

Available online at www.postmodernopenings.com

e-ISSN: 2069-9387; ISSN-L: 2068-0236

Postmodern Openings

2016, Volume 7, Issue 1, June, pp. 167-170

The Artificial Gametes and the Immaculate Conception

Antonio SANDU

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/po/2016.0701.10>

Covered in:

EBSCO, ERIH PLUS, CEEOL, Ulrich Pro
Quest, Cabell, Index Copernicus, Ideas
RePeC, EconPapers, Socionet, Journalseek,
Scipio

©2016 The Authors & LUMEN Publishing House.

Selection, peer review and publishing under the responsibility of LUMEN Publishing House.

How to cite: Sandu, A. (2016). The Artificial Gametes and the Immaculate Conception. *Postmodern Openings*, 7(1), 167-170. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/po/2016.0701.10>

The Artificial Gametes and the Immaculate Conception

Antonio SANDU¹

Abstract:

A very current topic in bioethical research is the impact that the technology of obtaining artificial gametes can have on society and humanity itself. One of the technologies of obtaining the artificial gametes allows the transformation of the epithelial cells (skin) into totipotent stem cells (cells that can transform into any type of tissue), hence, obtaining gametes (human reproductive cells), both masculine and feminine, starting from the cells of a single donor. This article's theme is the possible religious impact of genetic single-parenting.

Keywords:

artificial gametes; Immaculate Conception; Christianity; genetic single-parenting.

¹ Professor PhD Hab., Stefan cel Mare University from Suceava & LUMEN Research Center in Social and Humanistic Sciences, Iasi, Romania. E-mail: antonio1907@yahoo.com; Phone: +4 0740 151 455.

Introduction

A very current topic in bioethical research is the impact that the technology of obtaining artificial gametes can have on society and humanity itself. One of the technologies of obtaining artificial gametes allows the transformation of the epithelial cells (skin) into totipotent stem cells (cells that can transform into any type of tissue), thereby obtaining gametes (human reproductive cells), both masculine and feminine, starting from the cells of a single donor. The genetic material coming from one single donor may generate, by in-vitro insemination etc., a viable human embryo that, in the case of a female donor, can be implanted in her own uterus, or in case of the male donor, can be implanted in the uterus of a surrogate mother. This topic has been the subject of a very interesting session: “The Ethics of Human Artificial Gametes”, chair: Dr. John B. Appleby, speakers: Appleby JB, Mertes H, Cutas D, Palacios-Gonzalez C., June 16, 2016, within the recently ended World Congress of Bioethics, IAB 2016. Daniela Cutas presents the mentioned topic in a series of articles on the ethics of reproduction, including the artificial gametes, such as: Daniela Cutas, Anna Smajdor (2016): “I am your mother and your father! In vitro derived gametes and the ethics of solo reproduction” 1065-3058, [GUP 232469](#).

Although the topic of reproduction starting from artificial gametes is particularly attractive in fields, such as the rights of LGBT minorities, in general of ethics in medically assisted human reproduction. This article’s theme is the possible religious impact of genetic single-parenting.

Possible Christian perspectives on genetic single-parenting

One of the founding myths of Christianity is that of the Immaculate Conception, namely the birth of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, through means of childbirth without a biological father. From a biological perspective, we talk about genetic single-parenting of Jesus Christ.

A first speculative question would be: knowing that genetic single-parenting is possible (according to those previously presented in the case of the artificial gametes) could make this phenomenon naturally emerge outside the specifically mentioned technology, showing at least the theoretical possibility of the biblical miracle?

The fact that, at least theoretically, the laws of nature do not exclude biological single-parenting and are far from diminishing the soteriological value of Jesus' birth, integrates the miracle of the Immaculate Conception within the logic of possibility, but absolutely improbable, which makes the Miracle make Sense. The Divine exceptionality could make – in the eyes of the believers – an absolutely improbable thing become true, so that the Universal order is re-established and not disturbed.

Another more phenomenological question would be: how will a child report to the Christian faith if he is coming from a single-parent in vitro conception? Will the analogy between its birth and the Immaculate Conception determine that child to come closer to the Christian faith or on the contrary?

The trivialization of genetic single-parenting (in the sense of the child's genesis, based on the genetic material coming from one single parent and the technology of artificial gametes, and not of social single-parenting, which would mean raising the baby by one single parent) will lead to the Christian belief erosion, by undermining the impact of the miraculous on the Christian collective imagination.

And last, but not least: should the use of this reproductive technique be used due to the fact that it can represent an offense to Christian belief (why not the Muslim one also, which admits the Immaculate Conception of Jesus?)?

We live in a country where there were 3 million signatures gathered on a petition on altering the constitution to describe the family as being composed of a man and a woman... in order to have legal rights constitutionally, and the public rejection of the gay couples' right to marriage and parenting. Obviously, the reproductive techniques starting from the artificial gametes – belonging to both members of the gay couple, goes straight into contradiction with this vision expressed by the 3 million signatures. What about the ones targeting genetic single-parenting? Would it be an offense to Divinity or an act of Immitatio Christi?

Instead of conclusions

As long as the technology is possible, it needs to be analysed, not reduced to zero. Denying one possibility does not make it disappear, it only disappears the dialogue in bioethics... I was about to say between

the bioethics based on science and technology, and Christian bioethics. I am, however, waiting for ideas and opinions.

References

- Appleby JB, Mertes H, Cutas D, Palacios-González C., (2016). *Symposium “The Ethics of Human Artificial Gametes”*, chair: Dr. John B. Appleby, IAB2016.
- Cutas, D., Smajdor, A. (2016). “I am your mother and your father!” *In vitro derived gametes and the ethics of solo reproduction* 1065-3058, [GUP 232469](#)

Acknowledgement:

The Romanian version of the paper is freely available at <https://antoniosandu.wordpress.com/2016/06/21/gametii-artificiali-si-imaculata-conceptiune/>