“When Does Human Life Begin?”

I am in an exchange of views with someone in regard to the question of when life begins. He is a very well read and educated person, however I cannot vouch for what or who he reads! According to him, “There is no hard line to draw where life of a human being begins. We only know that as soon as the sperm cell and egg fuse, the resulting cell bears the genetic and biochemical potential to become a new human person. Everything else is an opinion, not science, only God knows at what stage the life of a human person really begins.” What recommendations might you have in dealing with this discussionspurred by the stem cell research issue during the election.

Your friend is essentially correct from a scientific perspective, but what he cites is very important. Having the full genetic and biochemical potential to develop into a baby in nine months is the only certain point of demarcation. Anything else will be an arbitrary point chosen largely for convenience. So why not establish fertilization as the point at which human life ought to be protected?

U.S. law was originally quite clear that where there was doubt, err on the side of life. Now we choose to err on the side of death just so we can pursue the next series of experiments. Nobody wants to worry about what if we’re wrong? We just redefine life so we can proceed ahead. And those who think religious

perspectives should be
left out are fooling themselves. If scientifically we cant make any other clear
point of reference then the point you do choose has been chosen for reasons
other than science, which means personal values and beliefs. This should be
a lesson that so-called personal values intersect with facts all the time
and they truly cannot be separated.

Of course, biblically and theologically, the line of demarcation is quite clear.
Beginning with Psalm 139:13-16,

> *13 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.*
> *14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.*
> *15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;*
> *16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.*

followed by Isaiah 49:1,

> *Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me.*

Psalm 51:5,

> *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*

and Jeremiah 1:5,

> *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”*

The Scriptures clearly indicate that a person made in the image of God is
present even before there is a biological manifestation of such.

I would basically tell your correspondent that he has helped make your case for
protecting the earliest life. Fertilization is the only sure point of demarcation.
We were all once a blastocyst and even a fertilized egg. But none of us was ever
just a sperm or egg cell.

Respectfully,

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