

## The problems arising in stem-cell research

REGENERATIVE medicine promises great things, and would amount to one of humankind's great achievements. But it is worrying that, as a nation, we are prepared to pursue a research agenda despite the possibility that in doing so we are destroying human persons. The newly-created Roslin Cells Centre, which will supply embryonic stem cells to researchers and companies, will sell cells from living embryos, destroyed in the process, not from adults, or umbilical cord matter, or from embryos that have died. This is the case despite the fact that some of these alternative forms of research have shown more promise than embryonic stem-cell research, which instrumentalises developing human beings, and on which ethical opinion is divided.

Are we at all concerned about the unnecessary destruction of human embryos? There are already more than 110,000 frozen human embryos stored in the UK which are potentially available for this kind of research, and 18,000 human embryos have already been destroyed by UK scientists. Yet we continue to increase these numbers, ignoring ethical dubiety. Beliefs about the status of the embryo are just that: beliefs. The Roslin Cells Centre cannot scientifically prove that embryos have no moral status; nor can the Catholic Church prove they do.

Yet the beliefs of one section of the population, seeking to protect human persons of all stages, are being disregarded in favour of the beliefs of another, seeking to provide new powerful medical treatments. The question that must be answered is why this is the case, when there are other options that can support both aims. As it is, Scotland is just carrying on, seemingly unconcerned.

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## To protect embryos

**DAVID Moyes** asks the question: "Are we at all concerned about the destruction of human embryos?" He implies that he is concerned by it (Letters, September 30). Since the moral worth of people and of embryos is independent of their genetic and reproductive pedigrees, I hope that Mr Moyes will take his argument to its logical conclusion and advocate the legalisation of human cloning.

In terms of the Human Reproductive Cloning Act (2001): "A person who places in a woman a human embryo which has been created otherwise than by fertilisation is guilty of an offence." It is a crime, punishable by up to 10 years in jail, to help these particular embryos to thrive.

If you want to protect human embryos, join me in denouncing this irrational and nasty piece of legislation. Even if you do not want to protect human embryos, raise your voice in opposition to it.

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