THE MORALITY OF EMBRYO USE

Is it permissible to use a human embryo in stem cell research, or in general as a means for benefit of others? Acknowledging each embryo as an object of moral concern, Louis M. Guenin argues that it is morally permissible to decline intrauterine transfer of an embryo formed outside the body, and that from this permission and the duty of beneficence, there follows a consensus justification for using donated embryos in service of humanitarian ends. He then proceeds to show how this justification commands assent even within moral and religious views commonly thought to oppose embryo use. Beneath his moral reasoning lies a carefully constructed metaphysical foundation incorporating accounts of the ontology of development, embryos, and species. He also incisively discusses nonreprocloning, reprocloning, ectogenesis, and related scientific frontiers. This compelling philosophical study will interest all concerned to understand virtue and obligation in the relief of suffering.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521694278

First published 2008

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Guenin, Louis M., 1950–
The morality of embryo use / Louis M. Guenin.
p. ; cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-521-87269-0 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-69427-8 (pbk.)
1. Life and death, Power over. 2. Human embryo – Research – Moral and ethical aspects.
3. Human embryo – Therapeutic use – Moral and ethical aspects. I. Title.
[DNLM: 1. Embryo Research – ethics. 2. Embryo Disposition – ethics. 3. Embryonic Stem Cells.
4. Embryo Transfer – ethics. 5. Personhood. 6. Cloning, Organism – ethics. QS 620 G926m 2008]

BJ1469.G84 2008
174.2′8 – dc22 2008013429

ISBN 978-0-521-87269-0 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-69427-8 paperback

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Preface

I am concerned in this study with a moral controversy precipitated by recent scientific advances. Human ingenuity has envisioned procedures in which scientists and physicians would use human embryos in the course of attempts to overcome human disease and disability. Embryo use is the general practice of which embryonic stem cell research is a special case. As we think about the propriety of this practice, it soon appears that we must adapt our moral machinery to deal with fundamental questions about what constitutes one of us. I began this project when I glimpsed what seemed to me the grounds of a stable moral consensus. I therefore set to work on the assumption that it is feasible to construct an account that compels assent across the gamut of pertinent moral views, and in particular within views usually thought to oppose all embryo use. Mindful of those many who suffer from maladies that might yield to treatments consequent on embryo use, the motivation for this inquiry could not be more compelling.

I have been aided by the work of many philosophers to whom my debts will be apparent from the text. For their generosity in discussions over the course of the research, I am grateful to Stephen L. Darwall, E. J. Lowe, and Allen W. Wood. For illuminating conversations, comments on portions of the manuscript, and correspondence, I also thank Dagfinn Føllesdal, Jorge J. E. Gracia, David L. Hull, Joshua Hoffman, Christine M. Korsgaard, Brian F. Loar, Trenton Merricks, Alvin Plantinga, Melinda A. Roberts, Michael Ruse, Israel Scheffler, Barry Smith, and James Van Cleve. My understanding of pertinent scientific and medical matters has been aided by the guidance of Jonathan R. Beckwith, Merle J. Berger, Jonathan H. Blum, George Q. Daley, Ralph E. Dittman, John D. Gearhart, Stanley R. Glasser, Ann A. Kiessling, M. William Lensch, Paul H. Lerou, Stephanie Mel de Fontenay, R. Douglas Powers, Catherine Racowksy, Jayaraj Rajagopal, Eric J. Rubin, Gerald P. Schatten, Evan Y. Snyder, Ayalew Tefferi, and Thomas Zwaka. In envisioning probability density functions as representative of the extent of developmental potential of embryos in various situations,

I have learned much from Kevin A. Rader and Michal R. Zochowski, as well as from George DeMuth, Steven R. Finch, Oliver Knill, A. David Wunsch, and Jens C. Zorn. I thank the audiences before whom I have given talks at Schepens Eye Research Institute (whose invitation from Kenneth J. Trevett stimulated my interest), Harvard University, The Mayo Clinic, International Society for Cellular Therapy, International Society for Stem Cell Research, The George Washington University, The Burnham Institute, The Salk Institute, Brandeis University, Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute, Genetics Policy Institute, Baylor College of Medicine, Stanford University, Children's Hospital Boston, and the University of Miami. I have benefited as well from discussions with my seminar students at Harvard Medical School. I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press for their insightful comments. For both her thoughts and encouragement, I thank Erin V. Lehman.

I mention the following about the plan of the book, this especially for general readers interested in the controversy over embryonic stem cell research. The argument in chief, the argument from nonenablement, is set forth in Chapter 2. The analyses in Chapter 3 of individuality of the twinnable, and in Chapter 4 of respect for life forms sorted by taxa, enter into topics in metaphysics and the philosophy of science wherein arise some of the most philosophically interesting issues that I discuss. The general reader who prefers to take their moral controversy without metaphysics may pass lightly over Chapters 3 and 4 at no detriment to comprehension of what follows. Chapter 5 describes how the argument from nonenablement takes hold within influential views assumed or declared to be opponents of embryo use. Chapters 6–8 delve further into the scope of embryo use and related practices, this in respect of avenues of research and therapy, putative alternatives to embryo use, and the construction of norms.

With permission of The Royal Institute of Philosophy, Chapter 3 draws on 'The Nonindividuation Argument Against Zygotic Personhood,' *Philosophy* 81: 463–503 (2006).

By means of this work, I hope to contribute to the formation of a moral consensus that will foster efficacious means for the relief of suffering.