Family Concerns
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MODERN SCIENCE'S GOAL: TO NEGATE THE NUREMBURG TRIBUNAL?

Lessons learned from exploitation of human life in jeopardy

After World War II when the full extent of the Nazi plan to exterminate non-Aryans, especially the Jews, became known, the entire world was horrified. Pictures of the death camps, gas chambers and emaciated inmates shocked and mystified us. How could this have happened right under our noses? Later, when the scope of the atrocities – medical experiments conducted on living human subjects – came to light the world once again had to look inward and begin to deal with man's proclivity to brutality and cold utilitarianism. Alexsandr Solzhenitsyn reminded us after his own bout with the cruelty of man that, "The line separating good and evil passes . . . through every human heart."

The Nuremburg trials were conducted after the war and those responsible for the atrocities were punished; in addition, the Nuremberg Code was put into effect – an "ethical fence" around scientific and medical experiments on humans. The Nuremberg Code sums up the ethical tradition of Western civilization regarding experimentation on human subjects. It reflects the dignity, worth and inviolate status of every human being.

- Principle Two states that, "The experiment should be such as to yield fruitful results for the good of society, unprocurable by other methods or means of study, and not random and unnecessary in nature."
- Principle Five of the Code states, "No experiment should be conducted where there is an *a priori* reason to believe that death or disabling injury will occur, except, perhaps in those experiments where the experimental physicians also serve as subjects."
- Principle Five of the code also states that, "Proper preparations should be made and adequate facilities provided to protect the experimental subject against even the remote possibilities of injury, disability or death."

A later document, The World Medical Associations Declaration of Helsinki, as amended in 2002, states, "In medical research on human subjects, considerations related to the well-being of the human subject should take precedence over the interests of science and society (Principle 5). Another principle states, "Medical research is subject to ethical standards that promote respect for all human beings and protect their health and rights. Some research populations are vulnerable and need special protection . . . Special attention is also required for those who cannot give or refuse consent for themselves . . . [And] for those who will not benefit personally from the research (Principle 8); "It is the duty of the physician in medical research to protect the life, health, privacy and dignity of the human subject (Principle 10)

These thoughtful and ethical restrictions on scientists seemingly are taken seriously by scientists all over the world. In fact, the principal author of the National Academy of Science's report on human cloning, Professor Irving L. Weissman, testified before President George W. Bush's Council on Bioethics that it was ethically impermissible to proceed with "reproductive cloning," while it *was* ethically permissible to proceed with "therapeutic cloning." This disingenuous strategy became even more appalling when Weissman explained that so-called "reproductive cloning" was too dangerous and would not comply with the Nuremberg Code, which he admitted was the authoritative test by which cloning research (and all other research) is to be judged. However, he did not feel that cloning for research posed a problem with the code.

The terms "reproductive" and "therapeutic" cloning are misleading. Both are achieved by the same process. The difference is the location of the embryo. Each embryo produced by somatic cell nuclear transfer (cloning) has its full complement of chromosomes to be *Homo sapiens* – 46. This method of reproduction differs from sexual reproduction; however, a human being is the result. Some scientists who promote this type of research say leaving the embryo in a Petri dish rather than implanting in a uterus determines the humanity of the embryo. In other words, it is location, location, location. They also call the end-product of SCNT an "unfertilized egg" or a blastocyst. An "egg or oocyte" has 23 chromosomes because it is a reproductive cell. SCNT removes the nucleus and places a full complement of 46 chromosomes taken from a somatic (body) cell into the egg . . . the egg then is no longer a reproductive cell, but a regular cell that divides and grows into a human being unless interrupted. A blastocyst is a stage of embryonic development.

An embryo from the moment of conception is a live human being that will grow and develop if not interrupted, or as in the case of embryonic stem-cell research, killed and stripped of its pluripotent stem cells.

When one regards this in comparison to the Nazi atrocities, it is not much different except that an embryo at that stage is a tiny human. So not only location has a bearing in some scientist's minds, but also size. As such, it is certainly deserving of protection as stated in the Helsinki Declaration. An embryo cannot give consent to the experimentation; obviously the only way to get stem cells is to kill the embryo; so it is not in the embryo's best interest. In addition, the ultimate good to society has not been proven, nor is it likely to be proven any time soon. The game score of embryonic stem-cell treatments and therapies is zero while adult stem-cells, taken from somatic (body) cells and not harmful to anyone, is now at 67 proven therapies, treatments and cures.

In a recent testimony before the House Federal and State Affairs Committee, Dr. Barbara Atkinson of KU Medical Center stated several times to the committee that the case of the humanity of the embryo is for you to decide. Hitler decided that Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, mentally and physically retarded persons, etc. were not *human*; therefore, he had the right to use them for experimentation. Think about it.