I illustrate: When parents who have used IVF donate the remaining embryos after a successful pregnancy to scientific research, I seriously doubt that these parents allocate the same value to these freely donated embryos as they would have if they still had plans to use these embryos to have a child. And then of course some prospective mothers opt to take the morning-after pill to terminate their prospective offspring, which indicates a negative extrinsic value allocation to the pre-embryo.

Dr Donkin mentions that there are alternatives to research with human embryonic stem cells. This is a dangerous half-truth. It should also have been mentioned that, for some important research areas, none of these alternatives is as useful and effective as using human embryonic stem cells. For example, research areas such as human fertility require human embryos with which to experiment. And even in research areas where there are alternatives to human embryos, the obvious question is: Why not use human embryos? In the absence of sound and rational reasons, scientists should not be prohibited, or bogged down in excessive red tape, to use such embryos. To hinder the progress of science in the absence of sound, rational reasons is profoundly unethical.

To conclude, I believe that hypocrisy and prejudice are proper objects of ridicule. And to erect steep regulatory barriers around the use of pre-embryos for research, but simultaneously allowing such embryos to be aborted at will and simultaneously not blinking an eye at the millions of pre-embryos that are naturally excreted, constitutes hypocrisy and prejudice against science. Moreover, irrational beliefs that cause suffering of real persons by hindering the progress of medicine are not only proper objects of ridicule, but also of contempt and condemnation.