

On Certain Aspects of the Significance of Sex-Selective Abortions in Bioethics and Population Policies

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Introduction

On Abortion

Abortions may be spontaneous (referred to as a miscarriage) or induced (commonly referred to as an abortion). An induced abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy is one of the most frequently performed gynaecological procedures. An induced abortion refers to a medical procedure, during which an embryo is removed from the uterus. From the clinical point of view, distinction is made between induced abortions during the first trimester (up to week 12 of pregnancy) and induced abortions during the second trimester (up to week 24 of pregnancy). While social indications dominate during the first trimester, abortions in the second trimester tend to be medical, in particular due to genetic indications around week 16 of pregnancy. It should be noted that termination of pregnancy especially during the second trimester is a rather serious iatrogenic intervention in the body of the pregnant woman with increasing risks of maternal morbidity and mortality [1].

On Determining the Sex of the Foetus in the Mother's Body

Under physiological conditions, the sex of the foetus is determined during fertilisation. The arithmetic expression of the situation during fertilisation would suggest that the proportions of men and women in the population should be equal. However, this ratio is not equal, as male newborns outnumber female newborns approximately at the ratio of 105:100. Immediately after fertilisation, this imbalance is even more pronounced, as the examination of abortive material shows. While the future sex of an individual is determined in the moment of fertilisation based on chromosomes – and as such is naturally

identifiable – the sex of an individual cannot be detected according to external features at first during the embryonal development; this period is referred to as the undifferentiated stage. Naturally, sex organs are differentiated subsequently: "During the third month of pregnancy, the main morphogenetic processes are mostly completed and most of the foetus' organs virtually have acquired their definitive shape and position. Details of shapes continue to develop. Eyelids are formed with an epithelial seam towards the end of the third month. Finger segments begin to form. On the whole, the foetus resembles an adult individual, yet still has a large head, which accounts roughly for one third of its body. Differentiation of outer sex organs is completed, and the sex of the foetus can be detected according to these [2]."

On the Paper's Approach to the Topic of Development and Growth of an Embryo and Foetus in Time

The progress of intrauterine development can be timed from the moment of fertilisation. This is how the so-called embryonic age is determined, as this can be estimated according to the first day of the last menstrual period, i.e. defining the so-called gestational age. Prenatal development consists of the embryonic, foetal and perinatal periods. The embryonic period ends in the 8th week after fertilisation, i.e. in the 10th gestational week. All organ systems are gradually formed, and their basic development is finalised during this period. The foetal period ending with delivery is characterised by completing development, morphology and function of individual organ systems. The foetus grows in size and its weight increases. A potentially viable foetus may be delivered as soon as in the 24th week of embryonal age, or the 26th week of gestational age. Under normal conditions, pregnancy ends with delivery occurring in the 38th week of embryonal age or

the 40th week of gestational age. This paper focuses on the study of anthropologic and ethical aspects of the approach of the societies or the mankind as such to an embryo or the foetus in the mother's body. The researched literature often fails to distinguish between embryonic and gestational age, and this paper accepts this from the methodological point of view, refraining from any attempts to make the references to the age consistent. The objective of this paper is to study the anthropological, ethical and social context and therefore the data needs to be accepted in their historical heterogeneity. This explains why the paper works with the combined term of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body.

Objective

- a) Definition of certain aspects of the significance of sex-selective abortions in bioethics in general.
- b) Definition of certain aspects of the significance of sex-selective abortions in population policies.
- c) Description of certain aspects of mutual links between the significance of sex-selective abortions in bioethics in general and their significance in population policies.

Methods

- a) Research titled "Sex-selective abortions in actually implemented population policies in the 20th and 21st century" was performed; period 1990-2025, languages: Czech, English, German, Italian.
- b) The author has been studying, among other topics, bioethical issues on a long-term basis as part of his interdisciplinary focus, approaching these issues from the scientific, as well as artistic point of view. The author pays interest, for example, to the topics such as euthanasia, contraception, the anthropological and ethical status of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body, and ethical issues associated with assisted reproduction.

