he can make it his interest, he has the right to enslave you.[30]

- In the same way, I know of no argument used to dehumanize the embryo that would not also call into question the humanity of many people walking about outside of the womb. Human beings do not lose their value because of physical appearances or functional abilities. They are valuable for other reasons.

5. **Kinsley confuses *intrinsic* human value with *instrumental* human value**. Why should anyone accept the claim that higher mental function bestows value (i.e. personhood) on those who have it?[31] Proponents of ESCR (and elective abortion) can give only two possible answers: 1) Higher brain function bestows value in that those who have it are carriers or recipients of what is actually valuable (i.e. higher brain function). In that case, the entity itself (in this case, the unborn) is not intrinsically

---

[30] *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (Rutgers University Press, 1953) vol. II, p. 222

[31] Material in this section adapted from Patrick Lee, *Abortion and Unborn Human Life* (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press in America, 1996) pp. 26-27. Order from www.amazon.com

valuable, but rather the mental states themselves are. Hence, the entity that possesses higher brain function is only instrumentally valuable, not intrinsically valuable. 2) Having a capacity for higher mental function means that the entity itself is intrinsically valuable. Both these views fail to justify Kinsley's functionalism.

- In #1 above, it cannot be true that persons are merely vehicles for what is truly valuable—in this case, higher brain function. If that were the case, the basic moral rule would be to simply maximize the occurrence of higher mental states. For example, it would not be morally wrong to kill one child, of any age, if doing so would enable parents to have two children in the future—thus replacing one carrier of higher mental function with two. But this is absurd. Hence, higher mental function is not intrinsically valuable, only instrumentally valuable. It derives whatever value it has because it resides in human beings that are intrinsically valuable.

- However, if the entity itself is intrinsically valuable (#2 above), then it must be so from the moment it exists. Nothing can be added to make it valuable.

B. **Flaw #2: Kinsley and other proponents of ESCR equivocate on the question of personal identity**. Is Michael Kinsley the adult journalist identical to Michael Kinsley the fetus? That is to say, Is he the same person though his body has changed over time? According to Kinsley, the answer is no. "That we each start out as something less than human, that the transformation takes place gradually, but that it's morally acceptable to draw a line somewhere other than the very beginning, [is not] just acceptable, but necessary. If faith tells you otherwise, listen. But don't mistake it for the voice of reason."

Peter Singer: "When we kill a newborn, there is no person whose life has begun. When I think of myself as the person I am now, I realize that I did not come into existence until sometime after my birth."[32]

The functionalism of both men cashes out into absurd consequences for personal identity over time.

1. In Singer's case, if *I* do not exist until sometime after *my* birth, in what sense is the birth *mine*? The only way for 'my birth' to be more than a linguistic convention is to admit that 'I' existed before *I* was born, or at least at the time of my birth."[33]

2. For Kinsley, it makes no sense to say "We each start out as something less than human" [What—chopped liver? Caviar?] unless Michael Kinsley

---

[32] Peter Singer and Helga Kuhse, *Should the Baby Live?* (New York: Oxford Press, 1985) p. 133.

[33] Scott Rae and Paul Cox, *Bioethics: A Christian Approach in a Pluralistic Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) p. 169. Order from www.amazon.com

the embryo is a different entity than what he is now. But if that's the case, he didn't "start out as something less than human," some other entity did. However, if Michael Kinsley the embryo is identical to Michael Kinsley the adult journalist (i.e. is the same person), then the only difference is one of *function*, not *nature* or essence.

3. Put differently, if I am merely a collection of parts which becomes valuable when important part, X, is added, then at no one moment am I identical to "myself" in a previous moment or future moment, for "I" am always losing and gaining parts.

4. Pro-life advocates argue that Scott Klusendorf the embryo/fetus is identical to Scott Klusendorf the adult because I possess a **human nature** that allows me to maintain my identity over time and through bodily change. I may lose my ability to think critically, but as long as I am still alive, I remain myself because I have a human nature. Hence, it is the underlying essence (or nature) of a thing, not its functional abilities, that determines what it is.

5. Frank Beckwith offers this example: Your **Uncle Jed** is in a terrible car accident that leaves him in a coma from which he does not emerge for two years. Is Uncle Jed before the coma identical to Uncle Jed after? Is he the same person? Could doctors have killed him during his extended sleep because he was not functioning as one? If Singer and Kinsley hold to the functional view of human persons, it would be difficult to say why it would be wrong to kill Uncle Jed while he is comatose. Yet clearly, it would be morally wrong to kill him while in that state because although he cannot currently function as a person, he still has the inherent capacity to do so.

   Kinsley and Singer might object that unlike the embryo, Uncle Jed *once did* function as a self-aware entity. Therefore, he is still a person (i.e. retains his identity) though he currently cannot function as one. But this objection is flawed, for it admits that something other than self-awareness defines personhood. For to claim that a human person can be functionally self-aware, become non-self aware, and then return a state of self-awareness assumes there is some underlying personal unity to this individual that allows him to maintain his identity while unconscious (i.e. while he is unable to function as a person). If not, then we must make the bizarre claim that a new person pops into existence once uncle Jed wakes up from his coma.

6. Put simply, Uncle Jed before the coma is identical to Uncle Jed after. He is the same person. The only difference is one of *function* (ability), not *essence* or nature. The same is true of Scott Klusendorf the fetus and Scott Klusendorf the adult. My abilities and my body have changed as I've developed, but I am identical to the fetus I once was because I have a human nature that allows me to maintain my identity through time and

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

change. That human nature is present from the moment I begin to exist. If I am wrong about this, then you are literally not the same person you were five years ago when your body was made up of different physical stuff. Sure, you have changed, but it is you who changed. Your thoughts and memories cannot exist unless you first exist. You can exist without them (as in the case of Uncle Jed), but they cannot exist without you. Consequently, you are a human person because you possess a human nature, not because you functioned a certain way in the past. From conception forward, the unborn possess that same human nature regardless of their current functional abilities.

7. **To sum up**, Kinsley, Singer, etc. confuse **substance** things, which maintain their identities over time, with **property** things that do not.[34] Property things are nothing more than the sum total of their parts. Take, for example, a table. Remove its legs and you no longer have a table, but a hunk of lumber on the floor. There is no internal organizing principle, or essence (nature), that allows it to maintain its identity when its parts change. Living things, however, are substances that remain what they are though their physical parts may change. A dog that loses its leg, for example, is still a dog because it has a nature that allows it to stay the same entity though it loses or gains parts. The same is true of human beings. Any physical change to your body that does not kill you will not change your essential identity. You remain yourself through that change because you possess a human nature that grounds your identity in something that is non-physical. A human being that never develops his inherent capacity to think abstractly is still a person because he has a human nature. The parts (or functional abilities) do not make the creature. Instead, the kind of being the creature is will determine its functions. From the moment of conception, the unborn are living substances that possess a human nature. That human nature grounds the unborn human's identity through all the developmental stages—zygote, embryo, fetus, newborn, and adult.

