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mgr Magdalena Debita  
Uniwersytet Wrocławski  
Wydział Prawa, Administracji i Ekonomii

Overview of doctoral dissertation  
*In vitro fertilization in the light of Polish law  
and social teaching of the Catholic Church*

The subject matter of the present work are issues related to the *in vitro* fertilization as presented from various perspectives: medical, bioethical, legal, social teaching of the Catholic Church and public opinion. The main problem is the search for an answer to the question about the nature of the *in vitro* discourse both under Polish law and the teaching of the Catholic Church. This work is a search for both similarities and key differences in these positions and an attempt to answer the questions as to whether these positions are complete or they omit some issues, e.g. those related to infertility, cell donation and taking, embryo freezing, etc.

Very extensive research material has been divided in respect of substance, which is why the structure of discussing the topic, encompassing the material into larger problem entities has been adopted. The first chapter is devoted to introductory issues and includes fertilization with the *in vitro* method as a scientific and social problem and was written mainly on the basis of medical literature. It introduces the language and structure of knowledge that will be the basis for further reflection. It consists of two subchapters which concern in turn: medically assisted procreation as well as prenatal and preimplantation tests. The first subchapter devoted to medically assisted procreation consists of three parts. The first one treats about infertility as a disease (also in the social dimension); the second one is devoted to the characteristics of medically assisted procreation, and also deals with topics related to various methods of infertility treatment; the third one concerns the *in vitro* fertilization as an infertility treatment method. The second subchapter concerns focuses on an important issue, which is actually an integral part of the *in vitro* fertilization procedure: prenatal and preimplantation tests, which are important diagnostic tools and the separate parts of this subchapter have been devoted to them.

The second chapter introduces the subject of bioethical, legal dilemmas the attitude of and social science of the Catholic Church towards *in vitro*. These issues concern the scope of protection of human life, the collection and storage of germ cells, the storage of embryos,

the doctrinal foundations of the idea of eugenics, invasive prenatal tests and preimplantation diagnostics, the use of embryos for purposes other than parenthood, the limits of legal regulations in the *in vitro* fertilization method, termination of pregnancy as a result of fetal birth defects and also cell and embryo donation in the context of parenthood. It is worth specifying that each of the issues raised was discussed in terms of bioethics, law and from the point of view of the Church's social teaching.

The third chapter presents a broad approach to the right to life in the context of *in vitro* fertilization. In this chapter, the author makes use of her previous findings, published in earlier scholarly paper. For the purposes of this dissertation, these findings have been updated and deepened. In this part, of this chapter, the issue of criminal and civil law protection of *nasciturus* was discussed in accordance with the current state of Polish legislation. Then the position of the Catholic Church regarding the protection of life was presented. The next subchapter is devoted to the issue of legal regulation of medically assisted *in vitro* procreation, and further one presents - the position of the Church towards *in vitro* fertilization. The last subchapter is devoted to discussing legal solutions in the field of *nasciturus* protection in the light of to selected draft legal acts in the years 2009-2015. Restriction to the selected time limit was dictated by the desire to carry out a thorough selection and analysis of draft legal acts. Attempts were made to examine the content of these projects which allowed to initiate political and social discourse on a broader scale, thus projecting on the political and social discussion around the issue of the legitimacy of using *in vitro* fertilization in Poland.

The fourth chapter of the work was devoted to issues related to the right to one's identity and integrity. In the first subchapter, the issue of respecting the dignity of the fetus in the process *in vitro* fertilization in the context of international law, Church teaching and bioethics was examined. The next subchapter was devoted to the mother's bodily integrity versus the bodily integrity of *nasciturus*. Another topics raised is the limit of interference with the genome of a human being in the prenatal period. In the area of this problem, the scope of parental care was also discussed in the context of *in vitro* fertilization, as well as anonymous and identified sperm and oocyte donors towards genetic, biological, social and legal parenthood. The next subsection analyzes the issues of eugenics and dysgenics in the context of *in vitro* fertilization. The considerations contained in this chapter are concluded with an analysis of the issue of the one's right to know one's genetic identity.

The fifth chapter sums up Polish public opinion surveys regarding *in vitro* fertilization. This issue is so socially important that the largest Polish research centers conducted research on it have been regularly and continuously. Medically assisted *in vitro*

procreation is constantly the subject of social debate as well as political and ideological disputes. This subject touches the foundations of human life and makes us return to the basic questions about human existence - therefore this aspect will also be taken into regards in the present dissertation. The analyzed reports concern to the attitude of public opinion to *in vitro*, but also to termination of pregnancy and contraception. It can be assumed that the questions were selected in such a way as to conduct research on various issues regarding reproductive rights. It is also worth adding that the newest research on this issue was carried out in 2016 (2 years before the research was carried out by the author). Since then, the *in vitro* financing method has changed, so it is worth checking how it affected public opinion. In this part of the work, the author also presents the results of her own quantitative research in this area. This research character was a survey and was conducted using an online survey on a non-probabilistic sample of 1153 people. They were nationwide, and the Internet has contributed to this effect (it is worth adding that, according to the Główny Urząd Statystyczny (Central Statistical Office) report 'Information society in Poland in 2018', 84.2% of households in Poland currently have Internet access and this percentage is growing). Various categories of respondents were reached *via* the network. The main research problem focused on the attitude of the respondents to *in vitro* fertilization, and specific problems concerned the impact of faith and unbelief (in the context of religion) on their views, and the relationship between one's views on the *in vitro* issue and other ideological issues such as access to abortion or contraceptive use. The main hypothesis of this study was the assumption that Catholics would be *in vitro* opponents as well as abortion and contraception. It is worth specifying that the results of the survey research, which the author conducted a query, treat the issue of contraception as an auxiliary and contextual, but it is not the main topic of interest.

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Magdalena Dobie