Results

On the General Anthropological and Ethical Status of an Embryo or A Foetus in the Mother's Body, with an Emphasis on Sex-Selective Abortions

A quote from a paper focusing on abortions from the Czech medical and intellectual circles to introduce this topic: "Contemplations of abortions tend to admit the question of the conflict between the woman's right to freely decide about her pregnancy and the right of the unborn child to life. All discussions revolve around this dispute and only few mention that the parties to this conflict are a human embryo without its own biological structure characterising a human being on one side and the mother as a fully developed human being on the other side. Therefore, this conflict is between the right of an individual having the characteristics of a human being and the right of an individual lacking these characteristics. Therefore, the presump-

tion of legal priority should be on the mother's side. However, the situation changes as soon as the foetus gains these unique human characteristics and is differentiated from other living organisms on this planet [3]." An attempt will now be made to summarise the views of the anthropological and ethical status of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body with an emphasis on sex-selective abortions.

a) The main question is which characteristic of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body is specifically human and when this characteristic is fully expressed in an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body. These two questions characterise the general anthropological and ethical status of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body. This should be considered with the awareness of the fact that from the medical point of view, development of a foetus in the mother's body is highly continual and fertilisation and delivery are the only two distinct moments in this process. In addition, the human existence from the legal point of view is more or less defined by two milestones – conception and death. It is therefore essential to note that the anthropological and ethical status of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body is a branched out structure of various options and is principally pluralistic. As if an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body represented the vast variety in the definition of a human being stored in the cognitive treasury of the mankind. In this specific aspect, an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body is the humanity as such.

b) It is obviously impossible to make an error in the multi-layered issue, which is not – and perhaps cannot be – terminologically unified, while listing the basic structure of the idea when an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body gains the quality of a fully-fledged human being. The so-called ontological personalism states that a human foetus is a fully-fledged human being from the moment of fusion of the maternal and paternal gametes. Embedding of the fertilised egg in the woman's uterus is another significant milestone closely related to this concept that can be encountered in discussions on abortion in the 1970s. Another opinion, referred to as empirical functionalism, states that a fully-fledged human being begins to exist at a certain stage of embryogenesis. As a point of interest, it can also be added that other, mostly philosophical opinions referring to Paul Ricoeur claim that a potential human being is a fully-fledged human being even before the paternal and maternal gametes fuse. However, opinions claiming that a fully-fledged human being only begins to exist at the moment of birth play a major role in the discussion of this topic [4]. Another important factor that should be noted involves the opinion that a human being is not born. A person becomes a human being gradually, at the cost of enormous rational and moral efforts, struggle and hardship, and the intrauterine stage is only initiation to this autonomous effort.

c) While this basic structure may be useful especially in the structure of thoughts, it does not provide a clear ideological concept for relevant solution to specific requests for abortion at various stages of pregnancy, especially with regard to the enormous complexity of various reasons stemming mainly from the mother's medical condition and social situation, the medical condition of the foetus in the

mother's body, specific social context of the conception, and other wider social context of the relevant society. However, it is important to note that the issue of seeking a moment from which a foetus becomes a human being is naturally associated with the values preferred by the relevant society. The current approach from the viewpoint of scientism based on specific knowledge in the theory of embryogenesis respecting the values preferred by the liberal society, for example in the opinions of H. J. Morowitz and J. S. Trefil determines functional activation of the grey matter (between weeks 24 and 32) as the decisive moment that turns a foetus in the mother's body into a fully-fledged human being having equal rights with the mother from the ethical and anthropological point of view.

d) From the point of view of sex-selective abortions: Christian religions and Christian faith is the primary source of the current pro-life position with regard to the opinion on abortions, asserting the opinion that the eternal soul is the distinguishing factor of human beings. However, the opinions on when the eternal soul appears in a human foetus in the mother's body vary among Christian thinkers; this topic is a subject of discussion even among the Christian community and there is no unified conclusion to the issue. The opinion expressed by Thomas Aquinas, according to which the eternal soul enters a male embryo on the fortieth day of its intrauterine life, while the same process occurs in the case of a female embryo on the ninetieth day, is greatly important for the issue of sex-selective abortions. It should be highlighted again just how important this approach is with regard to the theoretical basis for sex-selective abortions, since it would seem that a longer period of time is theoretically permitted for terminating the development of a female embryo. This essentially foreshadows a certain trend appearing in population policies in the 20th and 21st century also in secular states. On the other hand, the current moral catholic theology is unquestionably critical of sex-selective abortions.