C. **Flaw #3: Proponents of ESCR pit science against faith in a manner that distorts both.**

Michael Kinsley: If you think embryo research is wrong because of your religious belief, that's fine. Just don't confuse it with the real world of science. (See quote above)

Britain's Prime Minister **Tony Blair** agrees with Kinsley (defending ESCR): "There is a danger, almost unintentionally, that we become anti-science. Our conviction about what is natural or right should not inhibit the role of science in discovering the truth—rather it should inform our judgment about the implications and consequences of the truth science uncovers. [We will] not

[34] For an extended discussion of this point, see Koukl, *Precious Unborn Human Persons*, pp. 28-32, and Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*, pp. 70-85. Both can be ordered from www.str.org.

stand by as successful British science once more ends up being manufactured abroad."[35]

Senator **Tom Harkin** told President Clinton that when it comes to ESCR, there should be no limits to scientific research. When Clinton previously urged congress to ban embryo cloning, Harkin exploded: "Take your ranks alongside Pope Paul V who in 1616 tried to stop Galileo."[36]

The argument of Blair, Kinsley, and Harkin is clear and to the point: We should never let moral concerns stop scientific progress. Science is the measure of all truth. Their argument assumes **scientism**, the belief that science, and science alone, defines truth. All other propositions, including moral ones, are nothing but private religious belief or subjective opinion. Their logic is self-refuting and intellectually dishonest.

1. First, to say that *science* is the only truth is *not* a scientific statement, but a *philosophical* one. Hence, the statement is self-refuting. Furthermore, we know many things to be true that are not scientific. For example, we know it is wrong to torture toddlers for fun or lynch homosexuals to ease our depression. These statements express moral truths, not scientific ones

2. Second, if Blair is correct that moral concerns about right and wrong should not impede scientific progress, then how do we condemn Hitler for using Jews for grisly medical experiments? The research was, after all, providing scientific breakthroughs designed to benefit Germans suffering from illness. Hitler's goal was the same as Blair's: make his nation the leader in scientific discovery, regardless of moral concerns.

3. Third, true science and true faith are not at odds in the stem-cell debate. Rather, conflicting worldviews are. When Kinsley says science and faith conflict, he should first define his terms. Everything depends on what you mean by "science" and what you mean by "faith."[37] If **science** means an objective investigation of the facts, there is no conflict between medical progress and moral principle. First, we learn that the embryo is human from the point of conception. Second, we discover we can treat the sick without killing the vulnerable. If, however, science means ruling out evidence that contests a physicalist worldview, then it does indeed conflict with faith. Why not experiment on embryos if human beings are nothing more than the sum total of their physical parts and properties? **Problem for the physicalist:** The belief that human beings must *function* as persons in order to *be* persons is not a scientific assertion, but

---

35 "Don't turn Against Science, Blair Warns Protesters," *London Daily Telegraph*, November 18, 2000 http://www.telegraph.co.uk./et?ac=000118613908976&rtmo=as3HJxsL.../nsci18.htm

36 Cited in Lori Andrews, "Embryos Under the Knife," *Salon Magazine*, August 21, 2000. http://www.salonmag.com/health/feature/2000/08/21stem_cell/print.html

37 Greg Koukl develops this theme in his presentation, "Science and Faith: Are they Compatible." Order the audio tapes and lecture notes from www.str.org

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

a philosophic and moral one. It disqualifies the human embryo based on one's predetermined philosophic worldview, not objective evidence.

4. If **faith** means a blind leap in the dark with no regard for evidence, then yes, science and faith conflict. However, the Biblical definition of "faith" is not an irrational leap, but faith based on evidence (Heb. 11:1). When we examine the evidence, we find two things are true: 1) Human embryos do not contain human life, they *are* human life. Hence, it is Kinsley and Harkin who distort scientific evidence, not pro-lifers; and 2) we do not need to kill embryonic humans to treat our diseases.

5. **Junk Science: Proponents of ESCR have redefined the beginning of human life**. They assert that implantation, not conception, confers and defines life. Because human embryos will be destroyed prior to implantation (indeed, laws mandate they must be), there is no loss of human life and hence no reason to oppose ESCR.

   - **Michael Kinsley**: "The beginning of human life is not a factual question....human life is a label we confer."[38]

   - **American Medical News** (21/11/2000): "Unlike drugs such as RU 486 (mifepristone) and methotrexate, which terminate pregnancy, emergency contraceptives prevent pregnancy from occurring by altering the lining of the endomentrium and inhibiting the implantation of a fertilized egg."[39]

   - **Dr. John Polkinghorn, Church of England**: "[Therapeutic cloning] can be readily fenced off from reproductive cloning" [i.e. coning of human beings]. How? By using the force of law to demand that ALL cloned embryos be killed prior to implantation, thus preventing the development of a child. Polkinghorn attacks the Catholic Church for its "absolutist" view that embryos are human from conception. What scientific evidence does Polkinghorn present to say life does not begin at conception? None. He appeals to emotion: "No one seems to suggest holding a funeral service for an embryo that failed to implant and was lost." [**Note to self**: Does the fact that I would grieve the loss of my own son more than I would the thousands who die daily in third-world countries mean that those entities are not human?]

   This is not science; its revisionism based on one's worldview:

   - There is no longer any doubt that individual human life begins at conception. Dr. **Landrum Shettles**, the first scientist to achieve conception in a test tube, writes that conception not only confers life,

---

38 Kinsley, "Reason, Faith, and Stem Cells," http://slate.msn.com/Readme/00-08-28/Readme.asp

39 Deborah Shelton, "Wider Availability Urged for Emergency Contraceptives," *American Medical News*, December 11, 2000. http://ama-assn.org/sci-pubs/amnews/pick_00/hlsa1211.htm

it "defines" life.[40] Prior to his abortion advocacy, former Planned Parenthood President Dr. **Alan Guttmacher** was perplexed that anyone, much less a medical doctor, would question this. "This all seems so simple and evident that it is difficult to picture a time when it wasn't part of the common knowledge," he wrote in his book *Life in the Making.*[41]

- Pro-life advocates consider their position scientifically sound for at least two reasons.

  Reason #1: life **The unborn human is not merely "capable" of human life (Kinsley's claim); it is human**. It is genetically distinct from its parents. Unlike sperm and ovum, the zygote possesses the active (inherent) capacity to develop itself into an embryo, fetus, infant, child, and adult. True, sperm and egg are human cellular material, but left to themselves, they will never become a human being. But what the zygote needs to function as a self-integrating human organism it already has. Hence, what actually comes into existence at conception is not a "fertilized egg" (sperm and ovum cease to be at conception) or a mere clump of human cells, but a distinct, unified, self-integrating human organism. All genetic material needed to drive the unborn's development is there.

  That is to say, at no point does the distinct organism that came into being undergo a "substantial change" or change of nature. It is human and will remain so. It is an immature human, as is an infant, but a human being nonetheless. Living things do not become entirely different creatures in the process of changing their form. Rather, they develop according to a certain physical pattern precisely because of the kind of being they already are. The unborn, therefore, is not a potential human, but a human with great potential. It is a potential teenager, adult, and perhaps a lawyer. But it is not a potential human. Living things do not change from one kind of being into another over time. They only change their form. What they are stays the same.

