

Cloning of the woolly mammoth philosophy essay



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When the 1993 movie Jurassic Park came to life on the big screen; which was about scientists bringing back extinct dinosaurs, people were very intrigued with the idea. It was a great concept for a movie, but seemed totally out there and unrealistic. Well apparently the producers of the movie were not far off with their idea of bringing back extinct animals.

Today a team of scientists from Japan, Russia and the United States have decided that they want to clone a woolly mammoth, a symbol of Earth's ice age that ended 12,000 years ago. The researchers say they hope to produce a baby mammoth within the next six years. To accomplish this the scientists say that they will extract DNA from a mammoth's carcass that has been preserved in a Russian laboratory and insert it into the egg cells of an African elephant in hopes of producing a mammoth embryo (Lendon 1).

Dr. Douglas E. Chandler of the Arizona State University School of Life Sciences believes that if an elephant egg were used "the offspring would not be a mammoth but a hybrid between an elephant and a mammoth. If one wanted a true mammoth one would have to find a source of viable mammoth (eggs) to fertilize and implant and this is a much dicier proposition." Dr. Peter Mazur, a biologist at the University of Tennessee who has worked with frozen eggs and sperm believes the chances that frozen sperm from mammoths could be used to fertilize a related species is near zero (Schmid 1-2).

I believe that the cloning of extinct animals is wrong. For something to be cloned it should have a specific purpose that would better society as a whole. Also every animal, human or nonhuman, has sentience; which is the

capacity to experience pleasure and pain. By scientists cloning the woolly mammoth it would not better society as a whole in any way, and the African elephant has sentience; which by the scientists placing a woolly mammoth into her it could cause some complications which could cause her serious pain. Also by making a woolly mammoth today you could be causing it harm. This could happen because it would not be accustomed to today's climate, food, environment, etc. By scientists cloning the woolly mammoth it could cause pain to both the woolly mammoth and the African elephant. Also by the scientist doing this it is not bettering society in any way so therefore I believe the cloning of the woolly mammoth would be wrong.

I will start with my first premise; that is for something to be cloned it should have a specific purpose that would better society as a whole. This is based on J. S. Mill's Utilitarian Greatest Happiness Principle, which says that " we should always produce the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number affected or we should alleviate the greatest amount of pain for the greatest number affected" (Rachels and Rachels).

The scientists that want to be, let's say god, are not thinking of the consequences that such an experiment could have. By combining species that are not meant to be combined, in this case a woolly mammoth with an African elephant, we could cause serious damage that could easily be avoided. There were reasons why the woolly mammoth went extinct those 12, 000yrs ago. Just because scientists want to simulate what happened those thousands of years ago does not give them the right to play " GOD" especially when they could possibly sacrifice the lively hood of an African Elephant. Why do we need to simulate what happened to the woolly

mammoth anyway? Are we going to do this with every species that is extinct? Where do we draw the line? If we bring back extinct species we could be messing with the food chain. When an animal becomes extinct another animal fills its place. By us bringing back a species that's spot has already been filled we could seriously be messing with the way our ecosystem, food chain, and environment operates. In my opinion this would not be bettering society or producing happiness or alleviating pain for any one human or non-human being. So there for we should not allow such an occurrence to happen. It is just not right!

My second premise is that every animal has sentience that needs to be accounted for. This premise can be related to Jeremy Bentham utilitarian argument that " whether an animal is human or nonhuman is just as irrelevant as whether she is black or white." On utilitarian grounds " what matters is not whether an animal has a soul, is rational, or any of the rest. All that matters is whether it can experience happiness and unhappiness. If an animal can suffer, then we have a duty to take that into account when deciding what to do" (Rachels and Rachels 105).

The last line of Bentham's quote sums it up well. If an animal can suffer, then we have a " duty" to take that into account when deciding what to do. So let's look at this through the eyes of the African elephant that may get impregnated with a mammoth. This could cause potential problems for both the elephant and the mammoth hybrid. Mammoths were designed to be carried by their mammoth mother not by an African elephant. Yes these two species are closely related, but that doesn't mean that the African elephant is capable of having or even caring for a mammoth hybrid. For one,

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mammoths were much larger than the elephants of today. They also had different diets, lived in different environments, and may have even cared for their young in different ways. So is it right for the scientist to put that much pressure on the African elephant's body, I don't believe so. It also isn't right to bring a living thing into a world where it could possibly not be able to survive. Woolly mammoths were designed to walk the earth thousands of years ago when there were different foods, environments, and ways of surviving. If they were to bring the woolly mammoth back from extinction it could cause much more pain than happiness for everyone that is involved. So therefore I believe in what Bentham said " If an animal can suffer, then we have a duty to take that into account when deciding what to do." I believe that the scientists should not be allowed to bring back the woolly mammoth or any extinct animal for that matter.

In conclusion I hope I have shed some light on the reasons why the woolly mammoth should not be resurrected. I believe that the cloning of extinct animals is wrong. For something to be cloned it should have a specific purpose that would better society as a whole. Also all animals human or nonhuman have sentience that needs to be accounted for. Bringing back the woolly mammoth would cause a much greater amount of unhappiness than happiness for everyone involved; the African elephant and the mammoth hybrid in particular. But it could also cause unhappiness to the ecosystem, food chain, and many other aspects of life. So I ask you, is it really worth cloning a woolly mammoth just to see how it " may" have died 12, 000yrs ago? I believe the answer to this question is no! We should not allow these scientists to go through with this experiment; it is not bettering society in

anyway, it could cause harm to all the animals involved, and could even effect the way our environment, food chain, and world operates.