In his statements, Hans Rotter takes the following methodological steps in line with the majority opinion in moral catholic theology:

- In the first step, he defines the moment at which a human embryo in the mother's body becomes a fully-fledged human being: "The question of the beginning of life is the first prerequisite for assessing examinations during pregnancy. Save for isolated, exceptional cases, there is currently a wide consensus in this regard: A human life unfolds from the moment of conception in such continuity that the idea of subsequent inclusion of a soul seems to be arbitrary and unlikely. As soon as the egg and sperm fuse, a being carrying the seeds of everything that is to appear during the subsequent development is created. It is therefore necessary to base any contemplation on the notion that when a new human life (embryo) is created, a human being is created. In addition, it is necessary to always consider the ethical principle, according to which every human life has the right to exist from the very beginning."

- In the second step building on the first step, he states that prenatal diagnostics have to serve life as any other act of a physician.

It is no longer ethically legitimate if prenatal diagnostics are controlled by the principle according to which abortion is admissible when the need arises, in particular, for example, in the case of the so-called eugenic indications in view of the health of the embryo.

- Building on the assessment of the initial ethical principles of prenatal diagnostics, he states the following on determination of the sex of an embryo and thus also on sex-selective abortions: "It is necessary to appreciate the fact that physicians are currently still reluctant to inform about the sex of a child, although it can be determined precisely via amniocentesis. Otherwise, there would be potential concern that also this factor would play a certain role in decision making on the life or death of the child. Indeed, there are cases of "trial pregnancies". It has been observed that couples with a severe genetic burden, which is, for example, expressed in male offspring only, strive for pregnancy but only expect to allow the pregnancy to continue if the diagnosis shows that the unborn child is female. It would be even more contemptible if such "trial pregnancy" was to be attempted simply because the family already has, for example, two daughters and the parents would like to have a son. – These actions suggest the course of future development, unless the awareness of responsibility keeps pace with technical capabilities [5]."

International Conference on Population and Development (1994, Cairo) on the Topic of Abortions

The development of global population policies in the 20th century was varied. However, it is the practical implementation of population policies, in particular in the second half of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century in China and India, that provides truly significant insight in the global context. Certain convergence of various streams can be observed at the beginning of the 1990s, i.e. after the end of the bipolar world divided by the Cold War. The International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 was a key event that set a new outline for individual branches of population policies. This conference significantly enriched the population agenda by the aspect of human rights, adopting a single stance on the topic of abortions in section 8.25. "In no case should be abortion promoted as a method of family planning. All Governments and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations are urged to strengthen their commitment to women's health, to deal with the health impact of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern and to reduce the recourse to abortion through expanded and improved family planning services. Prevention of unwanted pregnancies must always be given the highest priority and all attempts should be made to eliminate the need for abortion."

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 confirmed this stance, recommending individual countries to "consider reviewing laws containing punitive measures against women who had undergone illegal abortions [6]." Abortion under coercion is expressly described as a violation of fundamental rights and principles.

Regression to Generality as the Key Principle Governing Bioethical Thinking

General bioethical topics, in particular the topic of the anthropological and ethical status of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body, which are associated with topics such as abortion or assisted reproduction with many consequent questions, are full of ideological irreconcilability so strong that it virtually prevents the attainment of even partial compromise. This explosively ideological character of bioethical topics is very hard to explain, perhaps this can only be explained by the fact that bioethical issues are fundamentally ideological, rather than scientific in the conventional sense. In what sense are they fundamentally ideological? Is ideology actually the correct term? It would seem that the bioethical issues are a field where the so-called regression to generality occurs, where ideas diverge in principle and any convergence is ruled out. The divergence of ideas in bioethics is a philosophical principle, rather than a metaphysical one. As if the bioethical issues were letting or even forcing us to observe the signs of inability to reach a definite opinion on the world being monistic, dualist or pluralist, whether it was created by the act of the Maker, or developed through evolution in nature, while the question remains how these principles of evolution began to exist in nature. The world of bioethics is a world where we make decisions, yet also a world by principle inaccessible to cognitive synthesis. It is a great paradox that bioethical issues, such as issues relating to assisted reproduction, are potentially crucial for the mankind.

