

STOP CLONING AROUND WITH HUMANS

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It is now theoretically possible to clone a human being.

If you ever wanted to have an identical twin, technology is available to create another human in your exact image. While your cloned twin would be much younger than you, he would be an *exact* twin in biological make-up, even closer to you than an *identical* twin.¹

Moral Questions

For moralists concerned about the advent of Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," cloning experiments presage the threshold of a frightening new era. Consider the following possibilities.

1. What if humans were cloned and developed under controlled laboratory conditions in order to harvest human organs and tissues for medical transplants?
2. What if cloned humans were genetically engineered to produce Nietzsche's "superman"? Goliath-sized troops could be designed to supply the armed forces, Einstein-like scientists could be developed to man the nation's research centers and halls of academia, and complacent worker bees could be mass-produced to stand at factory production lines and burger grills.

Fearing a public backlash against research into the make-up of human beings, leading geneticists themselves petitioned Congress to ban the cloning of humans when the controversy hit the headlines in 1997. Congress obliged, and the prospect of Americans seeing the production of a human being for sterile or even ghoulish ends was immediately thwarted. The new law indirectly guaranteed that there would be continued public support for another important project, Congressional funding for research to map and define the 70,000 genes found in human DNA.

Theological Questions

For theologians, the issue of cloning presents more than questions growing out of social or personal ethics. Theologians deal with spiritual and eternal verities. Biblical theologians remind us that God has an interest in each person, and that human life has inherent worth because it is made in God's image. As long as a human clone is a real human being, there will be legitimate concerns for God's relation to the clone, and the clone's everlasting relation to God.

One immediate question that arises for theologians is whether a cloned human would even have a soul. This is not a question merely regarding the preservation of man's inherent dignity. Rather, it is one of eternal consequence if a soul is produced along with the physical form of the human clone.

Questions naturally arise.

1. Does a human clone have a soul?
2. Assuming human clones have souls, would the soul be the same soul as that of the donor parent? If the clone's soul has the same essence and form as the parent, it would appear that the parent, apart from its own unique environment and life experience, would no longer be a unique person before God.
3. Since the clone is created in the laboratory by scientists, would the clone be created in God's image, in the donor's image, or (facetiously, we may ask) in the general image of the laboratory creators?
4. To show that there is no limit to all kinds of ponderous questions, if a regenerate Christian were ever cloned, would the twin's soul automatically be regenerate also?
5. If the clone has no soul, what kind of masterpiece would mankind have wrought with this technology? –a monster or an intelligent robot?

It's one thing to clone a dumb sheep, but in view of the spiritual dimension of mankind, it is a grave matter to manufacture a human.

What Is Cloning?

Besides uncertainties over the end product, the current cloning process itself raises ethical questions. Much like laboratory *in vitro* fertilization where several test tube babies are started in the petrie dish before a viable embryo is implanted in the mother's uterus, cloning also often involves the destruction of developing embryos. Dolly the wonder sheep was chosen from one of 277 clone starts.² The rest of the batch was destroyed. Certainly for Christians who believe that human life begins at conception, this laboratory method applied to human reproduction shows callous disregard for the sanctity of human life.

The actual cloning procedure generally involves the use of an egg but no sperm. In normal cells, the entire blueprint for producing more cells is contained in the cell's nucleus. Cell reproduction is through cell fission. Egg and sperm cells, however, contain only half of the blueprint for reproducing. These reproductive cells must meet and combine the DNA of each cell's nucleus in order to begin multiplying.

Cloning involves removal of the nucleus from an egg cell in order to replace it with the nucleus of a mature cell. The doctored egg then has all the chromosomes necessary for

beginning normal development by cell fission. The egg and the new nucleus could come from the same female donor. In Dolly's case, the full nucleus came from the breast tissue of the sheep donating the egg.

Implications and Suggestions

This technology raises other disconcerting social implications for human cloning. In our age of same-sex marriages and shameless homosexuality, the technology now exists for homosexual partners to have children made in their own image. The old joke that "at least they can't reproduce" may not stand much longer. Lesbians will no longer need a sperm donor or any male involvement in their lives. Homosexual men would only need an egg donor and a donor to supply the host uterus.

Moving beyond the social implications to the spiritual realm, it does seem that a human clone would be 100% human, viz., the clone would be an immortal being. Whether it would be a unique soul in contrast to the identity of its donor parent creates a bit more consternation.

In orthodox Christian circles there are two different views of the origin of the human soul. One view holds that God intervenes at the point of conception to miraculously create the soul of the new human. Support is found in passages like Isaiah 57:16, and in the special creative precedent of God breathing life into the first human, Adam.

The alternative view is that a new soul derives directly from its parents even as a body originates from the parents. This approach finds support in the biblical doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his offspring.

Against the first view are problems in supposing that a soul newly created by God is polluted by connection to its material form at conception. This smacks of Platonic dualism. Rather, it is more reasonable to believe that Adam's own corruption was genetically passed down to his descendants through the bodies and souls of his offspring.

This latter approach begins to shed light on the necessity of Christ's virgin birth. Jesus would have no human father in order to preclude His inheriting the pollution of Adam's sin through the line of Adam's sons. At the same time, the perfect deliverer, the second Adam, would come as promised through a daughter of Eve rather than from Adam.

Returning to the question of a human clone having a unique soul, it must be admitted that there is no easy answer. It appears that the clone would be the exact image in body and soul of its parent donor, except that the clone would be conditioned and shaped by a slightly different (or even largely different) environment. He would be cut from one piece of cloth rather than from two pieces as is normally the case. He would not be his parent, but would be just like him as a twin.

Because of environmental conditioning, and because the exact twin would live and die independently of its original, it might be better to describe the human clone as an exact, yet

independent, “analogy” of its twin. The operative word is “independent.” Identical twins come very close to sharing an exact identity; though they may live in sympathetic response to each other, they are still independent (and unique) in their lives. By the same token, while the clone may not have a soul of unique essence, he would be able to have a unique life. That life would be lived in dependence upon and responsibility toward God (Acts 17:26-28).

Conclusion

Human cloning should be banned and discouraged. Even if human embryos were not destroyed in the process, cloning is spiritually dangerous. It presumptuously claims sovereignty over the creation of human life, transferring this ultimate issue from the prerogative of God and religion to the initiative of man and his laboratories of technology. In man’s pursuit to escape God’s providence, cloning will further demean the value of human life in a modern world where life already grows cheaper by the day.

Should the day ever come when the world sees its first human clone, it will not be a life-like robot nor a monster. It will be a living soul. That soul, like all others, will have to live a life that answers to the ultimate Maker of all.

¹ In the case of identical twins, two separate sperm cells simultaneously fertilize one egg. As close as the offspring are in their origin, they still start with slightly different contributions of DNA from the father. The twins are “nearly identical” rather than exactly identical as in a clone.

² *Moody Magazine*. March/April 1998; p. 47.