

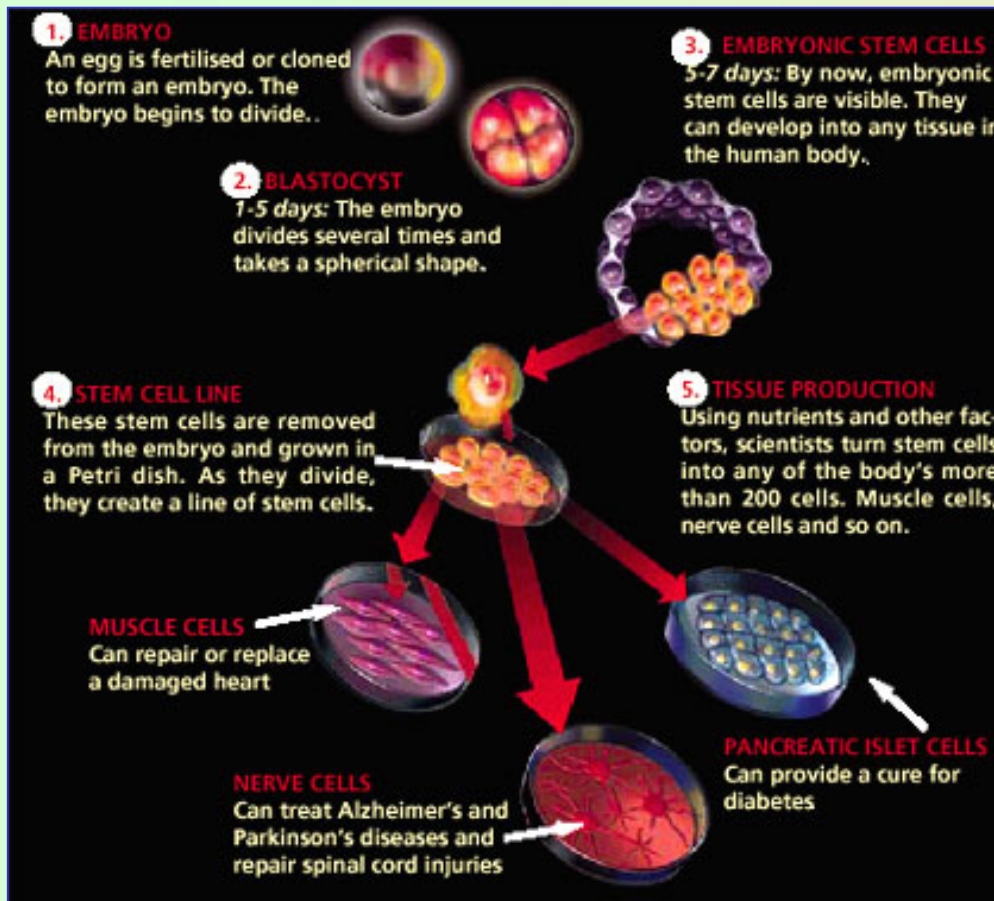
The Moral Status of Human Embryos

The Topic

Stem Cells are undifferentiated, self-renewing cells with the potential to produce specialized, differentiated cells.

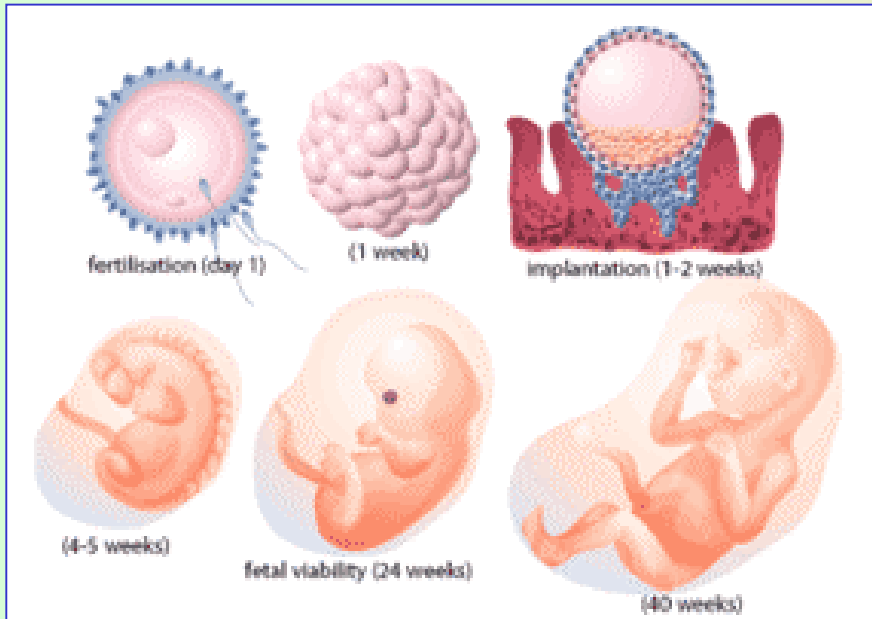
Human embryonic stem cells (hES cells) can be derived from the blastocyst 5-10 days after fertilization.

The possibility of deriving hES cells from an embryo raises the important and difficult question of defining ethically acceptable actions toward human life and this phase of development.



<http://www.gobartimes.org/20060215/70.jpg>

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An overview of human fetal development

<http://www.bioteach.ubc.ca/quarterly/wp-content/fetus.gif>

The Topic

The interest of science in being able to make use of hES cells is especially related to three objectives:

- a) **Better knowledge** of human biological development at an early stage of its life (basic research)
- b) **Testing** of both new and existing compounds/drugs, and
- c) The **cultivation** of various types of **cells**, **tissues**, and perhaps even **organs**.

