

Tok Journal

The controversy of embryonic stem cell growth and development is rapid amongst the scientific, and ethics community. Embryonic stem cells are the cells found in the blastocyst stage of a cell in embryonic development, that can be repurposed to grow any form of tissues and/or organs with proper programming. With the possibilities that embryonic stem cells offer, scientists all around the world have attempted to do research with them for the next medical advancements. However, there is moral questionability to the research as, in order to do research on them, you must extract the cells from the embryo, essential killing that potential life. In response to this controversy, many state governments have banned the research in their territory, as they find it unethical. For instance, in 2004 Arkansas's congress passed Act 607 which prohibit the creation or destruction of human embryos for medical research. With many political and scientific debates currently revolving around embryonic cell research, the controversy has shifted to, is this type of research morally ethical? And if so when does it not become ethical? Many scientists have attempted to answer this question, as the ones that believe it is morally ethical have proposed a resolution, by only using the embryos that were going to be discarded from past In vitro fertilizations(IVF). As the moral questions surrounding this controversy are limitless, they all revolve around one, to what extent should we as a society value potential human life?

Although there has not been a concrete answer to this question, there have been many different approaches to solving this ethical dilemma. For instance, some scientists and politicians have taken a consequentialists standpoint. Consequentialism is when in order to determine the ethics of something you value the pro's and con's of the decision, and you base your decision on if the good outweighs the bad. Therefore, in this situation, the people that believe this type of research is ethically moral take this approach. They argue that the scientific benefits of using these cells for research could be utilized to develop all types of medical advancements like cures for diseases, injuries, and even disorders. In addition, to weaken the argument of it not being ethical, they emphasize how its potential life. Due to the stems cells being taken out in such an early stage of development, they rarely consider it human life and if anything potential life due to the possibility of death before birth. Even though they're a lot of benefits to this type of research if the scientific community continued with these advancements, many questions of morality would arise. They would be asked as a society how would we know if this is the right path to walk for scientific answers? How do we know if their predictions on the research become true? and even if it is true, how morally important is it to consider the potential lives lost? When does the research become immoral?

With there being major doubts to the ethics of the consequentialists approach other scientists and politicians have taken on deontology to base their argument on. Deontology is when the morality of an action is based on what current societal norms state as of right and wrong, instead of the consequences of the action. When the ideology of deontology is applied to this situation, it results in being against the research. In our current society death is looked at as wrong, especially for self-gain. Thus, actors involved in the controversy with a deontologist mindset, overlook the scientific gains this research could have, and instead despise it over the fact that it leads to the death of life. However, what deontologist also fail to acknowledge is that it is only potential life, and the worth of these advancements. In questioning deontology questions like, when is purposeful death moral, or when social norms change concerning death is it still immoral, and even who determines what societal norms are arises.

Personally I believe that death is morally wrong, however, for this situation, the consequentialist mentality is most ethical to have. Both deontology and consequentialism raise flags on if something is ethical or not, with deontology social rules can change, and in consequentialism the good outcomes warrants the wrong actions. When dealing with morally questionable actions such as life or death, it's most important to ask: would you feel morally right doing this? There are numerous flaws to every approach to ethics, and most times there is no right answer. Thus when analyzing this situation, the question to ask is how important is a potential life to you, and would you feel morally right killing potential life for human medical advancements? As humans we will never have the same opinion on one thing, the most effective way to deal with moral issues is to see if you would do it yourself, because only when you ask yourself that question can you determine if something is ethically right for you.