Instrumental Ratio of the State within its Population Policies as A Tool for Partial Solutions in Bioethics

Nonetheless, there seems to be at least a partial methodological solution to how to achieve at least partial synthesis, as shown in the analysis of the topic of regulation of sex-selective abortions in national population policies. Population policies in general are an interesting field for studying the anthropological and ethical status of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body, as the state is always forced to reach a partial summary of divergent thoughts that arise when we study the anthropological and ethical status of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body from the general perspective of pure science. The topic of sex-selective abortions is a very interesting example of how the state decides because it has to. This paper strives to show that the instrumental ratio of the state striving to maintain its own operation is capable of partial, imperfect approaches to grasping the anthropological and ethical status of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body, surpassing or bypassing the purely noetic approach of science, which fails in the case of bioethics due to the phenomenon of regression to generality. The instrumental ratio of the state intervening in general issues of bioethics, specifically in the case of sex-selective abortions, will be examined on the case study of China and India and their national population policies primarily in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

On Reasons of Collision Character from the Ethical Point of View in Sex-Selective Abortions in General and Actual Population Policies of the 20th and 21st Century

Sex-selective abortions are sad reality of actual national population policies in the 20th and 21st century. The term "actual" is key in this context. Naturally, no official national population policy pleads openly for sex-selective abortions, and these abortions cannot be in the interest of any population policy as deforming the SRB (sex ratio at birth) is not in the interest of any state – no discussions on this can even unfold. However, certain states may be forced by strong population growth to adopt a national population policy that opens the back door in the specific cultural milieu to the practice of sex-selective abortions on a larger scale within the grey or even criminal zone of the society. The specific character of ethical dilemmas surrounding sex-selective abortions in general is the result of the following: the borderline between the 1st and the 2nd trimester of pregnancy is a borderline between potential abortions for social reasons (among others) and abortions chiefly for medical reasons; the borderline between the 1st and the 2nd trimester of pregnancy is a borderline between iatrogenic abortions with low risk and a much higher risk; therefore, the borderline between the 1st and the 2nd trimester globally therefore has to be a significant boundary where the approach to the anthropological and ethical status of the foetus in the mother's body changes qualitatively. The Czech Act No. 66/1986 Coll., on termination of pregnancy, a typical example of this, is a liberal regulation based on the woman's right to decide on her pregnancy and motherhood, which stipulates the key condition for terminating the so-called physiological pregnancy – the duration of such pregnancy must not be longer than 12 weeks. At the same time, it is the third month of pregnancy when the external morphological differentiation of sex organs is completed and therefore the sex of the foetus can be determined using commonly available medical means free of any risks even in the environment of countries with limited economic development. It is essential to point out that medical and technological progress even in less developed societies is relatively fast. In summary: From the point of view of actual national population policies especially in countries of the so-called Global South, sex-selective abortions carry a strong ethical tension, should the topic of sex-selective abortions be resolved by withdrawal to illegality and criminal zone.

To reiterate, sex-selective abortions carry major ethical tension in particular in societies with strong population growth, which needs to be brought under control. In the case of sex-selective abortions, the state finds itself in a model situation where the instrumental ratio can be applied. The core aspect of the instrumental ratio, which is also the reason why it is referred to as instrumental, lies in the fact that the state does not proclaim its entire population policy to be ethically defective simply because the policy as a whole produces this undesirable side effect. The state strives to utilise instrumental ratio by

maintaining the operation of the foundations of its population policy, as this strengthens the state's foundations (and the state as an organisation is a value in itself), and resolving the practice of sex-selective abortions as a practical problem. This means that the state strives to minimise rather than eliminate such side effect. At the same time, such instrumental actions are not unethical, or more precisely, these are only unethical when absolute ethical measures are applied. However, the state may always defend its stance by claiming that it only strives to harmonise its key responsibility, to prevent anarchy, while harmonising this Hobbes motif as much as possible with the principles of ratio determining the ideal maxims of actions.

Instrumental Ratio of the State in the Case of Regulation of Sex-Selective Abortions in People's Republic of China

Abortion as such has been legal in People's Republic of China since the 1950s. As China declares itself to be a socialist political system, it is hardly surprising that the practice of abortions follows the precedent in the existence of a liberal abortion law in the early Soviet Union. It should be mentioned in this context that a socialist system in general introduces liberal abortion laws even with regard to elimination of criminal abortions with all risks posed to a woman's health. However, liberal abortion laws in specific Chinese conditions are subsequently significantly modified in connection with birthrate control. In fact, since the beginning of the 1950s were aimed at moderating excesses in population growth. Abortions in China can be divided into three categories: voluntary abortions, enforced abortions as part of submission to the family planning policy, and sex-selective abortions, which are derived in principle from the first two types, but cannot be officially part of the national family planning policy. In the 1980s, enforced abortions became part of the one child strategy, or more precisely, enforced abortions are used in provinces as an auxiliary tool for regulating out-of-quota pregnancies. According to Chinese authors, estimating the extent of these enforced abortions is difficult. Li Mei and Quanbao Jiang state the following on sex-selective abortions: "Sex-selective induced abortion has been reported since the early 1980s with the strict implementation of the one-child-per-couple policy and the availability of sex identification technology. The decline in fertility, either spontaneously due to socioeconomic development or involuntarily due to compliance with the family planning policy, increased the pressure for sex-selection in the context of son preference...An estimate made three decades ago claims that, even if the abortion of female fetuses could explain the entire distortion in China's SRB, it would account for less than 5 percent of all abortions reported for 1986" [7].