  Reason #2: **The unborn entity has human parents**. The law of biogenesis states that each living thing reproduces after its own kind. That is to say, dogs beget dogs, cats beget cats, frogs beget frogs, etc. To find out what something is, simply ask, "What are its parents?" According to the law of biogenesis, human parents can only produce human offspring, never goldfish as Kinsley argues.[42]

---

[40] Landrum Shettles, *Rites of Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) p. 27.

[41] Alan Guttmacher, *Life in the Making: The Story of Human Procreation* (New York: Viking Press, 1933) p.3

[42] Greg Koukl develops this in *Precious Unborn Human Persons* (San Pedro: Stand to Reason Press, 1999) pp. 22-23. Order at www.str.org

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

- If you reject the scientific evidence I have presented for the humanity of the unborn, you must explain two things. First, you must say what the unborn entity *actually* is. It is not enough to say that it is potential life. Potential does not exist in the abstract. A potential X must be an actual Y. So what is the unborn actually? A dog? A fish? A frog? An amphibian? Furthermore, you must explain how two human beings can create a separate being that is not human—in clear violation of the law of biogenesis—but later becomes one.

D. **Flaw #4: Proponents of ESCR ignore moral arguments against their position**.

Despite the alleged benefit to patients, ESCR is morally problematic for at least five reasons.

1. **ESCR is morally problematic because you must kill the embryo to harvest its stem cells**. If the embryo is a human person, killing it to benefit others is a clear-cut evil. It treats a distinct human being, with his or her own inherent moral worth, as nothing more than a disposable instrument to be used for someone else's benefit.

   Advocates of ESCR reply that research would be limited to those embryos scheduled to die anyway, specifically, ones leftover from invitro fertilization (i.e. so-called "spare" embryos or "embryos in excess of clinical need") and those slated for elective abortions. In both cases, researchers would secure parental consent before harvesting the cells.

   Critics of ESCR are quick to point out that this turns the nature of parental consent on its head. Following the Nuremberg Trials in 1948, the United States joined several nations in publishing ethical protocols for human experimentation. Those protocols clearly state that no human can be subjected to medical experiments without his or her full knowledge and consent.[43] If that individual cannot give consent, a parent or guardian/protector can be appointed to make the decision. However, no experiment should be conducted where there is an *a priori* reason to believe that death or disabling injury will occur. Concern for the interests of the subject must always prevail over the interest of science and society. When a mother consents to an elective abortion or the discarding of leftover embryos, she abdicates her parental role as protector of the child's best interest. She has, in fact, signed her child's death warrant. Therefore, neither she nor anyone else can give authentic consent to destructive research because there is no honest attempt to serve the best interest of the child.

---

43 *Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10*, Vol. 2, Nuremberg, October 1946 - April 1949. (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1949). pp. 181-182. http://helix.nih.gov:8001/ohsr/nuremburg.php3

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

Furthermore, the claim that research is justified because "these embryos are going to die anyway" is specious. We all die sometime. Do those of us who are going to die later have the right to kill those who will die sooner? Even if an individual's death is imminent, we still do not have a license to use him for lethal experiments. We cannot, for example, conduct experiments upon death-row prisoners or harvest their organs without their consent. Nor can we extract body parts from mortally wounded soldiers while they are dying on the battlefield.

2. **ESCR is morally problematic because an evil means is used to secure a good end.** In essence, accepting embryonic stem cells obtained through elective abortion makes one an accomplice to a crime after the fact. Unlike adult organ donations, the death of the embryo is intentionally caused. The act of removing the stem cells actually causes the death of the embryo. This is hardly the same as when organs are recovered from someone killed in a tragic accident. Consider the case of a hospital that becomes the beneficiary of a gang of killers who supply it with fresh cadavers. Surely one could question the moral appropriateness of the hospital's continuing cooperation with the suppliers. Or, as Scott Rae points out, what about a banker who regards the drug trade as morally wrong, yet agrees to accept drug money to finance housing for the poor? The banker in this case would be involved in complicity with the drug trade, even though he is not involved with the actual sale of narcotics.[44]

   German doctors convicted at the Nuremberg Trials argued passionately that they were only using the brains of Jews for the common good. They claimed that SS troops, not doctors, killed the Jews. Therefore, physicians had a moral imperative to make beneficial use of bodies the SS troops supplied them. The Court at Nuremberg rejected this claim. In the United States today, the *New England Journal of Medicine* and nearly every other peer-reviewed journal refuses to publish any results form the Nazi experiments because of the nature of the crimes committed.

3. **ESCR is morally problematic because it defines human life subjectively, stripping all human beings, born and unborn, of inherent dignity**. Michael Kinsley writes, "The beginning of human life is not a factual question,...but a label we confer." What Kinsley means: The strong and independent have the right to define the small and vulnerable out of existence. Might makes right. Government policy defines persons.

   - **Traditional American Jurisprudence** (as grounded in the *Declaration of Independence*): Government is not an absolute

[44] Scott Rae, "Spare Parts from the Unborn?" *Christian Research Journal*, Fall, 1991. Revised 1994. See also Paul Ranalli, "An Ethical Free Fall," *University of Toronto Magazine,* May 15, 2000.
http://www.equip.org/free/DE192.htm
http://www.newsandevents.utoronto.ca/bin/thoughts/forum000515.asp

sovereign whose fiat creates rights. Rather, human beings exist prior to the state and have certain rights simply because they are biologically human.

Examples:

- *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925): Court declared unconstitutional an Oregon law requiring that children be sent to public school. "The child," wrote Justice McReynolds, "is not the mere creature of the state." The parents had an inherent right to determine their child's education—and that right was not a mere creation of the state!

- *Loving v. Virginia* (1967): Court declared unconstitutional a Virginia statute forbidding interracial marriage. Chief Justice Warren: "Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not to marry, a person of another race resides with the individual and cannot be infringed on by the State." The right to marry exists prior to the state and is not dependent on it.

Hans Kelson's jurisprudence: The legal order is the source of all rights. "The physical person is, thus, no natural reality, but a construction of juristic thinking." (i.e. the state defines who is and is not a person, who does and does not have rights). If the state says you are not a person, you don't exist.

Examples:

- *Bryn v. New York City Health and Hospitals* (1972): Judge Charles Breitel: although the unborn in the womb were "human" and "unquestionably alive, it is not true that the legal order corresponds to the natural order." Who was a legal person was for the law, not biology, to say.

- **Justice Adrian Burke** (dissenting): Invoked *Declaration of Independence* to argue that all men are created equal with inalienable liberties that precede the state and arise from a source superior to it.

- *Roe v. Wade*: Justice Blackmun ignored biological evidence for unborn and simply declared unborn were not persons in the whole sense (potential life). Personhood was not a question of *fact*, but *fiat*, and only the Court's counted.

- *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992): In defense of abortion, the Supreme Court majority stated: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of the universe, and the mystery of human life." Therefore, are we to conclude that a Satan worshipping parent, who believes that life begins at age two, can define his newborn out of existence if that's his concept of "life?"

