The Morality Of Creating Life Essay, Research Paper

The Morality of Creating Life

The idea of creating life has intrigued people since the beginning of time. Mary Shelly in her novel Frankenstein brought this idea to life. In this novel, Victor Frankenstein created life by using advanced science and spare body parts. The idea of creating life is a current controversy. Technology now allows for the cloning of sheep. Certainly, the ability to clone humans cannot be far away. It is necessary to place restrictions on cloning research and to ban humans cloning because human cloning is immoral. Furthermore, the expectations placed on a cloned creature by society would be unbearable for the creature, and would lead to its psychological demise.

In the nineteenth century, the idea of creating life was thought to be science fiction. A nineteenth century writing, Mary Shelly’s novel Frankenstein, portrays Victor (the creator) as innocent and the creation as evil at the beginning of the novel. Later, it becomes evident that the monster was not evil when created, rather that the creature was made evil by the surrounding environment. Victor’s immediate response was, as Shelly writes, “Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath” (??). The monster soon understood that he was in fact hideous. Shelly writes, “Knowing social opinion, the monster explained after his agonizing shock of self-discovery, ‘All men hate the wretched’” (??). Whereas the cloning of humans may not produce a being like Victor’s creation, there is little doubt that society may react harshly to this new type of being. The expectations would be enlarged for the creation, which may lead to negative consequences for both the creation and society.

Society would be forever changed once a creature was cloned. Maureen Noelle McLane, author of Literate Species: Populations, “Humanities,” and Frankenstein writes about the drastic impact of the creation on the society in Frankenstein. She writes, “The monster is a problem both for himself and for Victor; more specifically, the monster forces what we might call the psychological re-mapping of the native human world” (967). The drastic changes that society could be forced to deal with could cause problems for the creature, but more so for society. Learning to deal with a being that knows it is the only creature not reproduced sexually would be difficult.

Learning to deal with the creature is not the only problem that society must accept. At the present time, if humans were to be cloned, many lives would be lost perfecting the procedure. John F. Kilner, director of the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity in Bannockburn, Illinois and author of Stop Cloning Around, notes that the cloning of sheep had 277 failed attempts, including the death of some defective clones (10). The idea of having defective human clones dying is quite scary. This fact seems to outweigh the good that could come about from cloning. For example, the cloning of wheat is done to yield more grain and bears no moral ramification. The cloning of humans could also lessen the uniqueness of humans. As Kilner notes, “?human beings, made in the image of God, have a God-given dignity that prevents us from regarding other people merely as means to fulfill our desires” (10). Also, one must wonder who are the true parents of this creation. If it is produced in a laboratory, is it then the doctors who cloned the creation, the donor of the cell, or other people involved in the procedure. Many adopted children are forced to deal with this question. This sense of wondering makes life unbearable for some adopted children and adults.

The theory of cloning a particular individual who was of great benefit to society to allow them to continue their greatness for another generation is ill founded. For instance, if Mother Teresa were cloned, the environment of her community would decide her personality. If she was raised in a family with no religious ties, there is a good chance that she may not be the Mother Teresa that society would expect. Another problem of cloning famous people, lost loved ones, or friends are the unfair expectations placed upon that person. If technology was furthered to the point where dead cells could be cloned, a parent could clone the dead child to “replace” them. The problem with this is that the cloned child would have unfair expectations to be the same as the dead child, or possibly better. Time distorts perceptions of the past.

The morality issues that cloning has presented have been addressed by President Clinton. RNS, writer of the article Clinton urges ban on cloning of humans, reports that President Clinton, at a White House ceremony where he accepted the report of the National Bioethics Commission, stated, “What the legislation will do is to reaffirm our most cherished beliefs about the miracle of human life and the God-given individuality each person possesses” (583). Clinton is responding to the legislation that would ban human cloning but allow continued research. This statement was in reply to Scottish researchers who had successfully cloned a sheep, making the cloning of a human more imminent. Backers of President Clinton included Gracie Hsu, an analyst with the Family Research Council. She opposed the idea to allow cloning research to continue in order to possibly aid the sick. She stated that the panel’s recommendation to allow human embryo research “is premised on the false assumption that human beings less that 14 days old are not completely human, thereby condoning the destruction of countless numbers of embryonic children for the sake of ‘research’” (584). This type of research is very similar to abortion.

