

Methodology of the workshop

The framework of the workshop is inspired by Article 16 of the UNESCO Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights: “The impact of life sciences of future generation, including on their genetic constitution should be give due regard.”

The ethics of assisted human reproduction (ART) is vast with many nuances and debates. While the papers could address areas in ART that are more particular to religious traditions, we recommend the papers to concentrate on the following guiding questions as they regard the more controversial areas that can affect the future generations and the nature of marriage, family and relationship with children.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

On Prenatal Testing and Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis

It is common for clinicians to perform prenatal testing (PNT) and preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) as a means of selecting the genetically “healthier” embryos for in-utero implantation

- a) *Given the fact that neural tube disorders and genetic abnormalities can raise a host of spiritual and existential dilemmas, as well as explicitly ethical concerns, for the pregnant woman regarding her future child, to what extent should religious and spiritual and bioethical counseling be offered to women both during the process of obtaining consent for such testing, as well as during her deliberations regarding the results of such tests.*
- b) *Does PNT and PGD constitute a form of eugenics or is it an acceptable means of ensuring the health and flourishing of the future child/generation?*
- c) *Does PNT and PGD constitute of form of discrimination against future persons with genetic disabilities or lesser abilities because they are not enhanced?*
- d) *Does the act of genetically selecting embryos raise moral concerns regarding the relationship between generations?*

On Maternal Surrogacy

- a) *Is maternal surrogacy inherently a form of commodification for both the child as well as the mother, or can it be considered a virtuous (compassionate or selfless) act?*
- b) *How does the practice of maternal surrogacy affect the nature of motherhood, fatherhood, womanhood, childbearing and family?*
- c) *How does the practice of maternal surrogacy affect the future generation?*

WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

Commissioned papers

We have commissioned different papers from diverse religious and cultural perspectives to analyze and discuss these bioethical questions and their anthropological implications. They are encouraged to approach the topic:

1. employing religious and/or cultural texts and sources
2. around the workshop's featured key questions
3. with reference to the global bioethics paradigm of human rights and duties, articulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the UNESCO Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (2005).
4. engaging questions concerning potential bridge concepts as well as 'problematic' dissimilarities with suggestions on how they might be managed to keep the conversation focused with the aim of fostering convergence and cooperation

The following papers has been commissioned:

1. One expert from each of the seven religious/secular groups will write and present a paper (approx. ten pages) that must be submitted three months before the workshop addressing some specific aspects of the topic suggested by our Scientific Committee.
2. A second expert of the same tradition will be assigned to respond to the above paper (approx. 4-5 pages) and submit it before the workshop.
3. A third expert from a different tradition will be assigned to respond to the above paper (approx. 4-5 pages) and submit it before the workshop.

During the three-day workshop

The language of the workshop is English. Participants of the workshop include:

- a) Experts from the various religions who have written and submitted the papers. They are expected to have read the other papers before attending the workshop. During each workshop session, they will give a 15-minutes summary of their papers followed by the two eight minutes critiques and an ample period of discussion, clarification, and questions from other authors.
- b) Academics interested in the workshop may also participate in the sessions, after approval by the organizing committee. They can raise questions only after the group above has completed its discussions.

Publication

Before submission for eventual publication, the participants may modify their papers considering the dialogue during the three-day meeting. It is hoped that these discussions will provide a clearer understanding of different perspectives of this bioethical topic under the lens of human rights.