

Candidate 10 evidence

Evaluate non-religious responses to moral issues arising from the use of embryos. 20

One use of embryos is IVF. IVF allows couples facing infertility to have a chance at conceiving a child. In IVF, embryos created through this process are implanted into a woman's uterus to help achieve pregnancy. One moral issue is around the status and value of embryos. Different religions have varying beliefs about when life begins and the moral status of embryos. Many Christians view embryos as potential human life with inherent moral value, while others, possibly non-religious, consider them as clusters of cells without the same moral status as fully developed humans. A utilitarian perspective on the moral issue of the status and value of embryos would focus on the consequences of actions involving embryos and how they impact overall well-being. Utilitarianism is a consequentialist ethical theory that evaluates the morality of actions based on their outcomes, aiming to maximise overall happiness and minimise suffering. Utilitarianism involves weighing the positive and negative consequences of using embryos for IVF purposes. It requires a careful assessment of how the potential benefits (e.g., medical advancements, successful pregnancies) compare to the potential harms (e.g., ethical concerns, emotional distress). Policies and practices involving embryos would be evaluated based on their effectiveness in maximising overall happiness and minimising harm. This could lead to support for embryo use for IVF if it significantly benefits many people or significant reform if harms are identified. I agree with the Utilitarian view as by focusing on maximising happiness and minimising suffering, utilitarianism promotes the idea that it could improve fertility treatments, and advance scientific knowledge as well as justifying the use of embryos for IVF, as these outcomes can substantially enhance the quality of life for many people by giving them the opportunity to start a family.

Another use of the treatment of embryos is for stem cell research. Scientists use embryos to extract embryonic stem cells, which have the potential to develop into any type of cell in the human body. This research aims to understand human development better and find treatments or cures for various diseases and conditions, such as Parkinson's disease. The use of embryos in this way raises ethical concerns, particularly about the moral status of the embryo and whether it is acceptable to destroy embryos for scientific purposes that might not necessarily improve lives. A non-religious response to the moral issue comes from Humanists. Humanism emphasises the inherent worth and dignity of every individual. It suggests that humans have intrinsic value and should be treated with respect, regardless of their background, beliefs, or circumstances. The Humanist view on the treatment of embryos is influenced by the fact that they do not believe in the 'sanctity of life'. As a result of this they agree that research can take place on embryos up to 14 days old. This allows humanists to support research, such as stem cell therapies, which could lead to treatments for debilitating conditions as this perspective enables research to continue within the 14-day window, fostering innovation and the potential to alleviate human suffering as they recognise that up to 14 days, the embryo has not yet developed a nervous system or the capacity for consciousness. I agree with the Humanist view because it allows for the development of treatments and cures for debilitating conditions, significantly improving the quality of life for millions of people. This is undoubtedly a positive outcome, especially for those who suffer daily through no fault of their own. Additionally, as the research is conducted within the 14-day window, it aligns with ethical considerations since no harm is inflicted on a sentient or conscious being. Humanists are particularly strict about ensuring that research remains within these ethical boundaries, which makes this approach both compassionate and responsible.