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The Debate about Cloning – Part I

By Sam Vaknin

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How to cope with your abuser?

Sometimes it looks hopeless. There are two types of cloning. One involves harvesting stem cells from embryos ("therapeutic cloning"). These are the biological equivalent of a template. They can develop into any kind of mature functional cell and thus help cure many degenerative and auto-immune diseases.

The other kind of cloning is much derided in popular culture – and elsewhere – as the harbinger of a Brave, New World. A nucleus from any cell of a donor is embedded in an egg whose own nucleus has been removed. The egg is then implanted in a woman's womb and a cloned baby is born nine months later. Biologically, the cloned infant is a replica of the donor.

Cloning is often confused with other advances in bio-medicine and bio-engineering – such as genetic selection. It cannot – in itself – be used to produce "perfect humans" or select sex or other traits. Hence, some of the arguments against cloning are either specious or fuelled by ignorance.

It is true, though, that cloning, used in conjunction with other bio-technologies, raises serious bio-ethical questions. Scare scenarios of humans cultivated in sinister labs as sources of spare body parts, "designer babies", "master races", or "genetic sex slaves" – formerly the preserve of B sci-fi movies – have invaded mainstream discourse.

Still, cloning touches upon Mankind's most basic fears and hopes. It invokes the most intractable ethical and moral dilemmas. As an inevitable result, the debate is often more passionate than informed.

I. Right to Life Arguments

According to cloning's detractors, the nucleus removed from the egg could otherwise have developed into a human being. Thus, removing the nucleus amounts to murder.

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It is a fundamental principle of most moral theories that all human beings have a right to life. The existence of a right implies obligations or duties of third parties towards the right-holder. One has a right AGAINST other people. The fact that one possesses a certain right – prescribes to others certain obligatory behaviours and proscribes certain acts or omissions. This Janus-like nature of rights and duties as two sides of the same ethical coin – creates great confusion. People often and easily confuse rights and their attendant duties or obligations with the morally decent, or even with the morally permissible. What one MUST do as a result of another's right – should never be confused with one SHOULD or OUGHT to do morally (in the absence of a right).

The right to life has eight distinct strains:

IA. The right to be brought to life

IB. The right to be born

IC. The right to have one's life maintained

ID. The right not to be killed

IE. The right to have one's life saved

IF. The right to save one's life (erroneously limited to the right to self-defence)

IG. The right to terminate one's life

IH. The right to have one's life terminated

IA. The Right to be Brought to Life

Only living people have rights. There is a debate whether an egg is a living person – but there can be no doubt that it exists. Its rights – whatever they are – derive from the fact that it exists and that it has the potential to develop life. The right to be brought to life (the right to become or to be) pertains to a yet non-alive entity and, therefore, is null and void. Had this right existed, it would have implied an obligation or duty to give life to the unborn and the not yet conceived. No such duty or obligation exist.

IB. The Right to be Born

The right to be born crystallizes at the moment of voluntary and intentional fertilization. If a scientist knowingly and intentionally causes in vitro fertilization for the explicit and express purpose of creating an embryo – then the resulting fertilized egg has a right to mature and be born. Furthermore, the born child has all the rights a child has against his parents: food, shelter, emotional nourishment, education, and so on.

It is debatable whether such rights of the fetus and, later, of the child, exist if there was no positive act of fertilization – but, on the contrary, an act which prevents possible fertilization, such as the removal of

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the nucleus (see IC below).

IC. The Right to Have One's Life Maintained

Does one have the right to maintain one's life and prolong them at other people's expense? Does one have the right to use other people's bodies, their property, their time, their resources and to deprive them of pleasure, comfort, material possessions, income, or any other thing?

The answer is yes and no.

No one has a right to sustain his or her life, maintain, or prolong them at another INDIVIDUAL's expense (no matter how minimal and insignificant the sacrifice required is). Still, if a contract has been signed – implicitly or explicitly – between the parties, then such a right may crystallize in the contract and create corresponding duties and obligations, moral, as well as legal.

Example:

No fetus has a right to sustain its life, maintain, or prolong them at his mother's expense (no matter how minimal and insignificant the sacrifice required of her is). Still, if she signed a contract with the fetus – by knowingly and willingly and intentionally conceiving it – such a right has crystallized and has created corresponding duties and obligations of the mother towards her fetus.

On the other hand, everyone has a right to sustain his or her life, maintain, or prolong them at SOCIETY's expense (no matter how major and significant the resources required are). Still, if a contract has been signed – implicitly or explicitly – between the parties, then the abrogation of such a right may crystallize in the contract and create corresponding duties and obligations, moral, as well as legal.