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

DANGER: *Your rights flow from your human nature. None of them have security if "human life is a label we confer," or if power rests with the 9 members of the Supreme Court to define you out of existence.*

4. **ESCR is morally problematic because the distinction between "spare" embryos and "research" embryos is morally incoherent.**. The NIH panel insists that human embryos deserve "profound respect," though destroying them for research purposes is not wrong. To hedge its incoherent position, the 1994 NIH panel proposed that destructive harvesting of cells be limited to so-called "spare embryos" from fertility clinics (which the NIH now calls embryos "in excess of clinical need"). Panelists insisted this was less immoral than creating embryos specifically for research. Congress in 1996, however, soundly rejected the distinction, with the House of Representatives voting 256-167 to deny federally sponsored research on any human embryo.

   They were right to do so. Morally, if it is wrong to create human embryos for destructive research, that is largely because destroying embryos for research purposes is *itself* an egregious moral wrong. It treats a distinct human being, with inestimable moral worth, as nothing more than a disposable instrument for someone else's benefit.

   Conversely, if one takes the view that human embryos have no inherent moral worth—that their value is purely instrumental—then why not create them solely for destructive research? ABC News ran a story four years ago about a woman whose father was suffering from Parkinson's Disease. Having heard that brain cells from aborted babies could be used to treat the disease, she sought to conceive a child for the express purpose of aborting it four months later so its body parts could be used to treat her father. The NIH panel strictly forbids using tissue this way, but on what moral grounds? If the human embryo or fetus has no inherent worth, why not decide in advance that its sole purpose is to treat others?

5. **ESCR is morally problematic because there is evidence it could enhance abortion's image as a moral and social good**. At a minimum, it will convince some women that killing their unborn offspring redeems a desperate situation. While ESCR may not dramatically increase abortion rates among women not inclined to abort (pro-life advocates must be careful to not overstate their case here), it could influence those who are undecided. Research shows tremendous ambivalence among women facing crisis pregnancy, with many suffering intense anxiety in the 24 hours before the abortion.[45] The prospect of "redeeming the abortion" to provide tissue for someone else throws a powerful motivation into a psychologically complex situation. A 1995 study by the Joint Centre for Bioethics at the University of Toronto found

[45] Michael Bracken, *et al,* "Abortion, Adoption or Motherhood: An Empirical Study of Decision Making During Pregnancy," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 130 (1978): 256-57. http://www.mosby.com

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

that, among women who would consider abortion, 17 percent would be more likely to have one if fetal tissue could be donated for medical use.[46] When one considers the 1.4 million abortions performed annually in the United States, the increase that may occur is a genuine public health concern.

E. **Flaw #5: The alleged moral neutrality of ESCR proponents is not neutrality at all, but compliance** in the act of destroying one human being so that another may benefit.

1. **NIH Embryo Panel and alleged moral neutrality**: The current debate over embryo research began in August 1993 when the National Institutes for Health (NIH) requested panel discussions for the purpose of issuing ethically and legally appropriate guidelines for the controversial research.[47] The NIH panel sought to sidestep the question of fetal (or embryo) personhood by claiming a neutral posture toward it. Despite its rhetoric, the panel's position was anything but neutral. Francis J. Beckwith explains:

> The main ethical concern for the panel was the moral permissibility of creating human embryos for the sole purpose of experimenting on them. After hearing thousands of hours of testimony by experts on all sides of the debate, the panel concluded in its final report that some research was acceptable for federal support, some warranted further review, and some was unacceptable. But what is remarkable is how the panel attempted to sidestep the issue of personhood, apparently believing that it was possible to make policy without addressing it. In the first 300 words of the report's executive summary, the panel writes that "it conducted its deliberations in terms that were independent of a particular religious or philosophical perspective." Yet, the panel supported federal funding of research on the preimplanted embryo on the basis that "it does not have the same moral status as infants and children" because it lacks "developmental individuation . . ., the lack of even the possibility of sentience and most other qualities considered relevant to the moral status of persons, and the very high rate of natural mortality at this stage.' Clearly, despite its earlier disclaimer that it would propose recommendations "independent" of any perspective, the panel affirmed (and argued for) a policy that is, by its own admission, dependent on a philosophical perspective, for it was employed by the

---

[46] Michael Bracken, *et al,* "Abortion, Adoption or Motherhood: An Empirical Study of Decision Making During Pregnancy," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 130 (1978): 256-57. http://www.mosby.com

[47] *Report of the Human Embryo Research Panel* (Washington, DC: National Institutes for Health, 27 September, 1994) pp. 49-50. http://www.nih.gov

panel to distinguish between those beings who are and who are not members of the moral community of persons.[48]

2. In other words, the panel, in supporting destructive embryo research, did in fact take a philosophical position on the question of who is and is not a person. It concluded that embryos were not. This is hardly neutral.

3. **Clinton Administration and alleged moral neutrality**: Since 1996, the U.S. Congress has banned the use of federal tax dollars for destructive embryo research. In July of 1999, the Department of Health and Human Services, under direction from President Clinton, defied the congressional ban. The HHS lawyers argued that because no federal money will be used to kill the embryos (private funds will do that), federal money may be used to experiment on them once they are dead. In other words, the HHS interpretation makes a distinction between destroying the embryo and using embryos that were destroyed, thereby allowing research on human embryos with taxpayer dollars.[49]

   Douglas Johnson, legislative director for the National Right to Life Committee, rejects this logic. "If we had a law that barred research in which porpoises were killed, no one would entertain for five seconds that a federal agency could arrange for someone else to kill the porpoises and then proceed to use them in research."[50]

4. **The March of Dimes and Moral Neutrality—**Throughout the debate over fetal tissue research and ESCR, the March of Dimes, which supports and funds destructive embryo research, has declared itself neutral on the philosophical questions surrounding the abortion controversy.

   However, the alleged MOD neutrality is not neutrality at all. The morality of abortion pivots on just one question: Is the fetus (or embryo) a human person? If so, research on human embryos should be conducted within the same guidelines we use for other children who, because of immaturity, cannot consent to treatment themselves. That is to say, the research must personally benefit the embryo and place it at no significant risk. If, on the other hand, embryos are not human persons, killing them for destructive research requires no more justification than pulling a tooth.

---

[48] Francis J. Beckwith, "Abortion, Bioethics, and Personhood: A Philosophical Reflection," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 4.1 (2000) 16-25.
http://www.cbhd.org/resources/aps/beckwith-personhood.htm

[49] Rick Weiss, "NIH to Fund Controversial Research on Human Stem Cells," The *Washington Post*, January 20, 1999. Cited in Hannah Vick, "Embryonic Stem Cell Research: Ethically Wrong Treatment of the Tiniest of Humans," Concerned Women for America, May 2000.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/daily/jan99/stemcells20.htm
http://www.cwfa.org/library/life/2000-05_pp_stem-cell.shtml

[50] National Right to Life Committee Press Release, August 23, 2000.
http://www.prolifeinfo.org/news033.html

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

By agreeing with the NIH panel that human embryos are fitting subjects for destructive research, the MOD is taking a position that embryos do not deserve the same protections as do toddlers or other human persons.[51] The MOD, for example, would never fund destructive medical research on two-year olds scheduled for execution by a totalitarian regime. Hence, the MOD, in supporting such research on human embryos, is taking a position that embryos are not the moral equivalent of fully human toddlers. This is hardly a neutral position.

