

# Eugenics and a brave new world



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Eugenics. The word strikes fear in the hearts of many. Visions of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, along with memories of Nazi experimentation and the Lynchburg sterilization colonies in the United States, cause many to dismiss the idea of cloning immediately. However, in reality, cloning has nothing to do with eugenics or genetic engineering. Cloning is the duplication of genetic material without any alteration. Germ line therapy, however, involves changing the material for a specific purpose. It does not make sense to combine the two processes for the sake of argument.

What affect could cloning have on disease research?

Cloning could be extremely valuable in studying the process of human development and disease influences this system. Scientists are already cloning genes to produce and test new drug products. Cloning animals (such as mice) could be used to produce knock-out specimens for testing. Not to say that we should produce knock-out humans, but isn't there a possibility that human cloning could actually help us find cures to a number of diseases?

Could cloning be used to produce transplant organs or brain-dead clones for organ harvesting?

Some claim that cloning would enable us to produce transplantable organs that would not be rejected by the recipient's body, since they would be produced from his own genetic material. This may be possible. However, there has not been enough research to confirm that rejection would not take place. There is also the problem of waiting for the organs to mature, which could take a number of years -- years which the patient may not have. As far as brain-dead clones for the same purpose, we are a long way away from ever achieving this task. Regardless, there is one thing to be careful of in

both of these cases: protecting the rights of the clone. Just because the purpose of cloning someone is to take his organs does not mean you can take them without his consent.

What is the difference between in-vitro fertilization and cloning?

In-vitro fertilization (IVF) and cloning both involve implanting an embryo in a woman's womb. Time's Barbara Ehrenreich writes, any culture that encourages IVF has no right to complain about the market of embryos. The only difference between the two processes is that in cloning the embryo is genetically identical. And, in both cases, the method can greatly improve the chances of conception for the infertile couple. If a person supports IVF, why not support cloning as an option?

Does society have a right or responsibility to restrict knowledge?

The age old question of can we do it? versus should we do it?. By looking at its resources, population, and needs, each society must answer this question for itself.

Supernatural Issues Essays