

THE SECULAR ETHICS OF ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Artificial procreation or artificial fertilization is understood as the different technical procedures directed towards obtaining a human conception in a manner other than the sexual union of man and woman (Abbey, 1991). This Instruction deals with fertilization of an ovum in a test-tube (in vitro fertilization) and artificial insemination through transfer into the woman's genital tracts of previously collected sperm. A preliminary point for the moral evaluation of such technical procedures is constituted by the consideration of the circumstances and consequences which those procedures involve in relation to the respect due the human embryo. Development of the practice of in vitro fertilization has required innumerable fertilizations and destructions of human embryos (Millsap, 1996). Even today the usual practice presupposes a hyper ovulation on the part of the woman: a number of ova are withdrawn, fertilized and then cultivated in vitro for some days. Usually not all are transferred into the genital tracts of the woman; some embryos generally called spare are destroyed or frozen. On occasion some of the implanted embryos are sacrificed for various eugenic economic or psychological reasons. Such deliberate destruction of human beings or their utilization for different purposes to the detriment of their integrity and life is contrary to the doctrine on procured abortion already recalled (Friedman, 1997 b).

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