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Antonio Puca

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Ten Years On From the Warnock Report: Is the Human Embryo a Person?

by

The Rev. Dr. Antonio Puca

The author is affiliated with the University of Naples. This paper originally appeared in Medicina e Morale.

The Impact of the Warnock Report in Latin Countries:

It did not take long before the Warnock Report had repercussions in the Latin countries. The first positions on this matter were those adopted by the essays published in the volume edited by the International Federation of Catholic Universities (FIUC), entitled *Unfolding the Origin of Human Life*. Among these were the contributions of Carlos Alonso Bedate and Jean-Francois Malherbe, both of which will be examined here. The contribution by Francise Abel, one of the editors of the volume, who adopts the position of middle-man between the different points of view, will also be considered.

Alonso Bedate begins his argument by stressing the necessity of an interdisciplinary dialogue between science, sociology, theology and morals, especially in contexts where the terms of "actions or laws of nature" are open to different interpretations. It is necessary, according to the aforementioned author, both to listen to the voice of science and at the same time not to ignore the significance of the present situation in which biology has been converted into sociology and politics. There are biologists who regard all ethical discussion regarding genetic or physiological manipulation as irrelevant, while others are preoccupied with the irreversible problems this technology can generate. The most difficult problem in establishing an interdisciplinary dialogue does not therefore derive from the mutual incomprehensibility of the languages employed but from a conflict of interests.

Bedate identifies two especially important problems presently deriving from the application of molecular biology to man: gene-therapy involving the human embryo and in vitro fertilization. As he emphasizes, the basic problems in regard to these issues concern the ethical value of the zygote and the early embryo. And as the author points out, the fact of the matter is that those debating these issues tend to adopt different anthropological standpoints. Some claim that the zygote is a human being and a person from the moment of conception, others deny that this is so. According to Bedate, none of the supporters of either view have so far

offered conclusive proofs for the truth of their statements (Bedate 1989, 62-63). And as Alonso Bedate sees it, it is impossible to provide biological arguments deciding this matter. That is to say, "it is impossible to determine whether a biological entity is a person, unless a priori one has already defined personhood in biological terms". Though, under no circumstances can one ignore the fact that — irrespective of the definition of personhood — the zygote is a biological entity directing its own development in accordance with a human gene programme (ibid. 63).

As concerns Bedate's view of the genetic programme of the zygote, it has been summarized in another piece written in collaboration with Roberto C. Cefalo, published in the *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*. In this article the two authors argued that it is not possible to say that the biological characteristics of a future adult are determined at the time of conception, for the zygote may subsequently develop into a hydatiform mole instead of turning into a human being. Whether it develops into an individual human person is determined by a molecular genetic code provided, not solely by the embryo, but also by the maternal environment. Consequently, it is an error to think that the chromosomal DNA (or other) of the zygote alone is sufficient to determine the future of the individual; it would certainly not be correct to say that the zygote genome itself possesses the molecular information determining the future person (Bedate and Cefalo 1989, 232).

Francesca Abel, for his part, whilst reminding us of the danger mentioned in *Donum Vitae* that science and technology may transgress the limit of our rightful dominion over nature, comments that: "the geneticists who have influenced the text of *Donum Vitae* believe that from the moment of syngamy 'the programme is fixed as to what this living being will be: a man, this individual-man with his characteristic aspects already well determined'. However, so he argues, this understanding seems a bit exaggerated" (Abel 1989, 350).

