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Religious, Philosophical, and Ethical Perspectives on Cloning

RESISTANCE AND MEANING: RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND HUMAN CLONING

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the wake of announcements that scientists had successfully cloned a large mammal, the sheep "Dolly," from a somatic cell from an adult ewe, President Clinton requested that the National Bioethics Advisory Commission (NBAC) deliberate and offer recommendations on federal policy on the cloning of human beings. In his mandate to the NBAC, President Clinton commented that "any discovery that touches upon human creation is not simply a matter of scientific inquiry, it is a matter of morality and spirituality as well."¹ This is to say that informed public discourse on human cloning must accommodate fundamental religious values and convictions embedded in scientific research on life's beginnings.

Many social commentators and political interest groups expressed surprise and/or concern that the NBAC's deliberations would incorporate religious considerations, in addition to scientific, philosophical, and legal perspectives, into the policy debate over the cloning of human beings. Yet, public policy commissions at the federal level that have addressed biomedical ethics have commonly examined and elicited theological issues and the views of religious traditions. While these religious perspectives cannot be the foundation for public policy, the NBAC and its predecessor commissions have correctly acknowledged that religious communities embody traditions of moral wisdom that continue to shape and guide the moral views of many members of the public who are also citizens in a democratic society. Moreover, the Western religious traditions have provided a core of moral beliefs, such as the sanctity of human life, and the dignity and equality of persons, that have become deeply embedded in our

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1. Marlene Cimon & Jonathan Peterson, *Funding for Human Cloning Banned*, THE OREGONIAN, Mar. 5, 1997, at A1.

culture, even if these values now may be explicated and justified on non-religious grounds.² The historical embedding of cultural values within religious traditions is one example of the possibility for what the philosopher John Rawls has described as the “overlapping consensus” on moral values in our society.³

This Article will examine and critique the religious values and theological arguments on cloning human beings presented to the NBAC and in the scholarly literature. My analysis will begin with a brief historical overview of religious ethical reflection on the cloning of humans. I will then proceed to consider the arguments offered in the current controversy over human cloning, using the themes of “resistance” and “meaning” that are central to Yale law professor Stephen Carter’s interpretation of the moral role of religious communities in a liberal democratic society.⁴ Such themes provide an important framework for understanding and evaluating religious and theological convictions and conclusions on cloning human beings.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While the advent of mammalian cloning using adult somatic cells has rightly been perceived as a new threshold in scientific inquiry, this has not been unanticipated in theological and religious scholarship. Indeed, it is possible to identify four overlapping time frames in which theologians and religious thinkers have examined the scientific prospects and ethics of human cloning. The first phase of consideration occurred in the mid-1960s. This discussion was shaped by a context of expanded choices and the control over reproduction (e.g., availability of oral contraception), the prospects on the medical horizon of technologically assisted reproduction (e.g., research on *in vitro* fertilization), and advocacy by prominent biologists and geneticists of cloning “preferred” genotypes to avoid overloading the human gene pool with deleterious genes that eventually could risk the survival of the human species.⁵

Among prominent theologians who engaged in these initial discussions of reproductive and genetic manipulation and human cloning with scientific and philosophical interlocutors were Charles Curran, Bernard Haring, Richard McCormick, and Karl Rahner within Roman Catholicism, and Joseph Fletcher and Paul Ramsey within Protestantism. I will here briefly review the positions

2. James F. Childress, *The Challenges of Public Ethics: Reflections on NBAC's Report*, HASTINGS CTR. REP., Sept.-Oct. 1997, at 9-11.

3. John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical*, 14 PHIL. & PUB. AFF. 223, 225-26 (1985).

4. STEPHEN L. CARTER, *THE CULTURE OF DISBELIEF* 23-43 (1993).

5. Joshua Lederberg, *Experimental Genetics and Human Evolution*, AM. NATURALIST, Sept.-Oct. 1966, at 519-31.

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 609

of the latter two, as they staked out diametrically opposed positions and their visions of the current controversy were remarkably prescient.⁶

