

Nascent human life

La vida humana naciente

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This work, presented in Spanish, was coordinated by Justo Aznar, head of the Department of Clinical Biopathology at La Fe University Hospital and former director of the Bioethics Observatory and the Institute of Life Sciences (Catholic University of Valencia). It was developed using a methodology of two hundred questions and answers with the participation of various specialists who give the work the interdisciplinary perspective it requires.

1. Abstract

This is a serious work that makes a significant effort at synthesis, allowing for a pedagogical understanding of the content, which fo-

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cuses on four main aspects: generalities about the value of human life, conjugal love and fertility, attacks against nascent human life, and biomedical research in regenerative medicine. The teaching of the Church can be considered the compass of the text, and I would highlight the ongoing dialogue between faith and reason that runs through the work from beginning to end.

The interdisciplinary perspective and accessible content that characterizes the text is supported by the prestige and experience of the seventeen contributors to the work, including lawyers (Bellver), philosophers (Postigo), biologists (Pastor), doctors (Aznar), humanists (López Guzmán), theologians (Pérez-Soba), among others who, using a question-and-answer methodology, lead the reader into the desired dialogue on these topics. They respond from 1 to 200 with firm conviction and passion for finding the truth.

The first part is based on five different aspects. It argues the value of human life, the first being Revelation, which perceives human life as a gift from God the Creator and Father. This is consummated in the person and life of Christ, in his words and actions, but above all in his death, where it is revealed. The second is the philosophy that every living being has impregnated in its essence a series of potentialities that it will realize throughout its existence in time, detailing that the terms “person” and “human life” mean substantially the same thing. I can become something in act because in some way I already am it in potency; an embryo is not a person in potency, but a person in act with potentiality. The third, the biological status of the embryo, affirms with certainty that the beginning of the life of a new person occurs at the moment when the zygote is formed with 46 chromosomes and its own genetic identity, with an integrated system capable of regulating itself, a continuous phenomenon and three properties: coordination, continuity, and autonomy. The fourth, the legal status of the embryo, the lack of binding laws on the *nasciturus* prohibits it from being recognized as a person. International realities are diverse, and neither the 14th day of embryonic development nor the completion of implantation represent more than a consensus among a group of experts. The value of life in the

legal sphere must be based on the enactment of laws or the development of public policies that bind embryonic human life. And fifth and last, demographic growth that perceives children as a consumer good, an individualism that allows procreation to be perceived as a risk, the loss of value of the family, and the devaluation of human life.

The second part takes us into the world of fertility and love. The author initially addresses the alliance of marriage as a public and stable covenant that, within conjugal love, expresses sexuality from a broad perspective, not only genitally but also involving personal, psychological, and spiritual aspects. True conjugal love includes self-control and responsible parenthood, which means being responsible for our own capacity to transmit life within this framework. Life is the most precious gift that every living being can possess, and fertility regulation also means responsible regulation that respects the truth and meaning of human sexuality.

Patients' lack of knowledge about artificial methods of human fertility regulation has triggered a social wave of poor-quality and insufficient information. The adverse effects of hormonal contraceptive methods bypass a message that is intentionally not disseminated. The adverse effects, drug interactions, or pathophysiological conditions that have been proven are given little relevance by the global market that these types of drugs reach, and efforts focused on reducing these aspects occupy a large part of the budget in pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics. Mechanical or surgical methods, as well as emergency contraception, are no exception to the argument of this article. On the contrary, in some respects, misinformation leads to erroneous conclusions among patients.

Natural methods of human reproduction recognize the biological potential to give rise to beings of our own species. These alternatives, which initially seek to change the anti-natalist mindset, are based on the recognition of the physiological changes and modifications that occur in each genital cycle. Analysis of biological markers and acting accordingly generate algorithms that have a very competitive sensitivity and specificity, or what is now called the Pearl Index.

In addition to this, communication within marriage and mutual respect are intensified, which means active intervention by parents in the adaptation and construction of circumstances, implying recognition of our nature and who we are.

2. Criticism

Let us continue with the criticism and put what we have analyzed so far back to square one, where the arguments do not focus on defining whether to understand fertility or physiology using a natural method or to go against life with a contraceptive, but rather on first achieving assisted human reproduction. The work provides a scientific and procedural analysis of the techniques that specify in detail the daily size of the embryo during its development, or the reduction of embryos carried out by inserting a needle vaginally or abdominally, guided by ultrasound, which injects potassium chloride into the embryo.

The third and final part of the work details the attacks against nascent human life, that is, it is not enough to ensure that the embryo develops and achieves implantation up to that point, but also before, during, and after, it is subject to imminent dangers. In summary, such attacks in the contemporary world arise excessively and through different mechanisms, starting with pharmacology, the RU-486 abortion pill, the morning-after pill, or the anti-implantation reaction caused by the IUD in the dermis' reaction to copper. Let us now turn to therapeutic cloning, whether for highly valued stem cells, stem cells, or experiments in regenerative medicine, the freezing or thawing processes to which surplus embryos are subjected, or molecular diagnosis, among others.

During the genital cycle, when the uterus is at its most fertile, it contracts to allow sperm to pass through even if there is no sexual intercourse. The egg is one of the largest cells in the body and can be seen with the naked eye. Progesterone promotes a highly bloody environment in the endometrium to encourage implantation. In this

context, 600 mg of mifepristone and 400 mg of misoprostol reduce progesterone levels and cause early uterine contractions that expel the embryonic remains. Frozen embryos and their experimental use pose significant threats to nascent life. To freeze them, the water they contain is replaced by freezing them at -196 degrees Celsius, which keeps them in a state of hibernation. Their ultimate fate raises a number of fundamental bioethical issues that need to be analyzed. Finally, preimplantation genetic diagnosis allows the determination of whether the embryo has any genetic or hereditary diseases, imposing pre-established quality criteria that, if not met, justify the disposal of the embryo as defective or useless.

In conclusion, and due to the urgent need for recognition, the value of human life is unfortunately being lost more and more in the consciousness of our environment and our society. Works such as this one provide clear, first-hand descriptions based on science and the dialogue between faith and reason, allowing the general population to access relevant, cutting-edge information, freeing the common denominator from news or arguments on the subject that can be confusing and vague, not from a dogmatic standpoint but by complementing it with data from various sciences that help us to understand these issues better and more fully.

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