

Condemnation of the First Human Cloning

The Vatican Press Office

The Holy See

The original article, which appeared in “The Journal of Regenerative Medicine,” which researchers of Advanced Cell Technology published on November 26, 2001, shows in all its dramatic character the gravity of the event that has occurred: the in vitro production of a human embryo, what is more, of several embryos that were developed respectively until attaining the stage of two, four, and six cells. The event is documented with clear colored pictures taken through a microscope with a scanner, showing the first phases of these human lives, which were not initiated through the fertilization of one ovum with one spermatozoid, but by activating ova with nucleuses of somatic cells.

The authors emphasized that their intention is not to give origin to an individual human but to that which, in their article, is referred to as an “early embryo.” What, then, is an embryo in the initial stage? This is where the bioethical question returns in all its current importance, never quiescent because of truth, regarding when to consider the beginning of human life. In fact, beyond the scientific event, this remains the object of the debate, it being without a doubt — by indication of the researchers themselves — that we are faced here with human embryos, not cells, as some would like to think.

Therefore, the event leads one to confirm forcefully that the beginning of human life cannot be fixed by convention to a certain stage of development of the embryo; in fact, it is fixed already at the first instance of existence of the embryo itself. This is more easily understood in the human way of fertilization between ovum and spermatozoid, but we must also learn to recognize it before an “inhuman” way, as is that of the reprogramming of a somatic nucleus in an ovum cell: with this way one can also give origin to a new life — as, unfortunately, the announced experiment has demonstrated — a life that in any case conserves its dignity as does that of every human life to which existence is given.

Therefore, despite the stated “humanistic” intentions of those who announce surprising cures by following on this road, which passes through the cloning industry,

an objective but firm judgment is necessary, which shows the moral gravity of this project and justifies its unequivocal condemnation. The principle that is introduced, in the name of health and well-being, in fact sanctions a real and proper discrimination among human beings, in virtue of the time of their development (thus an embryo is worth less than a fetus, and a fetus less than a baby, and a baby less than an adult), reversing the moral imperative which instead imposes the maximum tutelage and respect proper to those who are not in a condition to defend and manifest their intrinsic dignity.

Moreover, research on stem cells indicates that other ways can be followed, which are morally licit and valid from the scientific point of view, such as the use of stem cells taken, for example, from an adult individual (there are several types in each one of us), from maternal blood, or from naturally aborted fetuses. This is the way that every honest scientist must follow in order to observe maximum respect for man, namely, for himself.

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