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Reflections on Cloning

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excellent Vladimir and Mária Ďurikovič *president and independent*
Dear Vladimir, mother and
with great thanks 1. Historical notes, *loving spouses*
the hearts and all God's friends.

Advances in the procedures of molecular biology, genetics and artificial fertilization have long made it possible to experiment with and successfully achieve the cloning of plants and animals.

Since the '30s experiments have been made in producing identical individuals by artificial twin splitting, a procedure with can be improperly called cloning.

In 1993 data concerning the twin splitting on human embryos of two, four and eight embryoblasts were published by Jerry Hall and Robert Stilmann of George Washington University.

The news published in the journal [3] about the birth of the sheep Dolly through the efforts of the Scottish scientists Jan Vilmut and K.H.S. Campbell and their team at Edinburg's Roslin Institut had an unusual effect on public opinion. It was something new and was considered troubling.

There are two new aspects of this event:

The first is that it is not a question of splitting but of a radical innovation defineh as **cloning**, that is, asexual and agamic reproduction meant to produce individuals biologically identical to the adult which provided the nuclear genetic inheritance.

The second is that until now this type of true and proper cloning was considered impossible. With respect to the fact that the DNA in somatic cells of the higher forms of animal life, having already undergone the imprinting of differentiation, could no longer recover their original totipotentiality and, consequently, their ability to direct the development of a new individual. *It was mistake*

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With the overcoming of this supposed impossibility, the way now is open to human cloning, understood as the replication of one or more individuals somatically identical to the donor.

This event has rightly caused concern and alarm. But after an initial phase of unanimous opposition, some have wished to call attention to the need for guaranteeing freedom of research, for not demonizing progress,

It should be stressed that the development of individuals obtained by cloning, apart from eventual possible mutations – and there could be many – should produce a body structure very similar to that of the DNA donor: this is the most disturbing result, especially when the experiment is applied to the human species.

2. Ethical Problems of Human Cloning

Human cloning belongs to the eugenic project and is thus subject to all the ethical juridical observations that have amply condemned it. As Hans Jonas has written in his article [4] “both in method the most despotic and in aim the most slavish form of genetic manipulation; Its objective is not an arbitrary modification of hereditary material but precisely its equally arbitrary fixation in contrast to the dominant strategy of nature”

Human cloning represents a radical manipulation of the constitutive relationality and complementarity which is at the origin of human procreation in both its biological and strictly personal aspects. It tends to make bisexuality a purely functional left-over, given that an ovum must be used without its nucleus in order to make room for clone embryo and requires, for now, a female womb so that its development may be brought to term. By human cloning is changing specific meaning of human reproduction.

Women are radically exploited and reduced to a few of their purely biological functions (providing ova and womb). Research looks to the possibility of constructing artificial wombs, the last step to fabricating human beings in the laboratory.

In the cloning process the basic relationships of human person are perverted: filiation, consanguinity kinship, parenthood. A woman can be the twin sister of her mother, lack a biological father and be the

daughter of her grandfather. The cloning will mean the radical rupture of the parenthood bonds.

As in every artificial activity, what occurs in nature is "mimicked" and "imitated", but only at the price of ignoring how man surpasses his biological component, which moreover is reduced to these forms of reproduction that have characterized only the biologically simplest and least evolved organisms.

The human cloning fosters the idea that some individuals can be in total dominion over the existence of others, to the point of programming their biological identity – selected according to arbitrary or purely utilitarian criteria. These do not exhaust man's personal identity, which is characterized by the spirit.

Human cloning must also be judged negative with regard to the dignity of the person cloned, who enters the world by virtue of being the copy (even if only a biological copy) of another being. This practice paves the way to the clone's radical suffering, for his psychic identity is jeopardized by the real or even by the merely virtual presence of his "other"

In any case, such experimentation is immoral because it involves the arbitrary use of the human body as a mere research tool. The human cloning project represents the terrible aberration to which value-free science is driven and is a sign of the profound malaise of our civilization which looks to science, technology and the quality of life as surrogates for the meaning of life and its salvation.

The human cloning clearly shows the difference between the conception of life as a gift of love and the view of the human being as an industrial product.

Furthermore, at the level of human rights, the possibility of human cloning represents violation of the two fundamental principles on which all human rights are based: the principle of equality among human beings and the principle of non-discrimination.

To enable biomedical science to maintain and strengthen its relationship with the true welfare of man and society, it is necessary to foster, as the Holy Father recalls in the Encyclical *Evangelium vitae*, a "contemplative outlook" on man himself and the world with a vision of reality as God's creation and in context of solidarity between science, the good of person and society. Outlook of those

who see life in its deeper meaning , who ~~grasp it~~ ^{utter} gratuitousness, its beauty and its invitation to freedom and responsibility, It is the outlook of those who do not presume to take possession of reality but instead accept it as a gift, discovering in all things the reflection of the Creator and seeing in every person his living image" (*Evangelium vitae*, n. 83).

References

- [1] Correa, J.D.V. and Sgreccia, E. : Reflexions on Cloning, Libreria Editrice ,Vaticana, 1997.
- [2] Reflections on Cloning, L'Osservatore Romano, p. 7, 25 June 1997.
- [3] On the birth of the sheep Dolly, *Journal Nature*, 27 February, 1997.
- [4] Jonas H.; Cloniamo un uomo: dall'eugenetica all'ingegneria genetica, *Tecnica, medicina ed etica*, Einaudi, Torino, pp. 122-154, p. 136, 1997.

Thank you for your letter