As regards the phrase "fetus-placenta-unit", coined by Angelo Serra, he makes the observation that: "there it is undoubtedly assumed that this 'fetus-placenta-unit' originates from the blastocyst and preceeding it the zygote." But, he says, the placental structure and the maternal contribution remain completely marginalized, although without them one cannot explain the development and differentiation in all the different directions starting with the genetic programming of the embryo (ibid.). According to Abel, "this entity [placenta] in the uterus is the necessary prerequisite" for the existence of an animated human body. Genetics he argues, may hold that human life begins at the moment the ovum has been fertilized but obstetrics suggests the blastocyst stage, when implantation of the particular zygote takes place, as the beginning; before that the zygote is only a human genetic programme with a merely theoretical and statistical potential to develop into a member of the human family, as witness the fact that implantation is achieved in the case of one out of three zygotes only. Indeed, he continues, observations of the human zygote in vitro provide further support for this last statement. The development of these zygotes is not intrinsically directed towards the final end of implantation in the uterus.

From the point of view of obstetrics, according to Abel, the importance of the

maternal input as an essential constitutive factor of the embryo is confirmed by the following considerations: suppose that gestation takes place in a surrogate mother and that the blastocyst derives from a donated ovum fertilized by donated sperm provided by two anonymous donors. In this case, the surrogate mother provides virtually everything. The new being is totally dependent on her, even if its genetic programme, the result of the "chance union" of certain chromosomes, directs its development and decides the nature and identity of the embryo (ibid. 351). Faced with the choice between the "orthodox interpretation of the ontological origin of the embryo" (see Serra) and the "revisionist" one (see Bedato and Cefalo), as he calls them, Abel is clearly in favour of the latter, this "being in keeping with the intuitions and the understanding of obstetrics" (ibid. 352). However, taking up the same argument in a more systematic work on the technologies of assisted conception, Abel, who objects to the use of these technologies, concedes that the "pre-embryo" possesses the value of a "potential human being", whilst confirming that one cannot speak of a human person until the stage of implantation (Abel 1992, 41).

Finally, Jean-Francois Malherbe, in his essay on the status of the human embryo, points to three dimensions of human existence relevant to the understanding of the personal status of the human embryo: *the symbolical*, *the mental* and *the organic* (Malherbe 1989, 86). "If the organic life of the human being begins at fertilisation, his or her life of relationship begins at implantation. From the time the zygote turns into an embryo, and from whence it becomes an individual and enters into communion with its mother, its life begins developing in the mental dimension. From that time on it is possible to speak of the embryo as a potential human person." However, this *potential* human person, Malherbe explains, is not an *actual* human person until its existence starts developing within the symbolical dimension, "It is not until the potential human person enters into the sphere of symbolic communication that he is really actualised" (ibid. 88-89).

Respect for Zygote

On what, then, according to Malherbe, is the respect for zygote or the embryo to be founded? His answer is: On an "*existential solidarity*". He explains that this "existential solidarity of human beings, which we cannot deny without denying what we are, calls for the humility to welcome the other without wanting to control him; it allows him life and freedom to cultivate his own autonomy. But, he says, "it is not possible for us to realise this radical human solidarity in life, unless we actually recognize our solidarity, our finitude and our doubts" (ibid. 90).

The three contributors mentioned have much in common, while each one also makes his own specific points. If Alonso Bedate puts heavy emphasis on the genetic data, Abel advocates the importance of the maternal input as an essential and constitutive part of the embryo. According to Bedate, they "are arguing from different anthropological points of view" (Bedate 1989, 62).

In my view, while it is right to take into consideration the maternal influence on the embryo's development, it would seem, however, that it is not an "essential and constitutive factor" to the point of deciding its identity.

As regards the statement in *Donum Vitae* that "from the time that the ovum is fertilised, a new life is begun which is neither that of the father or of the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. it would never be

made a human being if it were not human already" (*Donum Vitae* I, 1), Abel regrets, as he put it, the preference of the document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for "the orthodox interpretation of the ontological origin of human life". It corresponds, he says, to an anthropological vision which marries the data of science with those of philosophy.

But as I see it, given the scientific data, it seems plausible that personal life begins at the moment of conception or syngamy. According to philosophical reflection, it is these data which are the basis for the ethical judgement that the human embryo must be respected as a person. This also provides a defence of human life before the dangers of genetic and physiological manipulation, denounced by Bedate.

