

On Human Cloning and Genetic Entropy

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The Ethics of Human Cloning, by Leon Kass, AEI Press, 1998, is worth the read. The following comments are a reflection on this excellent book.

Dolly the lamb was cloned in Scotland in 1997. The President's National Bioethics Advisory Board on Human Cloning immediately advised against human cloning but only out of concern for safety. Presumably, if human cloning becomes "safe" it will then pass inspection. Kass comments on why it should not be done:

- Reproductive technologies have already added to the erosion of the mystery and respect for human sexuality and the origins of life. Although wonders can sometimes be performed, intimacy seems to be increasingly diminished with each new reproductive technology.
- Cloning represents a way to control the future through our genetically altered children. It has always been the case that misguided curiosity will stop at no ends to pursue whatever can be done. Attempts to control our own future and that of the world around us are, in part, attempts to deal with our fears and insecurities that arise from our distancing ourselves from God.
- Cloning is a new form of eugenics and results in the exercise of control over other's lives. Whether eugenics is pursued through politics and social revolution or through genetic means, there are those who inevitably end up as the desirable and others as the undesirable. The "betterment of mankind," as C. S. Lewis said, always means the sacrifice of some lives for the so-called betterment of others.
- Asexual reproduction through cloning is dehumanizing and degrading found only in lower forms of life. How interesting, that we should strive to be more primitive in our pursuit of life rather than to accept the higher form of life God has given us.
- Cloning threatens identity and individuality. Who will my clone be to me? Will he be my brother, my twin? Will he be my child? Or will he be my father, since some of his DNA preceded us both? The loss of what might be called relational-biological relationships throws us into confusion and precipitates abandonment of mutual responsibility and obligation for one another as community.
- Cloning turns procreation into manufacture. If reproductive technologies already in use have blurred the line between the "begetting of a child" and the making of a product in a laboratory, how much more down the descent do we move in needing neither "love" nor "mate" to produce our clone?
- Cloners will have exercised power over the cloned. It is inevitable that, as parents act as though they own their children, it will surely be inevitable that the cloner will claim ownership over the life of his clone. Children grow up and out of our control, but clones cannot outgrow us for they are us and not themselves.

- Separation of the biological from the relational destroys marriage. Reproductive technologies, whether currently in use, or in the form of human cloning, will continue to divorce the physical from the relational. When this happens, there will be no care for that which is us, but not us, in a clone.

The two ethical systems that support cloning are *ethical relativism* and *utilitarianism*. Ethical relativism claims that right and wrong are whatever each of us says they are. Utilitarianism claims that the best consequences of what we do make judgments of right and wrong irrelevant. There are other moral approaches to ethics, but for Christians the direction of faithfulness in how we live is found in our being created in the Image of God and not in the image of Man as exercised in imposing our will on creating a clone.

The bottom line is that human cloning may never be possible, whereas the attitude that toys with such things is already well established among us.