To Clone or not to Clone?

Sara Honickman

“Hi Barbara. I don’t know what to do! I so want a child but I have no marriage prospects and I don’t want to involve a man unless he is willing to make a long-term commitment to me and the baby.”

“Well, Pam, why don’t you just adopt a baby that needs a home?”

“I guess I could do that, but I was really hoping to raise a child genetically related to me.”

“Have you considered cloning? It is now possible to take the nucleus from one of your somatic cells and transplant it into a denuded egg. The embryo would have a genome identical to your own, and you could carry the baby.”

“Are you kidding me? That’s totally unethical!”

“Why?”

“It’s too dangerous! There would be far too many failures. It took over 400 tries to clone Dolly, and she’s just a sheep. You cannot risk human life that way.”

“But, the embryos are not persons. They are made in laboratories and do not have a proper environment to become persons until they are implanted. All the embryos would be screened before implantation and only the healthiest of the cells would actually make it to a uterus. Plus, every scientific breakthrough starts with a few failures.”

Philosophy and Society (continued from page 1)

those who want to understand other cultures, and those who are involved in politics— the running of our people—all must utilize philosophical thought in some way or another. For if one wants to understand a completely foreign culture, what better way than to attempt to understand that culture’s deepest level of thinking on the most fundamental questions of mankind? Politics, furthermore, is a direct application of philosophical thought. The most fundamental question in all of ancient Chinese philosophy is “What should be done?” This, of course, is directly implying the question “How should our society function?” Without considering philosophical questions like these, politicians would have no well-reasoned viewpoints. Moreover, by studying the deepest questions of the west or the east (What is real versus what should be done), we are able to recognize what is valued in certain cultures—at the most fundamental level possible.

But we must understand that it is not just those involved in foreign and political affairs that should have an understanding of philosophy. Ethics, as a branch of philosophical study, is something we consider daily. Every moral dilemma (Should the death penalty exist? Do we have the right to invade another country if we feel that their people are being treated unfairly?) is a matter of ethics. Religion, moreover, is philosophical theory by definition. The purpose of religion is to provide theses for what (if anything) created the world, as well as how we should act, worship, and live our lives. Anyone who practices and truly thinks about his/her religion is thinking philosophically. How, given these examples, can one claim that “Philosophy just IS NOT for me”? For by developing viewpoints about his/her religion is thinking philosophically. How, given these examples, can one claim that “Philosophy just IS NOT for me”? For by developing viewpoints on ethical, societal, religious, or existential issues, one is “doing philosophy.” It is safe to say, then, that everyone “does philosophy”—simply by thinking! There is no way of avoiding thinking about the issues that surround us. We, as society, should embrace this deep level of thought, rather than attach a stigma to those who study it at the most extensive level.

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“I still think the medical risks are too high. There could be flaws in the screening and children could be born with severe mutations. And on a separate note, it would be too weird raising myself.”

“Well, it wouldn’t be raising yourself. It would be raising your twin. She would grow up in a completely different environment and time period, and would develop her own interests and aversions. She would be an entirely different, autonomous being.”

“Sure, but it may still cause some serious psychological problems. She would be identical to me but 30 years younger. People would expect her to excel at the same things I did. Just imagine the disappointment of her grandparents if she was not recruited to play collegiate basketball as I was. Or what if I develop a genetic disease? I don’t want my child to have to live with that sentence looming in her future. In addition, would I be the child’s mother or sister? I could never inflict these kinds of problems on my child.”

“I can agree that the child may have identity problems, but this is no different from when surrogate mothers are also biological grandmothers. Strange things happen all the time that can cause emotional and identity stress for a child. This idea just needs some getting used to.”

“Well, what if it becomes too common? Once you allow singles like me to start cloning, where does it end? It is a very slippery slope. How could you let me clone myself, but not allow people to clone celebrities or even Hitlers? People could even start trying to bring back the dead.”

“This could never happen. Just like your daughter would not be you, a cloned Hitler would not turn out to be a tyrannical lunatic, and you cannot bring people back from the dead, just their twins.”

“I don’t think the rest of uneducated America could grasp that idea. Even now, people are trying to fill the hole left in their hearts from the death of a pet with cloning. They don’t understand that it’s not actually their old dog. There would be too much misuse to ever allow cloning.”

“I think a future with cloning would not be a huge problem. It will simply be a last resort for infertile couples or single people who want children with their own genes. This misuse idea is a minute problem. People don’t care that there are twins walking around on the planet, so why should they care if there are clones as well?”

“It seems that we have a ways to go to get on the same page.”