As to Malherbe's argument allowing for not only an organic dimension but also for a mental and a symbolic one, he maintains that, in line with modern anthropology, the modern literature on psychology of how the I and the you enter into a mutual subjective relationship shows that this kind of relationship is founded not simply on relational facts but also on existential ones. That is to say, our "existential solidarity", he thinks, is to be explained by the fact that those human beings who cultivate it open themselves to others.

Other arguments meriting attention are those of Maurizio Mori (1988) and Manuel Cuyas (1989). In a philosophical analysis of the arguments adopted by Catholic medical ethicists about the beginning and end of life, Mori suggests a parallel between abortion and transplantation. "Just as transplantation violates the donor's right to life if performed before his death, abortion violates the right to life of the fetus if performed after the fetus has become a person; just as transplantation performed after death does not violate the right to life but may be wrong because it violates other 'social obligations', abortion before the fetus has become a person does not violate the right to life but may be wrong because it violates other 'social obligations'" (Mori 1988, 100).

According to Mori, even the reflections of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), in its *Declaration on Procured Abortion* (1974), "show by means of an 'anti-probablist argument' that it is wrong to interfere with the development of the fetus, though not because it violates any 'ontological duty' deriving from the fetus's right to life" (Mori 1988, 119). The argument, he says, is based on two fundamental premises: first, it is not the task of science to establish the moment at which the human (or spiritual) soul is infused; this is a philosophical, not a scientific, question (*Donum Vitae* I, 1); secondly, since we do not know exactly at what moment the soul is infused (philosophy is not in a position to give us a firm answer), and since one should follow the safest path when in doubt, abortion is (absolutely) wrong; for one must never take the risk of killing a person (Mori 1988:120).

Having recourse to the definition of brain death stipulated by the Working Party of the Pontifical Academy of Science for the Extraction of Organs for Transplantation (1985, 5), according to which "a person is dead if he has, irreversibly, lost the capacity for integrated and coordinated physical and mental bodily functions", Mori affirms, as regards abortion, that "it must be recognised that there is no 'personal life' before the fetus has acquired the capacity to

integrate and coordinate the physical and mental functions of the body" (Mori 1988, 127). Thus, in his view, the starting point for an exact definition of the problem, whether in the case of nascent life or in that of transplants, should be not the beginning but the end of life. The solution to theoretical confusions and subsequent conflicts are not to be found in any "medical definition" but in a "philosophical definition" (ibid. 128).

Mori's argument, then, is based on a parallel between the beginning and the end of life, a thesis defended by a number of writers favoring the "brain life theory" (cf., Golderning 1985). The present author has written elsewhere on the weakness of this theory, both from a biological and a philosophical point of view (Puca 1993: 88-94). In brief, it can be said that with "brain death" comes the total disappearance of any "unifying principle", whether of relations with the external world or those between internal organs and tissues; this is the progressive disintegration of the individual. By contrast, as others have argued, "embryonic development demonstrates a close relationship between cells, tissues and organs, eventually actualising the possibility to enter into a relationship with the external world also" (Serra 1989, 101-104; Cuyas 1989, 443).

It is noteworthy, however, that even if Mori's view about the role of philosophy in regard to the definition of birth and death is accepted, the separation between science and philosophy cannot be sustained. Referring to note 19 of *The Declaration on Procured Abortion* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1974), which states that it is not up to biological sciences to make a definitive judgement on questions which are properly philosophical and moral, such as the moment when a human soul is constituted, Mori argues that "to say that this [the question of animation] is a question of philosophy is to make it clear that the whole debate is one based on arguments of reason" (Mori 1988, 143, note 30). But in response to this, it should be said that just as rational reflection cannot ignore scientific fact, science requires philosophical reflection. And, I would add, the issues concerning the embryo, while adequately addressed by science, nevertheless transcend science.

