



Statement following President George W. Bush's decision to approve limited federal funding for embryonic stem cell research

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"I was encouraged when I heard President Bush's decision to block federal funding for the destruction of human embryos for research purposes. From one perspective, his decision rejects promoting the manipulation and destruction of some lives in hopes of improving others.

However, President Bush has also created a precarious moral dilemma for himself and our country by sanctioning experimentation on stem cells already extracted from human embryos which were killed for the purpose of such research. In doing so, he created a demand for embryonic stem cells which may encourage the development and destruction of human embryos for future experimentation.

Some proponents of embryonic stem cell research have framed their arguments in a way that pits victims of debilitating diseases against 'clumps of cells in a petri dish.' This emotional appeal obscures what science tells us about the beginning of human life and discourages authentic moral discourse. Human embryos are genetically complete human beings. Their tiny size does not diminish their humanity, just as an infant is no less human than an adult.

To destroy embryos for research purposes is to suggest that some lives are more valuable than others, and that we may sacrifice some lives today in the hopes that future generations will benefit. Whatever our intentions, however, it is not morally permissible to do evil in hopes that good may result from it.

Those promoting the destruction of embryos for stem cell research argue that human embryos from fertility clinics are destined for destruction, so we may as well destroy them in experiments. This logic reveals a utilitarian ethic that treats people as products for exploitation. We should never determine the value of human life based upon its 'usefulness.'

As a nation, we possess the intellect and scientific creativity to discover cures for diseases in a manner that does not kill others in the process. The positive results of adult and infant stem cell research have given great hope to those who suffer from cancer, diabetes and other sicknesses. We should continue to pursue this research vigorously, but never through the destruction of human life.

Real freedom is the ability to see and the courage to do what is right. President Bush's effort to prevent federal support for future destructive research involving human embryos is a step toward the rediscovery of an honest moral vocabulary in our country. But the decision to federally fund research that has its genesis in the destruction of human embryos could lead to a coarsening of our American attitude toward the dignity and value of human life.

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