Suppose a 19th century medical school delivered this opinion on the issue of slavery: "We take no position on the morality of owning slaves. We are neutral. However, in our quest to cure many diseases, we fund many groups that conduct medical experiments on those African American slaves scheduled for execution. Rest assured: We do not pay money for these groups to kill slaves. They must use private funds for that. We pay only for the beneficial research they conduct after the slave is killed. In fact, we think slaves deserve profound respect. However, they do not carry the same moral status as white people. Once the slaves are executed, it would be morally wrong to let all that tissue go to waste. Remember this: These slaves are going to die anyway and we don't pay people to kill them. We simply fund the research after the fact."

Would anyone in America today consider this a "neutral" position on slavery? Clearly, the 19th century medical school would be complicit in the deaths of those executed slaves. By funding the research, it would be taking a position that black slaves are the sorts of beings that can be killed and treated as property. The message would be clear: Blacks are not full-fledged members of the human community.

In fact, the NIH guidelines supported by the MOD specifically demean the value of the human embryo. The guidelines tell researchers to assure parents that their "early human embryos...will not survive the experiment, but "will be handled respectfully, as is appropriate for all human tissue used in research."[52] In short, live human embryos are dismissed as mere tissue to be destroyed for useful cells.

The NIH justifies this destruction in part as a humane alternative to animal research. In fact, PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) is now paying research labs $250,000 if they will use human embryos for toxicity tests instead of mice.[53] Thanks to the NIH

---

[51] The MOD signed the Stem Cell Letter to House and Senate Appropriations Committees, July 29, 1999. Letter requests funding for embryonic stem cell research; http://www.aamc.org/advocacy/corres/research/stmcell2.htm

[52] "Draft National Institutes of Health Guidelines for Research Involving Human Pluripotent Stem Cells" (December 1999), *Federal Register*, December 2, 1999, pp. 67576-91. http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=1999_register&docid=99-31339-filed

[53] Joseph Farah, "Sacrificing Human Beings to Save Animals?" World Net Daily http://www.worldnetdaily.com/bluesky_exnews/20000110_xex_sacrificing_.shtml

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

guidelines, the human embryo now ranks lower in status than a laboratory rat.

Reasonable persons should commend the March of Dimes for its laudable work improving the health of babies, preventing birth defects, and reducing infant mortality. These are good and noble actions.

But good deeds do not atone for bad ones. By embracing fetal tissue research and destructive embryo research, the March of Dimes has violated the principle that made it a great organization: its basic commitment to assist the small, weak, and defenseless. Its unfortunate that this great organization would treat the most vulnerable members of the human community, the unborn, as nothing more than disposable instruments to be used for someone else's benefit.

F. Flaw #6: Proponents of ESCR downplay (and sometimes, ignore) ethical alternatives to ESCR

Supporters of ESCR, like actor Christopher Reeve, charge that embryonic stem cells are needed because adult stem cells are not "pluripotent" (i.e. capable of transforming into other types of cells used to grow new organs, etc.) However, recent peer-reviewed evidence disputes Mr. Reeve's claim.

Startling new research indicates that we can treat the sick without killing the most vulnerable members of the human community. We now know that adult stem cells are far more effective at treating disease than previously thought. Unlike ESCR, we can extract these cells without killing the donor.

1. **Adult bone marrow stem cells can provide an abundant and accessible supply of neural cells for transplant**. The reverse is also true: Adult neural cells transform themselves when transplanted into other parts of the body. In both cases, these stem cells are thought to be "pluripotent," meaning that upon transplantation, they can differentiate and become other tissue as needed for the body. Because these cells are obtained from the patient's own body, they are a perfect genetic match, which means there is no risk of tissue rejection by the body.

    - ***Journal of Neuroscience Research*** (July 31, 2000): Adult bone marrow stem cells can be grown into neural stem cells for the brain and spinal cord, raising the likelihood that treatment for Alzheimer's Disease and Parkinson's Disease can be pursued without killing human embryos. According to researchers, adult stem cells found in the bone marrow can be coaxed to provide "an abundant and accessible" supply of nerve cells for the brain. The authors say this confirms earlier studies suggesting that adult stem cells "may be less restricted than was previously thought"—that they can indeed be

"pluripotent" (i.e. able to develop into other tissue for growing organs or repairing body parts). Because these stem cells come from the patient's own bone marrow, there is no risk of the body rejecting the tissue.[54]

- ***Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*** (September 14, 1999): Stem cells taken from the bone marrow of adult mice become nerve cells when inserted into the brains of newborn mice, a finding researchers say is promising for the treatment of Alzheimer's Disease and other neurological diseases. The adult cells appeared to have the properties of embryonic stem cells—underdeveloped cells that can become any type of cell in the body. Once they are multiplied, these bone marrow stem cells can be transplanted to cure several neurological disorders.[55]

- ***Science*** (June 2, 2000): Adult neural stem cells are shown to have broad differentiation abilities. Previously, researchers thought these neural cells were limited to reproducing cells identical to the organs from which they came. This study demonstrates that adult neural cells have a very broad developmental capacity and may potentially be used to generate a variety of cell types for transplantation in different diseases.[56]

- ***British Medical Journal*** (January 30, 1999): Adult neural Stem Cells are redefineable and can "reinvent" themselves when transplanted. In fact, researchers found that adult stem cells were as effective in reconstituting the immune system as fetal neural stem cells. In addition, the problem of immune rejection can be circumvented when an individual's own cells are used. The article states that "the need for fetal cells as a source of stem cells for medical research may soon be eclipsed by the more readily available and less controversial adult stem cells."[57]

---

[54] Dale Woodbury, Emily Schwarz, Darwin Prockop, Ira Black, "Adult Rat and Human Bone Marrow Stromal Cells Differentiate Into Neurons," *Journal of Neuroscience Research*, July 31, 2000, 61: 364-370. http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgibin/fulltext?ID=72514189&PLACEBO=IE.pdf;
See also Maggie Fox, "Researchers Make Nerve Cells from Bone Marrow," Reuters, August 14, 2000. http://news.excite.com/news/r/ooo814/health-paralysis and "Researchers Grow Brain Stem Cells from Bone Marrow Stem Cells," CNN, August 15, 2000.
http://www.cnn.com/2000/HEALTH/08/15/brain.stemcell/index.html

[55] Gene Kopen, Darwin Procktop, and Donald Phinney, "Marrow Stomal Cells Migrate throughout Forebrain and Cerebellum, and the Differentiate into Astrocytes After Injection Into Neonatal Mouse Brains," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,* vol.96, pp.10711-10716, September 1999. http://www.pnas.org/cgi/reprint/96/19/10711.pdf; see also "Bone Marrow Stem Cells Turn Into Brain Cells in Study," Bloomberg News, September 13, 1999; .http://www.bloomberg.com

[56] Diana Clarke, *et al*, "Generalized Potential of Adult Neural Stem Cells," *Science*, Vol. 228, #5471, June 2, 2000, pp. 1660-1663.
http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/288/5471/1660?maxtosh.../2000

[57] Deborah Josefson, "Adult Stem Cells May be Redifineable*," British Medical Journal,* January 30, 1999. http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/318/7179/282/b

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

- ***Associated Press*** (November 6, 2000): Cadavers can supply versatile brain stem cells that can turn into different kinds of brain and nerve cells. Skin, bones, and just about every other tissue can be coaxed into producing brain cells. Even the body of a 72 year-old man (dead 24 hours) produced bone marrow cells capable of growing nerve cells—the same kind once thought available only from embryos.[58]

2. **Cord blood** (i.e. that taken from the umbilical cord at birth) contains a rich supply of stem cells useful for treating disease.