In *Donum Vitae*, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith emphasizes the fact that: "from the time the ovum is fertilised, a new life is begun . . . the fruit of human generation, from the first moment of its existence, that is to say, from the moment the zygote has formed, demands the unconditional respect that is morally due to the human being in his bodily and spiritual totality (*Donum Vitae* I.1). Commenting on this statement, Mori says, that it is not open to the objection that it asserts that it is wrong to interfere with the development of the fetus, because this involves a violation of the "ontological duty" deriving from the fetus's "right to life". The "ontological duty", to use the original expression of *The Declaration on Procured Abortion* (1974), is based, as is pointed out by Moraczewski, not on rights and duties conferred by the law, but on the concept of the "ontological subject" which underlies both the legal and the psychological subject (Moraczewski 1983, 301).

It should be pointed out, however, that the 1974 document confirms the position of those — who like the present author — emphasize the holistic unity of the human being from the moment of conception.

Avoiding any form of Cartesian dualism (Eccles Popper 1977, 9), and also the

position that there is no such entity as a person, but only a continuous series of interconnected conscious states in temporal succession (Locke; Hume; Rorty 1976), the human person may, as Ashley and O'Rourke have argued, be defined as an "embodied intelligent freedom" (Ashley and O'Rourke 1989). According to this definition, a person is a bodily being by nature capable of rational thought and of choosing between different alternatives without being subject to internal coercion. But, as Moraczewski has pointed out, this kind of capacity is a "radical capacity"; having it does not necessarily mean this power is exercisable here and now or that it is already developed — witness the case of a sleeping person or that of a child. On the present understanding, a human person is a biological entity — a material entity — and at the same time an entity which transcends biology (Moraczewski 1983, 302).

This takes us to a second point, suggested by the Spanish author Manuel Cuyas, who argues that it is not yet possible to specify an "anthropological concept" which brings together the holistic unity of the corporality and the transcendence of the person, i.e. brings together both his biological and cultural aspects (Cuyas 1989, 448). No solution proposed so far for determining the status of the embryo satisfies either the genome or the mental criterion, affirming personhood solely on the basis of relationships with others. Nor, he says, does the cultural criterion, focusing on specific qualities of the person or a "juridicial" criterion, guaranteeing the status of the embryo by arbitrarily delimiting its protection; nor even does a "non-discriminating" one, ignoring the specific differences between living things without souls (plants), with sensitive souls (animals) and with rational souls (human beings).

According to Cuyas, all the criteria mentioned above suffer from the shortcoming of trying to identify the status of the embryo in terms of the moment at which the human person begins to exist. The problem is therefore badly defined; life, he says, eludes the competences of the empirical sciences (biology and psychology), because their methodology obliges them to place entities in a spacio-temporal context, in which there is no room for the concepts of "subject", "individual" and "person". It may be possible to have an understanding of these concepts within philosophy or theology, but the sciences of the psyche cannot establish when the "subject", the "individual" or the "person" begins to exist (Cuyas 1989, 450).

We are here faced with the problem, noted by Mori, posed by a total separation of the facts of science and philosophical reflection. That is to say, it is not possible to accept Cuyas's position that "only a moral approach can provide a coherent account of the status of the human embryo" (*ibid.*). Both scientific data and moral reflection entail moral evaluation; such a valuation can be separated neither from the objective data of science nor from the anthropology considering all aspects of the human being. Indeed, if one of these elements were lacking, it would be impossible to find a correct moral solution to the problem.

And it would appear that both scientific data and philosophical reflection point to the fact that life begins at the moment of fertilization. Thus, as Serra says, "a welcome return to respect for the human subject from his beginning at syngamy, because each one of us began life at that point (were it not for the zygote none of us would be here)," (Serra 1993, 115).