It can be said that the long-term high SRB is a major problem in China [8], as it creates a generation of superfluous men, who cannot find a female partner. Therese Hesketh, Li Lu and Zhu Wei Xing state: "There are already laws forbidding fetal sex determination and sex-selective abortion in China, India and South Korea. But only in South

Korea has the law been strongly enforced...The fact that in China and India sex-selective abortion is still carried out with impunity, by medical personnel, usually qualified doctors, in hospitals and clinics, not in backstreet establishments, makes the failure of government to enforce the law all the more surprising. However, although sex-selective abortion is illegal, abortion itself is readily available, especially in China, and it is often difficult to prove that an abortion has been carried out on sex-selective, as opposed to family planning, grounds" [9]. China is gradually relaxing its policy of one child, but the policy of one child has been psychologically internalised in the population. China is striving to correct the deformed SRB instrumentally. The rather ineffective strategy of prohibitions has already been mentioned. However, the Care for Girls Campaign managed by China's National Population and Family Planning Commission launched in 2003 is generally noted as successful and effective.

Instrumental Ratio of the State in the Case of Regulation of Sex-Selective Abortions in India

Abortion as such has been legal in India since the 1970s, when the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, a more or less liberal regulation, came into force. The act stipulates the conditions under which abortion is legal: threat to the mother's health and life, pregnancy due to rape, or even poor socioeconomic status of the family in which the child is to be born. It is necessary to mention in the context of sex-selective abortions that as the modern unified India emerged, the country documented in 1871 marked asymmetry in SRB, with only 940 women being born per 1000 men. Legalisation of abortions as part of the liberal abortion policy combined with availability of modern medical technologies, such as the ultrasound and amniocentesis, intensified this asymmetry in SRB: for example, in 1991, only 929 women were born per 1000 men in India. This means that legalisation of abortions to some extent facilitated the assertion of the traditionally patriarchal concept of a family typical for South Asia, where sons are perceived as a guarantee of economic development of the family and its long-term stability. In addition, specifically in India the preference for the patriarchal family concept leads to an exceptionally widespread practice of dowry for daughters, which represents a major economic burden for many families, despite the efforts to eliminate this practice by legal regulations ongoing in India since 1961. Therefore, despite the modernising efforts of the Indian state, the tradition is exceptionally strong, and modernising tradition applied also in liberal abortion laws leads to intensified deformation of the SRB when faced with the conservative patriarchal tradition.

This is a rather strange consequence of the overall modernisation against the backdrop of the traditionalist society, and one that would hardly be expected, given the general trust in the power of modernisation without any alternative. India responds instrumentally: it does not change its overall concept of abortion laws, does not perceive the terrifying phenomenon of missing women as a vicious circle, in which emancipation as a general increase in freedoms turns against itself.

Instead, the state adds a certain technical and legislative tool for reducing female feticide – the Prenatal Diagnosis Techniques Bill to the valid abortion laws in 1994 [10]. It should be reiterated that where abortion is criminalised, changes in the SRB due to illegal sex-selective abortions in a traditionalistic society are not a noteworthy problem. Two remarks in conclusion: During the 1970s, the government under the leadership of Indira Gandhi introduced a very strict family planning and birthrate control policy comparable to the Chinese policy of one child; the policy relied, among other instruments, on an extensive sterilisation program. However, Sugandha Nagpal in his analysis of the phenomenon of sex/selective abortions states the following when comparing Southern and Northern India: „However, an analysis of changes in the 0-6 sex ratio between 1991 and 2001 shows that, except for Lakshadweep, Sikkim, Mizoram and Tripura, all states have registered a decline in the female child ratio” [11].