   - ***Doctor's Guide*** (March 27, 1997): Cord blood stem cells (taken from the umbilical cord after the infant is born) has shown a remarkable ability to treat diseases like leukemia. Researchers insist that the blood remaining in the umbilical cord and placenta following birth is a rich source of stem cells that can be used to treat a number of life-threatening diseases.[59]

   - ***New England Journal of Medicine*** (November 26, 1998): Blood taken from newborn's umbilical cords appears to offer a good source of life saving tissue for cancer victims and others suffering from blood related diseases. Researchers concluded that placental blood is a useful source of allogeneric hematopoietic stem cells for bone marrow reconstitution.

3. **Adult stem cells treat degenerative diseases of the eye**:

   - ***New England Journal of Medicine*** (July 13, 2000): Conditions such as Stevens-Johnson syndrome and chemical burns can severely compromise ocular surfaces of the eye and cause catastrophic vision loss. In this study, lab-grown corneas from adult stem cells reverse damage to the eye once implanted.[60]

   - ***New England Journal of Medicine*** (June 3, 1999): Adult corneal stem cells restore useful vision to patients who were legally blind. Transplants of these cells are used for those with severe ocular-

---

58 "Scientists Have Coaxed New Life Our of Dead Brains," Associated Press, November 6, 2000. http://www.new.omaha.com/index.atp?u_div+3&u_hdg=5&_sid=32934

59 "Umbilical Cord Blood Transplants May Have Significant Health Impact," *Doctor's Guide*, PSL Consulting Group, March 25, 1997;.http://www.pslgroup.com/dg/219ce.htm;

60 Ray Jui-Fang, *et al*, "Reconstruction of Damaged Corneas by Transplantation of Autologous Limbal Epithelial Cells," *New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 343, No. 2, July 13, 2000. http://www.nejm.org/content/2000/0343/0002/0086.asp; see also Ivan Schwab and R. Isseroff, "Bioengineered Corneas—the Promise and the Challenge," *New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 343, No. 2, July 13, 2000. http://www.nejm.org/content/2000/0343/0002/0136.asp

surface disorders. One year after treatment, over half the patients had marked improvements in vision.[61]

- ***Science*** (March 17, 2000): Researchers at the University of Toronto have identified retinal stem cells in the adult mammalian eye, opening the door for retinal regeneration as a possible cure for damaged or diseased eyes. Previously, scientists thought that only fish and amphibians contained retinal stem cells capable of regenerating and making new neurons. The stem cells were under inhibitory control while still in the eye, but proliferate once they are removed.[62]

4. **Adult stem cells treat diabetes and liver disease**:

- ***Nature Medicine*** (March 2000): Researchers at the University of Florida reverse diabetes in mice using adult pancreatic stem cells. The pancreatic stem cells were taken from an adult donor and grown in culture, where they formed small functional organs known as islets of Langerhans (the insulin producing parts of the pancreas). When the cells were injected into the diabetic mice, they began secreting insulin. People with diabetes could one day undergo transplantation of pancreatic stem cells to provide a permanent source of insulin.[63]

- ***Science*** (May 14, 1999): Bone marrow stem cells are manipulated to divide and produce liver cells, giving hope to patients with fulminant hepatic failure (a condition where the liver is unable to repair itself). The new cells could also help alleviate other diseases of the liver and decrease the need for liver transplants. Researchers conclude that cells in the adult organism have a remarkable degree of plasticity."[64]

---

[61] K. Tsubota, *et al*, "Treatment of Severe Ocular-Surface Disorders with Corneal Epithelial Stem-Cell Transplantation," *New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 340, No. 22, June 3, 1999. http://www.nejm.org/content/1999/0340/0022/1697.asp; see also E. Holland and G. Schwartz, "Epithelial Stem-Cell Transplantation for Severe Ocular-Surface Disease," *New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 340, No. 22, June 3, 1999. http://www.nejm.org/content/1999/0340/0022/1752.asp; and Susan Okie, "Tissue Grown in Lab Reverses Damage to Eye," *Washington Post*, July 13, 2000. http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A31044-2000Jul12.html; and Lab-Grown Corneas Restore Sight," BBC News, July 10, 2000; http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/health/newsid_827000/827728.stm

[62] Vincent Tropepe, *et al*, "Retinal Stem Cells in the Adult Mammalian Eye," *Science*, Vol. 287, March 17, 2000. http://www.sciencemag.org; see also Retinal Stem Cells in Adult Eye: Regeneration Possible?" *UniSci,* March 17, 2000. http://unisci.com/stories/20001/0317005.htm

[63] Vijayakumar K. Ramiya, *et al*, "Reversal of Insulin-Dependent Diabetes Using Islets Generated in vitro from Pancreatic Stem Cells," *Nature Medicine*, Vol. 6, No. 3, March 2000. http://www.nature.com/cgitaf/DynaPage.taf?file=/nm/journal/v6/n3/abs/nm0300_278.html; see also Abi Berger, "Transplanted Pancreatic stem Cells can Reverse Diabetes in Mice," *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 320, March 18, 2000. http://www.bmj.com/cgi/reprint/320/7237/736/a.pdf; and Maggie Fox, "Diabetes Reversed in Mice with Stem Cells—Human Tests Next," Reuters, February 28, 2000. http://uk.news.yahoo.com/000229/1/a0wbk.html

[64] B.E. Petersen, *et al*, "Bone Marrow as a Potential Source of Hepatic Oval Cells." *Science,* Vol. 284, May 14 1999; http://www/sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/284/5417/1168?maxtosh…/199;

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

- ***Nature*** (July 20, 2000): Scientists in Great Britain show how adult stem cells from the patient's own transplanted bone marrow can turn into liver tissue. Researchers argue that "Adult stem-cells offer great promise in medicine, as they may generate the full spectrum of cell types needed to repair a damaged organ."[65]

5. **Adult stem cells repair bone marrow, muscle, and skeletal damage**.