Such an understanding is also in line with the statement in *Donum Vitae*: "the Magisterium has not expressly committed itself to an affirmation of a philosophical nature, but it constantly reaffirms the moral condemnation of any kind of procured abortion" . . . Thus, "the fruit of human generation, from the first moment of its existence, that is to say from the moment the zygote has formed, demands the unconditional respect that is morally due to the human being in his bodily and spiritual totality" . . . "The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognised, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life" (*Donum Vitae*, I.1). This document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is principally of a moral nature. While it leaves room for further philosophical reflection, it firmly demands the respect due to the human being from the moment of its conception. The position adopted in this document may well be the most appropriate in the face of the facts of science and, as Serra says, one that may overcome the difficulties stemming, on the one hand, from the confidence scientists and doctors — and theologians — have in themselves and in their own opinions, and on the other, from irresistible cultural pressures (Serra 1993: 113).

By contrast, the Warnock Report and the positions examined above seem obvious cases of surrender to the aforementioned pressures. However, the contribution by Cuyas may be deemed valuable on account of its anthropological reflections on the embryo and personhood in terms of the attributes of corporeity and transcendence. "Corporeity (the objectivity of the being in itself) and transcendence (relational openness) must be the two focal points, when seeking a solution to the problem posed by the necessity of recognising the presence of a personal being" (Cuyas 1989, 441).

What is required is a more profound understanding of the very nature of the human person. And, by way of comment, it would seem that the Boethian definition of a person as "*naturalis naturae individua substantia*" — like those contemporary ones referring to the "I-you" relationship, or the realm of interpersonal relationships — while capable of establishing a universal concept of a spiritual personal subject does not manage to capture what constitutes the essence of man. Only in theology, as Scola argues, is it possible to do so; here personhood relates to the mission of man; here, consequently, the question of "who I am" finds a complete answer (Scola 1985, 235).

Theological Reflections

To the question wherein lies the essence of man, of the adult and well as the embryo, the immediate answer is: in the Lord. The Lord; that is to say, the Mystery comprising everything in its totality at every moment. The narrative in Genesis (Gn 1, 26) confronts us, without introduction, with our divine destiny; this being a characteristic of our nature. Indeed, this understanding is expressed in numerous passages in the Scripture.

Catholic theology, which has compressed centuries of reflection on man into three statements, maintains first, that man is composed of body and soul (*DS* 902, 1440, 3002; *Gaudium et Spes*, 14-15) and secondly, that the soul is the form of the

human body (DS 902). Thirdly, it relates the spiritual nature of man (DS 800, 2812) to the immortality of the soul (DS 1140, 2765). But it is above all the theme of man created in the image of God, found both in the New and Old Testaments, and repeated by the Church Fathers, which theological tradition has dwelt on.

Answering the question "What is man?", Thomas Aquinas, inspired by St. Augustine replies: he is an imperfect image of God. According to Scola, "he explains that Jesus Christ alone is the true image . . . because he is of the same nature as the Father. Strictly speaking, man is not the image of God, but only approximating to the image of God — meaning that man has a tendency towards the full realisation of his being made in the image of God, which opens up the possibility of laying the foundations of morality . . ." Furthermore, he says, "being made in the image of God, we are by implication 'theological persons', human beings defined through Christ's mission in this world", which, so he argues," explains the urgent appeal of theology to philosophy to found in the sphere of theology the concept of the person and those connected with it, such as those of dignity and human rights. (Scola 1985, 222-223).

On this understanding, what is made in the image of God is man, not a subspecies of *Homo Sapiens* or a species created as a result of a moral decision on the part of ethicists (Kuhse and Singer 1984, 60). As Camerons puts it, "the foundation of the dignity of man does not consist in his being *Homo sapiens*, nor in his being of my own species; rather it is because of his special form of being (man and not gorilla, man and not tadpole, man and not tree) reflecting and deriving from God in a way that no other form is or could be, that every man must be respected by me and by every other creature" (Cameron 1985,9).