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http://www.telegraph.co.uk/telegraph/multimedia/archive/01069/connected-graphics_1069558a.jpg

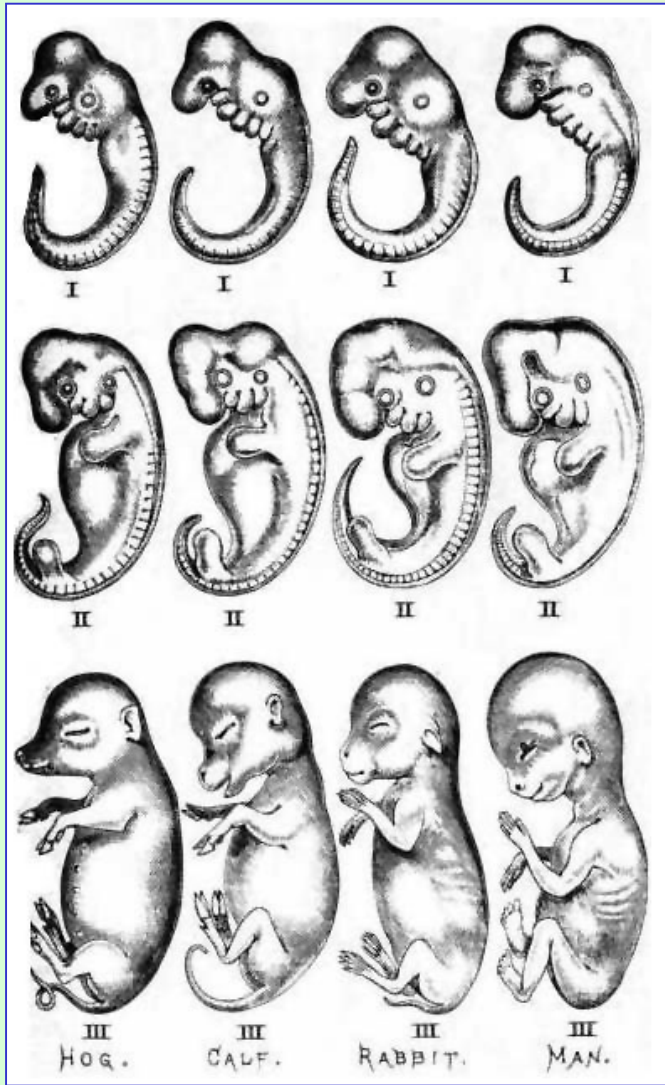
Philosophical and Theological Traditions

1. POTENTIALITY

The potentiality argument states that that which has the potentiality of becoming a developed human being, has a right to life.

According to this point of view such rights (life, care, protection...) do not emerge later in the development.

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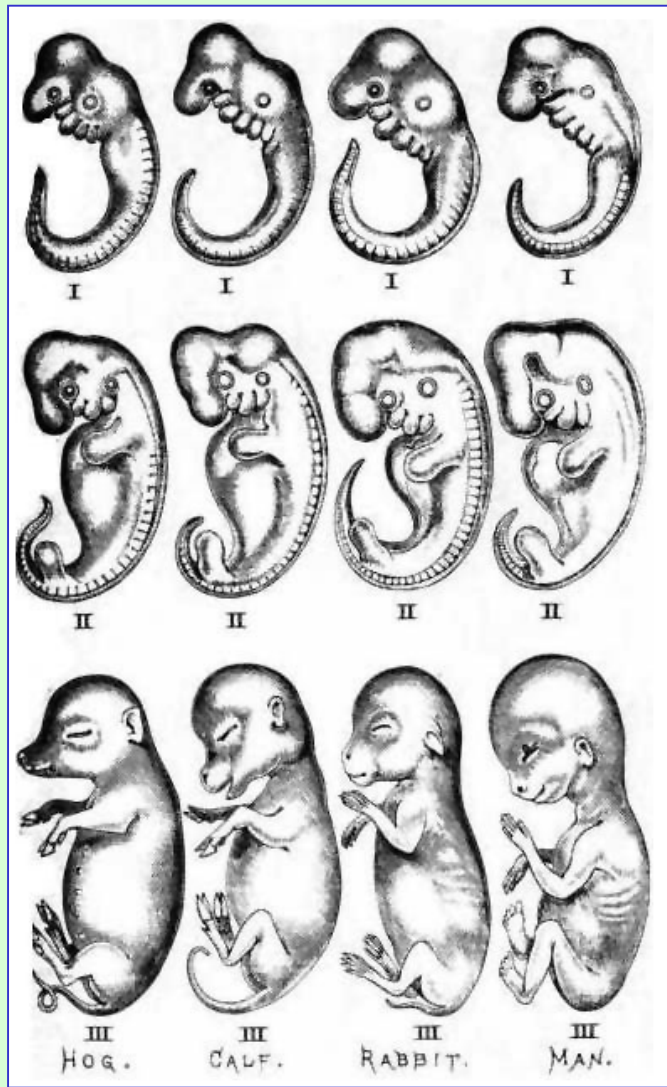
Philosophical and Theological Traditions

2. BIOLOGICAL CONTINUITY

The main point of this argument is that there is a continuous development in the life of an embryo, beginning with fertilization, without any possibility of differentiating between clear stages with corresponding, variable right to life.

Against this has been maintained that biological continuity does not exclude that there are morally relevant stages during the life of an embryo.

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Philosophical and Theological Traditions

3. GRADUALITY

Graduality is an alternative for answering the question: At what point does a human being obtain its full moral status: At fertilization? At some point during pregnancy? At birth or at some point after birth? And how does it happen?.

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Based on their **utility** and their **moral status**, would you agree on the use of blastocysts (human embryos) in research?

To consider		My point of view
Their utility		
Potentiality		
Biological Continuity		
Graduality		