

Ethical Aspects of Cloning

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Cloning refers to the somatic cell nuclear transfer that creates biological material that is genetically identical to the parent (Reeve, 2013). For instance, an organism or organ can be used to create genetically identical replicas. As such, the process of cloning creates a genetic duplicate. The discussion over whether there is any ethical justification for cloning is very polarizing. This is because many arguments have been advanced to support and reject cloning, particularly concerning the potential medical benefits and fate of the rejected clones. In this respect, the ethical debate is centered on what is to be done with excess clones and how they are disposed off (Morrison, 2013). Therefore, the subject of cloning generates a lot of ethical debates since it presents potential benefits as well as harm.

As earlier indicated, cloning involves the creation of replicas that are genetically identical to the parent. In this case, there are two principal forms of cloning which include therapeutic and reproductive cloning. Therapeutic cloning refers to the reproduction of organic material used for treatment or research purposes while reproductive cloning refers to generating cloned embryos that are then implanted into the uterus of live mothers to be birthed (Reeve, 2013). As such, cloning can occur at the organism, organ, single cell or even DNA level. Typically, ethical debates concerning cloning are focused on the replication of whole organisms. Although animals have historically been cloned (particularly microorganisms such as bacteria, with minimal ethical outcries), the same cannot be said for mammals. In fact, the first mammal's cloning, the sheep called Dolly, raised a lot of debate in both the scientific and nonscientific community since it was a surprise. Following the successful cloning of the sheep, intense speculation began concerning the possible cloning of humans and other mammalian species. Granting that human embryos have successfully been cloned, there are no substantial reports to support the notion that

these embryos have been implanted into live hosts and birthed (Morrison, 2013). The principal ethical issue is centered on the moral status of the clone and whether it can be destroyed without compunction, specifically when they are created for research purposes and are produced in large numbers to counter the low success rate. The ethical issues likely to arise would be the human life commodification, altered and complex familial relationships, clones being psychologically harmed, large number of fetuses and embryos that must be produced to ensure successful uterus implantation, mothers facing health risks, and the clone being genetically impaired (Hope, Savulescu & Hendrick, 2008). As long as these six issues remain unaddressed, the ethical debate concerning cloning will remain.

One must accept that cloning is a revolutionary process that has changed the concept of life. Also, one has no option but to accept that this subject provokes polarizing ethical debates. In fact, ethical questions are raised over whether it is right to clone organisms and what rights each of the parties have. Although the clone is produced for research, therapeutic or reproductive purposes, questions are still raised about life commodification, relationships, psychological effects, and health risks. As a result, the ethical issues must be addressed before cloning can be universally accepted. Therefore, the subject of cloning generates a lot of ethical debates since it presents potential benefits as well as harm.

References

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