Conclusion

- a) Sex-selective abortions belong to bioethical issues as a field where the so-called regression to generality occurs, where ideas diverge in principle and any convergence is ruled out. Regression to generality is a concept of the author of this paper and one the author has been working with on a long-term basis. It can be used to explain even exceptional ideologization of issues addressed in bioethics.
- b) With more or less standard prenatal diagnostics at the current level of technological and medical development, sex-selective abortions become a highly specific ethical issue, as they carry enormously strong ethical tension, should abortion as such join sex-selective abortion in the grey or criminal zone of the society.
- c) Generally speaking, in the dispute between the pro-choice and pro-life stance, where the terrain is extraordinarily unclear, sex-selective abortions are mostly part of the arguments used by pro-life opinions: “One of the paradoxes of feminism lies in the fact that by advocating for abortions, feminism deprives women of their most fundamental right – the right to life. Abortion has become a major tool for eliminating unwanted women worldwide [12].”
- d) On the other hand, sex-selective abortions may be the field of the extreme pro-choice stance. This was the topic of the reflection paper entitled “Is sex-selective abortion morally justified and should it be prohibited?” by Wendy Rogers, Angela Ballantyne and Heather Draper. It is a general polemic with the opinion that regulation or removal of the right to sex-selective abortion limits a woman’s freedom and reproductive autonomy. The scientific paper mentioned above uses comprehensive arguments to reject this approach and advocate for a definite legal ban of sex-selective abortions (SSA): “We have argued that it is possible to demonstrate the immorality of SSA, whilst seeking to understand and empathise with the difficult choice faced by women who use SSA. SSA is morally unjustified because it does not reflect an autonomous choice for women and generates serious harms for both women and men. SSA perpetuates discrimination against women and destabilises important social structures such as family formation. For these reasons it is appropriate for governments to prohibit SSA with rigorously enforced laws [13].”
- e) Let’s stress out the term “trial pregnancy” as a generally bioethical topic, which also links generally bioethical issues with ethical issues associated with national population policies. The necessity of interaction between general discussion of bioethical problems and addressing bioethical problems as part of national population policies is the message of this paper: this is where compromise may be sought effectively in the entirety of bioethical thinking. The perspective of population issues provides a significant methodological advantage: it introduces the topic of maintaining the society as a whole in the highly ideological environment of bioethics and the society in its entirety rather than an individual human being is the bearer of humanness as such.
- f) Sex-selective abortions carry pronounced ethical tension especially in societies with strong population growth, which needs to be kept under control in the interest of the society; at the same time, societies with strong population growth tend to be traditionalistic and patriarchal. Such societies that combine liberal abortion laws with a good level of medical progress face the problem of significant deformation of the SRB due to sex-selective abortions, which may be prohibited, but are tolerated, as long as they are not outright criminal abortions.
- g) The presented paper is of the opinion that with regard to national population policies, the state finds itself in a model situation where instrumental ratio can be used instead of strictly ideological solutions typical for bioethics. The state may do so by avoiding any major changes to its population policy, as this strengthens the state’s foundation and there is no alternative to this policy, while addressing the practice of sex-selective abortions as a practical problem, meaning that it strives to minimise this practice through comprehensive political, social, medical and legal measures instead of trying to eliminate it. However, it is important to note that application of instrumental ratio in bioethics and in national population policies may be subject to justified criticism.
- h) There is no doubt that the anthropological and ethical status of an embryo or a foetus in the mother’s body is the key to resolving complex anthropological and ethical issues in assisted reproduction. This is currently a widely used medical strategy with massive, albeit high-risk potential for future.

From the perspective of this paper, the following can be stated on assisted reproduction:

- The key ethical and legal principle of assisted reproduction includes the stipulation that “techniques of assisted reproduction

may not be used to obtain special characteristics in the future child, in particular with regard to selection of the child's sex, except for those cases where serious sex-specific hereditary disease is to be avoided."

- Bioethics are an unusual comprehensive multilayer environment whose dimensions may be expressed through the slippery slope connection. In other words, a decision on the anthropological and ethical status of an embryo or a foetus in the mother's body consequentially means a decision on our stance on remote ethical challenges of bioethics including topics such as red biotechnology and issues of transplantation medicine.

i) Generally, it can be summarised that the anthropological and ethical potential of sex-selective abortions in bioethical theory has not been studied extensively or grasped intellectually.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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