Final Paper Assignment

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The “Future like Ours” Argument and Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research, By A. Kuflik

 The objective of the article in question is to analyze the “future like ours” argument developed by Marquis and determine its relation to the ethical debate of human embryonic stem cell research. Kuflik goes through the debate between Don Marquis and Julian Savulescu on the “future like ours” argument’s relation to abortion, and determines that the stated argument supports the use of embryos in stem cell research because they do not fall within Marquis’ updated criterion of an individual. In this paper, I show that Kuflik’s article succeeds in showing that human embryonic stem cell research is morally right.

 Kuflik begins with discussing the “future like ours” argument, the first statement that there is a moral agreement that killing a normal human is wrong. This extends out to children and babies also, leading to the point that killing someone like us or having a future like us is murder. The second half of the argument unfolds with “… killing’s presumptive wrongness is that it deprives an individual of that individual’s future of valuable experiences and activities- a ‘future like ours’” (Kuflik 417). The comparison of fetuses being stripped of their future in abortion is compared to that of murdering an adult within this argument. Kuflik states that the conclusion is controversial but makes the important distinction that this argument has no religious ties and relies on a common sense of morals for its justification. Savulescu makes a counter argument that Marquis is being too broad and that it would apply to any acts that steal a future away from a soon to be human (contraception). Marquis’ response is very important and noted by Kulfik, “…the egg and the sperm that gave rise to that baby were merely ‘physical precursors’ of that baby, not the very same ‘individual’ as that baby” (Kuflik 418). The statement that sperm and egg are only physical things that in the future will transform into an individual but are not said individual yet, is now starting to draw a line of when the presence of a person begins. The analysis is then made into the second part of Marquis’ response dealing with cloning, the argument that the natural history of a somatic cell is not affected by it becoming something else. Now an argument can be stated that for something to transform into something else, it must mean that the first thing no longer exists, or that’s what Kuflik states as a valid response. A conclusion was determined by Kuflik, when destroying a somatic cell so its genetic material can to be transferred into an egg, the cell had not been stripped of any future even when it had ceased to exist. So far two main ideas have been pulled from the responses, that just because A becomes B doesn’t mean that A is B and When is A is destroyed or transformed, it doesn’t lose a future like that of B because it wasn’t B to begin with.

 A more detailed exploration into the science of embryonic stem cells is made next by Kuflik, primarily concerning blastocysts. The first important thing to know is that 4-5 days after fertilization, the inner cell layer is made of blastocysts which are capable of transforming into any cell of any tissue types. The extraction of these cells is where further research can be done to their exact nature of development for potential medical benefits, but then they no longer have the potential to form into a human person. The second important thing to know is that these blastocysts can potentially become multiple babies, “… development can continue toward the formation of monozygotic siblings” (Kuflik 419). After about 15 days, a line formation forms and marks the end of any potential formation of multiple persons. The time before this mark represents a stage where the exact number of individuals to be developed is unknown. The fact that twins can be made from the same mass of blastocysts is important in that they did not have an established individual in their early stage, this is because twins are not the exact same individual and have their own personhoods. The conclusion can be made that these blastocysts have no individualistic qualities in their early stages, like that of a sperm or egg and cannot be determined to have a future like ours yet.

 From this reasoning, Kuflik states that “… in neither case is there an actually existing individual ‘someone’ who is being deprived of a ‘future like ours’” (421). From the earlier statements it was indeed proven that the early stage of blastocysts are not able to be considered a single individual who can have a future taken. This results in the exclusion of the stem cells out of the range of Marques’ argument. Going back to the beginning, Marquis’ argument made two distinctions that A is not B, even if A can eventually become B. The loss of A does not also mean the loss of B. This idea was connected with the blastocysts, if blastocysts can eventually become one or more individuals but are not yet determined to be such individual(s), then the loss of the blastocysts does not also mean the loss of the individual(s). To further harden Kuflik’s argument, the point was made that twins are not the same individual so therefore the blastocysts that they come from have not yet identified as an individual or individuals and cannot be treated as one. This reassures that A is not B in this scenario, validating the conclusion that the loss of A is not also the loss of B. If the loss of blastocysts within the embryotic cycle does not deprive an individual of his/her future, then it can be determined that embryotic stem cell research in that early stage is morally right. In conclusion, this paper has successfully proven that Kuflik’s article succeeds in showing that human embryonic stem cell research is morally right.

Works Cited

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