Another point of note, concerns the authority of God and the stewardship of man. Christian theologians have since ancient times availed of the language of Greek philosophy to translate this Biblical metaphor. The concepts of nature, creation and grace are the three important ones expressing the power of God and the stewardship of man. From a theological point of view, dominion or stewardship are different ways in which man can participate in the creative work of God — or destroy it (cf. Gn 2, 15; Gn 2, 19-20; Gn 4, ; 1 S 8, 1-22; 1 K 1, 12; Ezk. 31, 2-3; h 2, 7; Mt 20, 25-28; Mt 25, 14-30; Mt. 25, 31-46), which raises the question whether man is the master or the steward of creation and, in particular, whether man may intervene without any restrictions and change the things and creatures entrusted to him.

According to Ashley, the Biblical principles for an "ethics of technology" may be summarized as follows: In making us intelligent and free, God has made us participants in his mastery over the world and over our own lives, but this power shared with God is a stewardship which must be exercised in cooperation with God in the completion of His creation. Hence, human technology is not a sphere of absolute dominion, but of relative dominion under the guidance of the loving wisdom of God, with the strength and care which comes by means of God's grace" (Ashley 1992, 87).

Gaudium et Spes (1965), has also offered an explanation of the concepts of dominion and stewardship: "Man . . . created in the image of God, has been given

the task of subduing the earth with all it contains, and of governing the world in justice and holiness . . . recognising in God the creator of all things, in such a way that in the subordination of all things to man, the name of God be glorified throughout the earth" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n.340).

The biblical and conciliar teaching can be expressed in one single principle: "Human beings are morally obliged to use and to modify their natural environment and their own bodies in accordance with their intrinsic teleology" (Ashley 1992, 92). This principle, formulated by Ashley, is applicable both to the ecosystem and to other problems in bioethics, such as the experimental use of embryos.

Finally, an observation is in place about the significance of the Incarnation. It is no accident that Cardinal Henry Newman, reacting against the liberal-rationalist interpretation of the Anglican Church, placed the Incarnation at the center of his theological thought. Obviously, we are in no position to deduce from the event of the Incarnation arguments deciding when exactly the body becomes ensouled. But it is impossible to deny that God became flesh, made of DNA, of protein—an embryo. And this is not only the view of Newman, the whole life of the Church hangs on this Creed, the life of Jesus on earth began, not in Bethlehem, but in Nazareth, with the annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary. This testifies to the fact, while the life of the Son of God was different from that of man insofar as it is the work of the Holy Spirit, it was, nevertheless, human inasmuch as it was conceived in the body of a woman. It began at conception.

Vatican II described the duality of Christ's nature as follows: "With the Incarnation, the Son of God became in a certain sense related to every man. He worked with the hands of a man, thought with the mind of a man, acted with the will of a man and loved with the heart of a man. Born of the Virgin Mary, He became in truth one of us, like us in all things but sin" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n 22) That is to say, the Incarnation totally took the form of the human physiognomy. "In the mystery of the World Incarnate the mystery of man becomes clear" (*Gaudium et Spes* n.22).

As Adam briefly sums up Christianity: "The Christian message is not, then, simply about the ascent of created beings to the height of the divinity, it is not simply about glorification, about divinisation of human nature, but above all about the descent of the divinity, of the Word lowering Himself so far as to assume the humble form of a truly human being. This is the central point of the ancient Christian message: "The Word was made flesh, He lived among us" (John 1, 14). "He did not cling to His equality with God, but emptied Himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are" (Ph 2,7) (Adam 1983: 13-14).

This essential message of Christianity has three aspects: the message is of an escatological nature, it is oriented towards the end of time, it is of a sacramental nature and it is of a social nature (Ibid. 22-24). Seeing the subject matter of this essay in this light, the teleological character of the zygote is best defined in terms of its orientation and tendency towards its fulfillment in Christ (Ep 1,23).

But as Karl Adam asks: "Is it still right, still required of us, who live at the present time, in today's European culture, to say 'yes' to the Christ's message?"