Fletcher, a theologian in the Episcopal tradition, advocated expansion of human freedom or autonomy and control over human reproduction, consistent with a theological understanding that rational capacities should domesticate nature. Fletcher portrayed human cloning as one among a panoply of present and prospective reproductive options that could be ethically justified under circumstances of overriding societal benefit. Not only did Fletcher not recognize any distinctive moral boundary between procreation through sexual intercourse and technologically assisted reproduction, but Fletcher singled out human cloning as a preferable method of reproduction relative to the "genetic roulette" of intercourse. Laboratory reproduction was "radically human" because it was deliberate, designed, chosen, and willed, that is, it reflected precisely those characteristics central to the rational domestication of nature.⁷

In contrast, Paul Ramsey, a Methodist theologian, portrayed human cloning as a "borderline" or moral boundary for medicine and society, the crossing of which would compromise human dignity and the meaning of procreation. This was consistent with a theological vision in which human beings were to exercise responsible stewardship within the limits of finitude and mortality, that is, limits of nature as designed by God. Ramsey expressed concern about three "horizontal" (person-person) boundary crossings represented by the prospects of human cloning. First, clonal reproduction in service of the scientific ends of a controlled gene pool would violate freedom by requiring dictated or managed breeding. Second, cloning would violate what Ramsey held to be the "cardinal canon of loyalty" in medical relationships—the requirement of informed consent—through non-therapeutic research on human embryos and fetuses. Third, cloning represented an assault on the meaning and purposes of sexuality and parenthood. Cloning would radically sever the unitive and procreative ends of sexual intercourse; contraception had made it possible to have sex without babies; cloning would facilitate babies without sex. Moreover, Ramsey sought to resist the technological transformation of "procreation" into "reproduction." The child of the procreative union was an embodied symbol of the couple's mutual love and a gift of their intimacy; the child of technology was, by contrast, a "product" of human will and design.⁸

6. Allen D. Verhey, *Cloning: Revisiting an Old Debate*, 4 KENNEDY INST. ETHICS J. 227-34 (1994).

7. JOSEPH F. FLETCHER, *THE ETHICS OF GENETIC CONTROL: ENDING REPRODUCTIVE ROULETTE* (1974).

8. Paul Ramsey, *Moral and Religious Implications of Genetic Control*, in *GENETICS AND THE FUTURE OF MAN* 107-69 (John D. Rostlansky ed., 1966).

In addition to these horizontal boundary crossings, Ramsey also articulated two “vertical” (person-God) instances of trespass into the forbidden. Cloning exemplified the theological original sin of pride or hubris; human beings who, having experienced god-likeness through the knowledge of good and evil, could now aspire to a form of immortality through science. In addition, cloning could satisfy the misguided desire for self-creation and creation of one’s progeny in one’s own image. In both of these instances, human beings fell victim to the wrong of “playing God.” On Ramsey’s account, “Men ought not to play God before they have learned to be men, and when they have learned to be men, they will not play God.”⁹

The legacy of these two thinkers on subsequent theological and philosophical discussion of bioethics, especially in the realms of reproductive choices and genetic controls, cannot be overstated. Fletcher and Ramsey established the broad moral parameters for bioethical discourse on cloning human beings. While the catalyst for the initial theological appraisal of cloning, the scientific concern to ensure a genetically healthy species, has diminished, Fletcher’s advocacy of reproductive autonomy and the use of technology to tame nature for rational human ends has been perpetuated in continued scientific and biomedical research to alleviate infertility. This ideology has been, by and large, the moral route that biomedical culture has followed to bring us to the threshold of human cloning. Yet, Ramsey’s reservations have not gone unheeded and, to some extent, have been confirmed in the cloning controversy. For example, the fact that only 1 of 277 somatic cell clones survived to birth in the Scottish sheep research has heightened moral concerns that human cloning inevitably will pose risks to the unborn child. Indeed, the potential for harm to a child from the cloning process was the *single* norm invoked by the NBAC in recommending legislation that would prohibit human cloning until such time as the process could satisfactorily meet standards of safety.¹⁰

A second distinctive phase of religious consideration was initiated in the late 1970s, and is especially demarcated by 1978, wherein two notable events occurred: the birth of Louise Brown, the first child conceived through *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), and the publication of *In His Image*, an account alleging to report the creation of the first human clone.¹¹ The immediacy and reality of IVF led Jewish and Christian thinkers to concentrate discussion on the religious

9. PAUL RAMSEY, FABRICATED MAN: THE ETHICS OF GENETIC CONTROL 138 (1970); *cf. id.* at 60-103.

10. Childress, *supra* note 2, at 9-11.

11. DAVID RORVIK, IN HIS IMAGE: THE CLONING OF A MAN (1978).

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 611

and ethical issues presented by this revolutionary event in human reproduction, and diverted attention away from human cloning, which seemed ever further in the future after scientists determined that the cloning account was fabricated.¹²