- ***Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*** (December 7, 1999): Researchers from Baylor College of Medicine show that cells derived from the muscle of adult mice can become mature cells of all major blood types, and not just muscle cells. After bone marrow transplantation, donor-derived cells were found in the liver, vascular endothelial cells, brain, skeletal muscle, and bone. Furthermore, the muscle cells retained their regenerative potential after bone marrow from one of the six mice was harvested and transplanted into secondary recipients. These findings, taken together with other recent studies, suggest that adult stem cells retain a previously unrecognized degree of plasticity in their commitment and that their differentiation may be influenced more by environment than by lineage.[66]

- ***Nature*** (September 23, 1999): Transplanted bone marrow stem cells (in mice) show promise treating Muscular Dystrophy as well as other diseases where the systematic delivery of therapeutic stem cells to sites throughout the body is critical. The study suggests that the inherent developmental potential of stem cells taken from various tissues or organs may be more similar than previously anticipated. (In other words, these stem cells can grow various kinds of tissue, not just the ones they were taken from.) In the case of dystrophic mice, the introduced cells migrated to muscle, where they produced the missing dystrophin, restoring some function.[67]

---

[65] Nicholas Wright, *et al*, "Cell Differentiation: Hepatocytes from Non-Hepatic Adult Stem Cells," *Nature*, July 20, 2000. http://www.nature.com/cgitaf/DynaPage.taf?file=/nature/journal/v406/n6793/abs/406257a0_fs.html; and David Whitehouse, "Stem Cells Promise Liver Repair," BBC News, July 19, 2000. http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/sci/tech/newsid_841000/841932.stm; and Bill Rosato, "British Scientists Make Liver Cell Breakthrough," Reuters, July 19, 2000. http://www.britannica.com/bcom/reuters/article/print/0,6183,61582,00.html

[66] K. Jackson, *et al*, "Hematopoietic Potential of Stem Cells Isolated From Murine Skeletal Muscle," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 96, December 7, 1999. http://www.pnas.org/cgi/reprint/96/25/14482.pdf; see also "Stem Cells not Bound to Become Any Cell Type," *UniSci*, December 7, 1999.http://unisci.com/stories/19994/1207995.htm

[67] E. Gussoni, *et al*, "Dystrophin Expression in the MDX Mouse Restored by Stem Cell Transplantation," *Nature*, September 23, 1999. http://www.natureasia.com/get.pl5/abstracts/issue990923/abstract990923_390.shtml; see also Ricki Lewis, "A Paradigm Shift in Stem Cell Research?" *The Scientist* 14[5]:1, March 6, 2000. http://www.the-scientist.com/yr2000/mar/lewis_p1_000306.html

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

- ***Science*** (April 2, 1999): Researchers at Osiris Therapeutics and the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine coaxed stem cells from adult bone marrow to develop into cartilage, fat, and bone cells. Once transplanted, these stem cells differentiate into the type of tissue needed to repair injury or disease. [68]

- ***Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*** (March 28, 2000): A new protocol has made it possible to obtain an almost unlimited number of stem cells from a small sample of adult bone marrow. These special type stem cells have the ability to develop into bone cells, cartilage, fat, muscle, and nerve. Dr. Prockop and his team were able to multiply human bone marrow stem cells a billion-fold in just six weeks. Now, cells needed for treating the patient are easily obtained from the same patient (via needle and syringe) and then genetically engineered so they grow rapidly in culture. Because the stem cells retain their potential for differentiation throughout the procedure, they are excellent for treating a number of skeletal diseases, including osteoporosis, muscular dystrophy, and osteoarthritis. They also have potential to treat nervous system disorders such as Parkinson's Disease and Alzheimer's Disease.[69]

V. Summary and Talking Points: Speak like a Liberal

1. Reasonable persons should applaud scientific research aimed at improving the health of the human community. Discovering treatments for diseases of all kinds is a good and noble pursuit.

2. But good deeds do not atone for bad ones. By embracing fetal tissue research and destructive embryo research, political liberalism has violated the principle that once made it a great: its basic commitment to assist the small, weak, and defenseless. It's regrettable that those espousing tolerance and compassion would treat the most vulnerable members of the human community, human embryos, as disposable instruments to be used for someone else's benefit.

3. Funding research that deliberately destroys one human being so another may benefit is not only a serious moral wrong, it is unnecessary. There is

---

[68] Mark Pittenger, *et al*, "Multilineage Potential of Adult Human Mesenchymal Stem Cells," *Science*, Vol. 284, April 2, 1999. http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/284/5411/143; see also Ricki Lewis, "Human Mesenchymal Stem Cells Differentiate in the Lab," *The Scientist* 13[8]:1, April 12, 1999. http://www.the-scientist.com/yr1999/apr/lewis_pl_990412.html

[69] Darwin Prockop, *et al*, "Rapid Expansion of Recycling stem Cells in Cultures of Plastic-Adherent Cells from Human Bone Marrow," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 97, March 28, 2000. http://www.pnas.org/cgi/reprint/97/7/3213.pdf; see also "Unlimited Harvest of stem Cells from Bone Marrow Possible, Repots NIAMS Supported study," National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Disease, *News*, April 2000. http://www.nih.gov/niams/news/spotlight/stemcells.htm

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

no credible evidence that embryonic human beings must lose their lives in order to save ours.

4. The alleged moral neutrality of those supporting ESCR is not neutrality at all. By agreeing that human embryos are fitting subjects for destructive research, ESCR proponents are taking a position that embryos do not deserve the same protections given to newborns or other persons that cannot consent to medical treatment. This is hardly a neutral position.

5. It is now clearer than ever that we can treat the sick without killing the vulnerable. Contrary to what has been repeated again and again, human embryos are not the only source for stem cells. Startling new evidence indicates that adult stem cells are not only effective alternatives to destructive embryo research, but are better at battling disease. In short, the choice between medical progress and moral principle is a false dilemma. We can pursue the cure of disease in morally acceptable ways.

6. Stem cells have been found in a wide variety of adult tissues including the brain, liver, pancreas, and bone marrow. Already, researchers have coaxed stem cells from adult bone marrow into becoming nerve cells that could treat conditions ranging from paralysis to Alzheimer's disease. Stem cells extracted from the patient's own bone marrow are less likely to be rejected than neural cells from foreign sources.

Concluding thought: "In pre-Nazi Germany the following statement of man was frequently quoted: 'The human body contains a sufficient amount of fat to make seven cakes of soap, enough iron to make a medium sized nail, a sufficient amount of phosphorus to equip two thousand match-heads, enough sulfur to rid one's own fleas.' Perhaps there was a connection between this statement and what the Nazis actually did in the extermination camps: to make soap of human flesh."

(*Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism*, from the writings of Abraham J. Heschel, selected, edited and introduced by Fritz A. Rothschild, New York, Free Press, 1959, p. 233)

Review Questions:

1. What dangers are there in defining human beings based on how they look? How have racial bigots used similar pejorative language in the past?
2. Define Embryo Stem Cell Research: How is it accomplished? What role does "therapeutic cloning" play?
3. Why is Michael Kinsley's "parts" view of human persons seriously flawed? In what ways does it result in savage inequality?
4. Explain how Michael Kinsley, Peter Singer, and other advocates of ESCR equivocate on the question of personal identity.
5. List the five ways ESCR is morally problematic. Why is it not morally neutral?
6. What ethical alternatives are there to ESCR? Why are these alternatives promising?