This is like Dostoevsky's question whether in fact a civilised man, a European can still have faith. "The metaphysical faculties of the modern man have atrophied", Adam says. "Plato would say that he lacks an eye for the invisible. The sense for perceiving the divine and supernatural is failing. And for this reason, modern man feels a secret aversion to all things which steal into this world of phenomena as a complete novelty claiming to be absolute and immediately from God. According to the mentality of antiquity, miracles and visible signs were, so to speak, the natural way for God to show Himself, the visible proofs of his presence; according to the modern mentality, on the other hand, they are a scandal" (Adam 1983, 26-27). Abolished, therefore, is the Son of God and suppressed the belief that man is made in the image of God, for whom the Son of God was born, lived and died.

Christianity, on the other hand, expresses a profound awe before the dignity of man. The man who seeks a deeper understanding of himself must, so to speak, allow Christ to enter into him and fill his whole self; he must "appropriate" and assimilate the whole reality of the Incarnation and the Redemption in order to find himself. If this profound process takes place within him, it will bear fruit resulting not only in the adoration of God, but also in a deeper wonder at himself.

Conclusion

This experience of awe and wonder enables us to solve the various ethical problems arising in relation to the embryo. Thus, to quote from the document of the Congregation of the Faith: "To use human embryos or fetuses as the object or instrument of experimentation constitutes a crime against their dignity as human beings having a right to the same respect that is due to the child already born and to every human person" (*Donum Vitae* I, 4). Again, in regard to therapeutic interventions, the document calls not only for respect for the life and integrity of the embryo but also for the free and informed consent of its parents. And in regard to experimental intervention on dead embryos, it calls for respect for the embryo itself in order to avoid in any way encouraging abortion and any form of commercialization (*Donum Vitae* I, 4). In addition, *Donum Vitae* gives a clear and unequivocal answer to many other questions related to experimentation on the embryo such as those concerning prenatal diagnosis (*Donum Vitae* I, 2), the use and destruction of surplus embryos (*Donum Vitae* I, 5), the use of frozen embryos (*Donum Vitae* I, 6), heterologous artificial insemination (*Donum Vitae* II, 1-2), homologous artificial insemination (*Donum Vitae* II, 6), in vitro fertilisation (*Donum Vitae* II, 4-5) and surrogate motherhood (*Donum Vitae* II, 3).

The focus here has been on the question of the status of the embryo. It may be commented that, in agreement with the position adopted by the Catholic Bishops' Joint Committee on Bio-ethical Issues (of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales) in its response to the Warnock Report, the Italian Senate has called for urgent legislation to prohibit "any form of experimentation on the human embryo which risks damaging it or endangering its life by delaying its transfer and implantation. It also advocates the prohibition of any form of freezing or storing undertaken without a genuine and definite prospect of subsequent transfer of the

unimpaired embryo to its real mother, as well as the prohibition of any form of selection among living and developing human embryos in order to transfer and implant only the fittest and most desirable ones (Senato della Repubblica 1991, 243-244).

Finally, it should be said, that terms such as "pre-embryo" and "spare embryos" are to be rejected. These expressions have been imposed upon us by a totalitarian ideology at the service of the "new world order" (Schooyans 1993, 48) and do not respect the uniqueness of the human being. It does not reflect the original attitude of man, that which most closely corresponds to how he feels in his heart of hearts, which is an attitude not of altering, dissecting or counting but like that of Eve who cried: "I have acquired a man with the help of Yahweh" (Gn 4,1) or like that of Mary who said: "Let what you have said be done to me" (Lk 1, 38). Indeed, even those without a Christian faith are aware that without this attitude of respect for human individuality, "the only thing that remains is the 'World Council of Administration'".

In sum, to quote Ratzinger, that, which according to the teaching of the Church must be respected in the generation of human life is not a biological or physiological datum wrongly regarded as sacred but, rather the dignity of the human person or of the three human persons involved in the process of generation (Ratzinger 1988: 207-208).

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