

CRG HUMAN CLONING Position Paper

A call for a worldwide ban on human cloning . . . and wider public debate about biotechnology

I. We call upon the nations of the world to prohibit the cloning of human beings, by incorporating such prohibitions into their national laws and statutes.

II. We call upon the United Nations to take the initial steps by constituting an International Tribunal to articulate the concerns arising in different nations, cultures, religions and belief systems, with respect to the potential cloning of humans.

III. We call upon the Congress of the United States to pass legislation to:

- 1) Prohibit the cloning of humans either through embryo splitting or nuclear transfer.
- 2) To exclude animals and plants, their organs, tissues, cells or molecules from patenting, whether naturally occurring or cloned.

IV. We call upon the citizens of the world and their institutions, including the media, to promote a vigorous public debate regarding the cloning of animals, and in particular, what line should be drawn (if any) between practices that are acceptable and those that are not.

In the course of human history our species has recognized many behaviors that are counter to the interests of the survival, development and flourishing of individuals within civilization. Among these are involuntary servitude, or slavery, torture, the use of poison gas, the use of biological weapons, and human experimentation without consent. Human societies are working to prevent other destructive practices such as child labor, environmental degradation, nuclear war and global warming.

The cloning of sheep, monkeys, and other animals opens up the specter of human cloning. The fundamental character of this activity is to transform humans into commodities, and to devalue the relationship of humans to each other and to their culture. Just as the 13th Amendment outlaws slavery, and laws exist to prohibit torture, child labor, and other forms of human exploitation, the time has come to ban human cloning.

We therefore call upon the United States, individual nations, and the United Nations to declare the cloning of human beings an immoral and illegal activity.

“CAN” DOES NOT IMPLY “OUGHT”

Despite the sheep cloners' disclaimer of any intent to apply this technique to humans, mainstream commentators, including "bioethicists," are already peddling the ideas of cloning dying children or 100% compatible human organ donors. (Transplantation of fetal pancreatic and brain tissue is already being used experimentally for treating diabetes and Parkinson's disease in adults). Scientists are reluctant to aver, for the record,

technological or medical scenarios that appear bizarre or avant-garde. We can expect that professional bioethicists and corporate marketing agents will ply their trade to make such new applications culturally palatable.

SOME EXPERIMENTS WILL BE PREVENTED

By banning cloning, some scientific questions will be more difficult to answer. But scientific convenience cannot be used to justify the degradation of the human condition, as occurred in the Nazi concentration camps, or in the Tuskegee syphilis study. The difficulty in obtaining classes of biomedical information is not a sufficient justification for research that exploits and demeans human beings.

DNA IS NOT DESTINY

Clones may share the same DNA, but they can hardly be described as "identical copies." Developmental, environmental and social factors stamp each living creature with the mark of individuality, even in the case of genetically identical twins. To be human is not the simple summation of genetic, biochemical or physiological processes. It involves the learning of language, the transmission of historical knowledge, the generation of new knowledge, and the creation and transmission of music, art and other forms of culture. Culture and society exist outside of physiology and are not transmitted through genes or cells, but through human communication and interaction in organized societies.

HUBRIS OF ENORMOUS MAGNITUDE – IMPROVING ON NATURE

Cloning per se will not be the most likely end point if this technique is attempted in humans. The cell nuclei of a mature individual with known biological characteristics can be used as the raw material for "enhancement" techniques, involving introduction of extra or altered genes. The idea would be that the resulting clones would be "new" improved models, with increased disease resistance, and

superior social, intellectual, or athletic skills. This highly questionable enterprise, now technically feasible, makes possible a virtually unlimited set of eugenic attempts at "improvement" from a culturally defined and arbitrary starting point.

DANGEROUS LOSS OF DIVERSITY

Even if the cloning technique were entirely confined to non-human animals in the foreseeable future, it would still be problematic. The robustness of natural populations, including their flexible response to new conditions and hence resistance to disease, lies to a great extent in their genetic variability. This characteristic would be entirely eliminated in a population of clones. The near total loss of the entire U.S. corn crop in the 1970's as a result of monoculture--overuse of too narrow a genetic base--is a harbinger of what could happen with cloned livestock.

ANIMALS ON THE ASSEMBLY LINE

Proponents suggest that farm animals of the future could be cloned to better maximize agricultural production: sheep cloned for softer wool or cows for higher milk yield. Transgenic animals could be cloned to produce human pharmaceuticals or even organs for human transplantation. But are we prepared to view animals solely as lucrative biofactories, useful only in their capacity to serve human needs? When utility becomes the sole lens through which we view non-human animals, we have begun a systematic ethical decline.

EROSION OF RESPECT FOR LIFE

The industrialized production of agricultural animals according to pre-specified standards will inevitably undermine any respectful stance toward animals that may remain in our highly corporatized culture. Our experience undermines any argument that the human realm can be successfully insulated from a basic disrespect for other living organisms. Our history of treating animals as commercial

goods, as well as the current trend of dismantling social programs protecting our society's most vulnerable people (children, poor and elderly), are not encouraging in this regard. Historical experience also points to a relationship between increased interest in genetic enhancement and decreased respect for the natural variation in ethnicity and ability in human life.

DEMOCRATIZING TECHNOLOGICAL PRACTICE

Genetic engineering is a technology developed largely with public tax funds. Hence, in fashioning policies for its implementation we should reflect upon citizen concerns. According to a 1997 Time/CNN poll of 1005 adults, conducted Feb. 26-27, 93 percent of Americans oppose the cloning of humans, and 66 percent oppose the cloning of animals. The Council for Responsible Genetics joins the call for a worldwide ban on human cloning and for wide public debate on the wisdom and ethics of animal cloning.

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ABOUT CRG The Council for Responsible Genetics fosters public debate on the social, ethical, and ecological implications of genetic technology. Founded in 1983, CRG is a non-profit/ non-governmental organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA). In addition to producing educational materials on various issues raised by biotechnology, CRG also publishes a bimonthly magazine, **GeneWatch**, the only national magazine that continually monitors the ethical, social, and ecological impacts of biotechnology as they apply to both humans and the environment. CRG has **position papers and question-answer sheets** on a variety of topics, including genetic discrimination, human cloning, predictive testing, genetically engineered food, the "gay gene," life patents, and germline engineering. Other resources include **The Genetic Bill of Rights**, a **Genetic Discrimination Legislation database**, and **selected books** on biotechnology and genetics. CRG also runs a **competitive internship program** for exceptional college and graduate students.

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