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

Harvesting the Unborn: The Ethics of Embryo Stem Cell Research—Abbreviated outline and Note-Taking Guide

Scott Klusendorf, Stand to Reason

I. **Introduction**: Lessons learned by a 10-year old on a Razor Scooter—We are more than our parts.

II. **Topic**: Are human beings intrinsically valuable or are they nothing more than the sum total of their physical parts and properties? If we are the sum total of our parts, how many must you have to qualify as a person? And who decides if you make the grade?

III. **Significance**: These questions are critical because what's clear to a 10-year old—namely, that humans are more than their parts—has been lost on some of the best minds of our day. The debate over Embryo Stem Cell Research (ESCR) is a case in point.

A. **Senator Tom Harkin** and actress **Mary Tyler Moore**: It's morally permissible to kill human embryos for their stem cells. Why? Because the embryos don't look like us. They look like goldfish. Unfortunately, we humans have a long history of defining people out of existence who don't look like us or are in the way of something we want:

1. "Man in the Zoo" (1906—African Pygmy as the "missing link"):
2. South African heart transplant victim (1967—apartheid atrocities)
3. Gustave Le Bon (women as modestly intelligent apes):
4. Henry Miller, Marquis de Sade (women as parasites)
5. Dr. Warren Hern: (1990—Unwanted fetuses are a "parasitic illness")
6. Planned Parenthood ad (1996): "Babies are loud, smelly, and expensive—unless you want one."

> In short, we used to discriminate on the basis of skin color and gender, but now, with ESCR, we discriminate on the basis of size, level of development, and appearance. We've simply swapped one form of discrimination for another.

B. **Definition** of key terms:

1. **Stem cells**: fast growing, unspecialized cells that can reproduce and grow new organs for the body.
2. **Embryonic Stem Cell Research** (ESCR): Human embryos prior to day 14 are killed so their stem cells can be used to treat others.
3. **Therapeutic cloning**: creating an embryo that is a genetic clone of the patient and using that embryo as a source for stem cells.

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

C. **History of U.S**. involvement in ESCR:

1. 1993-1996: National Institutes for Health (NIH) authorizes panel discussions on the morality of using embryos for treatment. In a bizarre twist of logic, the panel concludes that embryos deserve "profound respect," but we may kill them to benefit others. In response to the panels distorted logic, Congress outlaws federal funding for destructive embryo research in 1996.

2. 1999-2000: The Clinton Administration, in clear defiance of the law [surprise?], authorizes the use of federal funds on grounds that no federal money will be used to kill the embryos, but only to conduct research after the fact. President Bush will likely reverse Clinton's order.

D. **History of British Parliament**: This is *not* science fiction.

1. On December 19, 2000, the House of Commons amends the 1990 Human Fertilization and embryology Act to allow the cloning of human embryos for destructive research.

2. The bill contains an alleged safeguard against cloning human beings: ALL cloned embryos MUST be killed after research so they cannot develop into mature human beings. That's the "safeguard" against ethical abuses.

IV. **Thesis:** If the unborn are fully human, killing them so another may benefit is a serious moral wrong.

The case for ESCR is seriously flawed for at least 6 reasons:

1. It assumes a "parts" view of human persons.
2. It equivocates on the question of personal identity.
3. It is intellectually dishonest: It pits science against faith in a manner that distorts both.
4. It ignores numerous moral considerations.
5. Its alleged moral neutrality is not neutrality at all, but complicity in an immoral act.
6. It downplays ethical alternatives to ESCR that do not entail the destruction of a defenseless human being.

In short, research that destroys one human being so another may benefit is not only a serious moral wrong; it is unnecessary. There is no credible evidence that embryonic human beings must lose their lives in order to save ours. Startling new evidence indicates that adult stem cells are not only effective alternatives to ESCR, but are better at battling disease. The choice between medical progress and moral principle is a false dilemma. We can pursue the cure of disease in morally acceptable ways.

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

A. Flaw #1: Proponents of ESCR assume a "parts" view of human persons, confusing functioning as a person with being one.

1. One can fail to *function* as a person and yet still *be* one (sleepers, etc.)

2. One must *be* a person in order to function as one. (man entering a room)

3. The rights of individuals are not based on their *current* capacities, but on their *inherent* capacities.

4. Functionalism results in savage inequality: If rationality and self-consciousness define the morally significant person, then why shouldn't greater rationality make you more of a person?

5. Functionalism confuses *intrinsic* human value with *instrumental* human value.

B. Flaw #2: Proponents of ESCR equivocate on the question of personal identity.

1. Is Michael Kinsley the embryo the same person as Michael Kinsley the adult journalist? Was *he* ever a zygote?

2. Is Peter Singer at birth identical to Peter Singer 30 days later? If not, in what sense was the birth *his*?

3. Scott Klusendorf the fetus is the same person as Scott Klusendorf the embryo because I have a human nature that grounds my identity through time and change.

4. Uncle Jed: Is he the same person after the coma as before?

5. Substance things versus property things: Which are you?

C. Flaw #3: Proponents of ESCR pit science against faith in a manner that distorts both.

1. **Scientism**: All truth is science truth. All else is private, subjective opinion. (If moral truth does not exist, how do we condemn Hitler for experimenting upon Jews in the name of science?)

2. **Definitions please!** What do you mean by "science" and what do you mean by "faith?" If science means an objective investigation of the evidence, there is no conflict between science and faith on ESCR.

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

D. **Flaw #4: Proponents of ESCR ignore moral arguments against their position.**

ESCR is morally problematic for 5 reasons:

1. You must kill the embryo to harvest its stem cells

2. An evil means is used to secure a good end

3. It defines personhood subjectively, stripping all humans--born and unborn--of inherent dignity and natural rights.

4. The distinction between "spare" and "research" embryos is morally incoherent.

5. ESCR may enhance abortion's image as a social good.

E. Flaw #5: The alleged moral neutrality of ESCR is not neutrality at all, but complicity in an evil act.

1. NIH Embryo Panel and alleged moral neutrality:
2. Clinton Administration and alleged moral neutrality:
3. March of Dimes and alleged moral neutrality:

F. Flaw #6: Proponents of ESCR downplay ethical alternatives.

1. Adult stem cells from bone marrow can grow nerve cells for the brain.
2. Cord blood contains a rich supply of stem cells for treating cancer, etc.
3. Adult stem cells can reverse degenerative diseases of the eye.
4. Adult stem cells can treat diabetes and liver disease.
5. Adult stem cells repair bone and muscle damage.

V. **Summary and Talking Points**—Think Like a Liberal: *Reasonable persons should applaud scientific research aimed at improving the health of the human community. Discovering treatments for diseases of all kinds is a good and noble pursuit. But good deeds do not atone for bad ones. By embracing fetal tissue research and destructive embryo research, political liberalism has violated the principle that once made it great: its basic commitment to assist the small, weak, and defenseless. It's regrettable that those espousing tolerance and compassion would treat the most vulnerable members of the human community, human embryos, as disposable instruments to be used for someone else's benefit. This is not only a serious moral wrong, it is unnecessary. There is no credible evidence that embryonic human beings must lose their lives in order to save ours.*

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON

Email: Scott@str.org • 1-800-2-REASON