Example:

Everyone has a right to sustain his or her life, maintain, or prolong them at society's expense. Public hospitals, state pension schemes, and police forces may be required to fulfill society's obligations – but fulfill them it must, no matter how major and significant the resources are. Still, if a person volunteered to join the army and a contract has been signed between the parties, then this right has been thus abrogated and the individual assumed certain duties and obligations, including the duty or obligation to give up his or her life to society.

ID. The Right not to be Killed

Every person has the right not to be killed unjustly. What constitutes "just killing" is a matter for an ethical calculus in the framework of a social contract.

But does A's right not to be killed include the right against third parties that they refrain from enforcing the rights of other people against A? Does A's right not to be killed preclude the righting of wrongs committed by A against others – even if the righting of such wrongs means the killing of A?

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Not so. There is a moral obligation to right wrongs (to restore the rights of other people). If A maintains or prolongs his life ONLY by violating the rights of others and these other people object to it – then A must be killed if that is the only way to right the wrong and re-assert their rights.

This is doubly true if A's existence is, at best, debatable. An egg does not a human being make. Removal of the nucleus is an important step in life-saving research. An unfertilized egg has no rights at all.

IE. The Right to Have One's Life Saved

There is no such right as there is no corresponding moral obligation or duty to save a life. This "right" is a demonstration of the aforementioned muddle between the morally commendable, desirable and decent ("ought", "should") and the morally obligatory, the result of other people's rights ("must").

In some countries, the obligation to save life is legally codified. But while the law of the land may create a LEGAL right and corresponding LEGAL obligations – it does not always or necessarily create a moral or an ethical right and corresponding moral duties and obligations.

IF. The Right to Save One's Own Life

The right to self-defence is a subset of the more general and all-pervasive right to save one's own life. One has the right to take certain actions or avoid taking certain actions in order to save his or her own life.

It is generally accepted that one has the right to kill a pursuer who knowingly and intentionally intends to take one's life. It is debatable, though, whether one has the right to kill an innocent person who unknowingly and unintentionally threatens to take one's life.

IG. The Right to Terminate One's Life

See "The Murder of Oneself".

IH. The Right to Have One's Life Terminated

The right to euthanasia, to have one's life terminated at will, is restricted by numerous social, ethical, and legal rules, principles, and considerations. In a nutshell – in many countries in the West one is thought to have a right to have one's life terminated with the help of third parties if one is going to die shortly anyway and if one is going to be tormented and humiliated by great and debilitating agony for the rest of one's remaining life if not helped to die. Of course, for one's wish to be helped to die to be accommodated, one has to be in sound mind and to will one's death knowingly, intentionally, and forcefully.

Sam Vaknin is the author of *Malignant Self Love – Narcissism Revisited* and *After the Rain – How the West Lost the East*. He is a columnist for *Central Europe Review*, *PopMatters*, and *eBookWeb*, a United Press International (UPI) Senior Business Correspondent, and the editor of mental health and

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Hair cloning as a viable treatment for hair loss conditions.

By Richard Mitchell

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One of the most exciting recent developments in the search to find new solutions for hair loss has been research investigating hair cloning. Properly known as follicle cloning or multiplication, it involves taking a sample of a person's hair follicle cells, multiplying them in a lab and injecting them back into the patient's scalp. The aim obviously is to generate natural hair regrowth without the need for invasive surgery. But can we realistically expect this treatment to become available in the foreseeable future?

Unfortunately the process is not yet possible but research is underway to perfect it. Current predictions suggest that it is unlikely to become available to the public for at least ten years.

The name of the process is a little misleading as it really refers to cell therapy rather than true cloning. Once perfected it would involve taking a small sample of tissue from the scalp and then creating a culture that would allow the follicle cells to multiply. The theory is that the few sample cells would multiply to become several hundred thousand that could then be injected back into the scalp to create several thousand new hairs.

The major obstacles that must be overcome include the following:

- There is no certainty that the replicated cells can develop into hairs.
- There is no guarantee that the new hairs will grow to the same thickness, color or direction as the existing hair coverage.
- There needs to be certainty that the cloned cells do not introduce serious health problems such as the growth of cancerous tumors.

Clearly hair cloning offers exciting possibilities for the treatment of hair loss in the future but for now, you'd best stick with the more limited treatments that at least are currently available.

Please go to

to find out more about the issues covered in this article.

Richard Mitchell is the creator of the

website that provides information

and guidance to those suffering from premature hair loss.



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