President Clinton is not the only person to oppose cloning. The Catholic Church and other religions have decided that cloning is immoral. These religions extend beyond the Catholic Realm. Many Protestants, including Gilbert Meilaender, Board of Directors Chair of Christian Ethics, and Professor of Theology at Valparaiso University, author of Religious, Philosophical, and Ethical Perspectives on Cloning: Cloning in Protestant Perspective, believe that cloning is immoral because it takes away sexual reproduction. Meilaender believes that sexual reproduction is good for the relationship of the man and the women, an also the relationship between the parents and child. He noted, “What Protestants found in the Bible was a normative view: namely, that the sexual differentiation is ordered toward the creation of offspring, and that children should be conceived within the marital union” (2). Meilaender also believed that when a child is cloned that the child is then constructed out of human will instead of God’s will.

Catholics are also against cloning. Cardinal Bernard F. Law articulates the Catholic view on cloning in an article by Kevin Krajnak. In his article, Cardinal Urges Congress to Ban Human Cloning, Krajnak reports the Pope as stating that Congress “?should enact a meaningful ban on human cloning without further delay.” The article also tells of the Cardinal sending each member of congress an information packet explaining how the arguments against a federal ban on human cloning are misleading.

There are many supporters of cloning. These supporters believe that cloning is moral for a variety of reasons. Meilaender attempts to tackle some of these ideas in his writings. Many religious supporters turn to Scripture to support their belief. They note that Adam and Eve were created, and that Jesus was “begotton, not made in one being with the father” (Nicene Creed.) This argument is easily combated with the fact that all was created by God, not just Adam and Eve. God, in his eternal wisdom, created everything to perfection. Mortals do not have that power. Meilaender combats the notion that Jesus being “begotton not made” relates to cloning. He states, “What the language of the Nicene Creed wanted to say was that the Son is God just as the Father is God” (4). If it had been said that God made Jesus it would have implied an inferiority that is not true.

There are many supporters of cloning. Well Hello, Dolly is an article that supports cloning. Author Kenneth Paul Wesche, where he acts as Dr. Frankenstein, Jr., explains his reasons. In this article, Wesche raises the argument of God creating Adam and Eve in a slightly different light. It is noted that Adam and Eve were no less human than Cain and Abel (or anyone else) because of the manner in which they were created.

The problem that this argument fails to realize is that God is able to use His infinite wisdom, whereas mortals are not capable of doing this.

Another argument that he presents is that while the DNA material may be the same, just as with identical twins, that the personality would be different. While this is not proven, it is quite likely. The environment of one’s community determines the personality much more so than one’s genetic code. Wesche writes, “A human clone would be as much a human being as its donor, its personality would be distinct even if its essence and genetic make-up were identical to the donor’s and therefore it would be possessed of all the value inherent in any personality” (276). Weiche again failed to realize that both twins are made by God’s infinite wisdom, not by human wisdom. Where the cloned being may be unique, it is still manmade, and prone to error by its creator.

The idea of creating life by controversial means is not a new idea. In vitro fertilization was a major concern to many people fifteen years ago. Dr. Kenneth D. Pimple, author of The Ethics of Human Cloning and the Fate of Science in a Democratic Society, views the two methods for creating life as quite similar. Dr. Pimple views that an objection that holds true to both of these methods is that they both use artificial methods in a laboratory to create life. He notes, however, that, “A key difference between these two methods is that cloning an embryo through blastomere separation is as chancy as normal sexual reproduction, whereas with somatic cloning, you can have a better idea of what you are going to get-?” (1). This may be the exact problem with cloning. When an individual is able to create exactly what they want, expectations are unreasonably high.

Catharine Cookson, Ph.D. in religious studies from the University of Virginia and author of Legal Perspectives on Cloning: Of Monsters Unleashed: A Modest Beginning to a Casuistry of Cloning, feels that there needs to be a happy medium insofar as cloning technology. She writes that the first step is “Providing a system of enforced responsibility that looks to long term effects and social goods” (9). While she is against cloning, she is in favor of scientists being free to advance technology that is less controversial under standards and limits. She raises the issue that with all of the hardships which normal humans are forced to overcome daily, a clone would have the power to overcome the obstacles that it is faced with.

The issue of cloning is no longer an issue in the imagination; it has come to life. Just as Victor created the Monster, society may be close to stumbling into the same fate. Scientists are now able to clone sheep and monkeys; humans cannot be far away. The government, along with the President of the United States, sees enough danger in cloning to place limitations on it. While the publicity on this topic may fade, its dangers will not. Actions need to be taken before a monster is created.

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