

For Review

489 WORDS RTO 3-4min /RA 4-5min

Cloning is reproduction of an organism by cell division. A cell-nucleus from the organism to be reproduced is transferred to an unfertilized egg whose own cell-nucleus has been removed. Where this is successful, the resulting organism has the same genetic
5 make-up as the original one. If we develop techniques for cloning humans, should we use them?

If we think of producing a single offspring by cloning, there seems to be only one, rather speculative, objection. Perhaps there would be psychological problems, because of the special position of
10 being a cloned offspring. But, if these problems are minor or non-existent, the production of a single cloned person seems unobjectionable.

When people are repelled by the thought of clones, they usually have in mind the creation of whole batches of people of
15 identical composition. This is unattractive because of the value we place on having a wide variety of different people. In an extreme case, where a town was entirely populated by one male clone and one female clone, there would be practical problems. (People might have problems telling who they were married to.) But the practical
20 drawbacks are not central. We feel our lives would be impoverished by the loss of variety. And our present degree of variety has genetic advantages. A very diverse gene pool makes it more likely that some of us will survive biological disasters such as the spread of some new and deadly disease.

25 We might expect cloning to change our relationships. Bernard

Williams (in a different context) discusses what it would be like to love someone just as an instance of a type rather than as an individual person. He says,

30 We can dimly see what this would be like. It would be like loving a work of art in some reproducible medium. One might start comparing, as it were, performances of the type; and wanting to be near the person one loved would be like wanting very much to hear some performance, even an indifferent one, of Mozart.

35 These engaging thoughts about this disturbing possibility might never be actualized, because of the extent to which a relationship between two people depends on a history of shared experiences, and of their responses to each other. Perhaps cloning will alter relationships less than we might first think. (I wonder
40 what it is like now to love someone who has an identical twin?) And any changes of a disturbing kind might be matched by compensating advantages. Members of a clone might develop special bonds of closeness and empathy.

It is hard to guess how far cloning would change relationships,
45 or whether any changes would be on balance for better or worse. The central objections have to do with the narrowing of the gene-pool, and the impoverishing uniformity involved. These objections are so strong that any substantial use of cloning batches of people could only be justified by some very pressing reason, of a kind not
50 now apparent.