Nonetheless, leading Jewish scholars, such as Seymour Seigel and Fred Rosner, began to articulate a more moderate perspective on human cloning than offered by Fletcher or Ramsey. Jewish thought did not present the "either/or" of the Christian theologians, but offered a "both-and" approach. In Jewish thought, human freedom is not unlimited, and persons are accountable for their moral choices. However, the Jewish scholars also emphasized human dominion over nature, in partnership with God, for the healing of disease and disability and the general betterment of human welfare. These themes did not lead to a decisive affirmation or indictment of human cloning, but rather to a call for considered and extensive discussion of cloning within the Jewish community.¹³ The "both-and" character of Jewish thought on human cloning continues in current discussion, as reflected in the testimony of Jewish thinkers before the NBAC. Although procreation through intercourse is religiously preferable, Jewish thought recognizes that special circumstances, such as the preservation of lineage or the relief of infertility, may make the cloning of human beings a permissible act as a last resort (though not a routine medical practice).¹⁴

The second phase also witnessed the initiation of formal ecclesiastical involvement with questions of reproductive technology, genetic engineering, and human cloning. The United Church of Christ, a mainstream Protestant denomination, produced a study booklet on genetic manipulation that appears to be the earliest reference among Protestant denominational literature to human cloning. The booklet provided a general overview of the science and ethics of human cloning; but, consistent with the denomination's tradition of respect for personal conscience, the booklet did not come to a normative theological assessment.¹⁵ Protestant-coordinated bodies, such as the World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches of Christ, as well as some specific denominations, issued resolutions or position-statements giving cautious endorsement to genetic interventions for therapeutic purposes.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Evangelical Christians, having been politically mobilized by the legalization of abortion in *Roe v. Wade*, initiated discussion of bioethical issues, including human cloning, among their religious communities and seminaries. Not surprisingly, evangelical commentary situated human cloning in the broad scope of the right-to-life controversy: cloning was itself deemed a threat to the core

12. William J. Broad, *Court Affirms: Boy Clone Saga Is a Hoax*, SCI., July 3, 1981, at 118-19.

13. See *JEWISH BIOETHICS* (Fred Rosner & J. David Bleich eds., 1979).

14. Elliot N. Dorff, *Human Cloning: A Jewish Perspective*, BIOLAW, June 1997, at S118-25.

15. BARRY LYNN, *GENETIC MANIPULATION* (1977).

16. See *ON THE NEW FRONTIERS OF GENETICS AND RELIGION* (J. Robert Nelson ed., 1994).

value of the sanctity of human life because of the anticipated loss of embryonic life in cloning research and reflected societal disregard for life's sanctity through efforts, crystallized in the abortion issue, to re-define human life and personhood.¹⁷

The blastomere separation of human embryos reported by researchers at George Washington University in the fall of 1993 initiated a third phase of religious discussion. This research project was performed on embryos with a genetic anomaly that would have precluded any attempts at gestation and birth.¹⁸ It nonetheless evoked a vigorous repudiation from the Roman Catholic tradition. In 1987, the Vatican had issued an encyclical entitled *Donum Vitae* (*Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation*), expressing moral opposition (and encouraging policy opposition) to techniques of reproductive technology that deliberately severed the procreative and unitive ends of sexuality, including donor insemination, IVF, surrogacy, and experimentation on embryos produced through IVF procedures. *Donum Vitae* also rejected human cloning (blastomere separation) both as a scientific *outcome* and as a scientific *proposal*. As it stated, "attempts or hypotheses for obtaining a human being without any connection with sexuality through 'twin fission,' cloning or parthenogenesis are to be considered contrary to the moral law, since they are in opposition to the dignity both of human procreation and of the conjugal union."¹⁹

Although Roman Catholic theologians had throughout the prior quarter-century argued against human cloning, *Donum Vitae* added an emphatic ecclesiastical resource by which Catholic scholars evaluated the embryo cloning at George Washington University. Richard McCormick, a renowned Jesuit theologian, maintained that cloning would impose irreparable harm to "our cherished sense of the sanctity, wholeness, and individuality of human life."²⁰ While proponents of cloning research appealed to autonomy, both in the sense of freedom of scientific inquiry and of control over reproductive choices, McCormick argued that the cumulative effect of the ideology of sovereignty of freedom and choice could issue in social support for eugenics. Persons will not have intrinsic dignity qua person, but rather will be valued (or devalued) in terms of the particular genetic characteristics they were designed to have. Thus,

17. J. KERBY ANDERSON, GENETIC ENGINEERING (1982).

18. Gina Kolata, *Cloning of Human Embryos: Debate Erupts over Ethics*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 26, 1993, at A1, C3.

19. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, INSTRUCTION ON RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE IN ITS ORIGIN AND ON THE DIGNITY OF PROCREATION Pt. I 6 (1987).

20. Richard A. McCormick, *Should We Clone Humans? Wholeness, Individuality, Reverence*, CHRISTIAN CENTURY, Nov. 17, 1993, at 1148-49; Richard A. McCormick, *Blastomere Separation: Some Concerns*, HASTINGS CTR. REP., Mar.-Apr. 1994, at 14-16.

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 613

cloning cannot but erode respect for pre-nascent human life and of respect for persons with genetic anomalies (not necessarily "diseases") who were not engineered or cloned for a desired trait. In so doing, we will instead socially engineer a culture intolerant of diversity and individuality.

The fourth and current stage of religious discussion on human cloning has, with the success of somatic cell nuclear transfer in the "Dolly" research,²¹ been permeated with a stronger sense of scientific reality and immediacy. Society has also witnessed the pluralism that is characteristic of this culture's religiosity. While Roman Catholic and conservative Protestant commentary has reiterated concerns about human dignity, parenting, and procreation, other Protestant thinkers have drawn on models of human partnership with ongoing divine creative activity to express qualified support for cloning research and human cloning.²² Jewish and Islamic thinkers, while expressing deep moral reservations about human cloning as a practice or option for prospective parents in the way that Joseph Fletcher proposed, have nonetheless contemplated scenarios within which acts of cloning could be ethically acceptable.²³

It is this religious pluralism on human cloning, and its supporting normative values, that the remaining part of this essay seeks to elucidate. It will be useful, however, to identify some insights generated by this brief historical overview.

First, a sustained theological engagement with the issue of human cloning has been ongoing for the past thirty years. This is attributable in part to the deep questions of human nature, purpose, and destiny at the core of religious reflection that the prospects for human cloning raise anew. This history of theological examination, moreover, anticipates and illuminates much contemporary discussion.

Second, no uniform, unified religious perspective on human cloning exists. Religious traditions invoke different norms, stories, images, and analogies to interpret human cloning and arrive at different conclusions in the evaluation of cloning.

21. Ian Wilmut et al., *Viable Offspring Derived from Fetal and Adult Mammalian Cells*, 385 *NATURE* 810-13 (1997).

22. Philip Hefner, *Cloning as Quintessential Human Act*, *INSIGHTS*, June 1997, at 1-2.

23. Dorff, *supra* note 14; Maher Hathout, *Cloning Humans: Who Will Set the Limits?*, *MINARET*, Mar. 1997, at 25.

Third, contrary to the views of some commentators,²⁴ religious communities and traditions of ethical reflection experience internal tensions and contradictions and moral assessments of cloning. Religious traditions seldom “abolish hard ethical positions” by absolutist declarations of principle. At their best, principled reflections of religious traditions are informed by and modified by human experience.

Fourth, despite changes in scientific context, research, and technical capability, the values that underlie religious understandings and concerns about cloning human beings have displayed durability and continuity. They been generated from within the moral frameworks of religious communities, but have helped to inform public consciousness and debate. This raises issues about the moral significance of religious communities in the policymaking processes of liberal democratic societies.

III. POLITICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

The political relevance of religious communities in a liberal democratic polity continues to be a subject of much controversy. Political theorists seek to acknowledge the influential role of religious convictions for religious adherents, while holding these convictions to a standard of “publically accessible” reasons for inclusion in democratic discourse. Within this context, the perspective of Stephen Carter, as articulated in *The Culture of Disbelief*,²⁵ provides a framework for interpreting and assessing religious commentary on the cloning of human beings.

Carter relies substantially on the insights of Alexis de Tocqueville, who described voluntary associations and intermediate communities, including religious traditions, as vital to a vibrant democratic society. Religious traditions enable mediation between the values of the self and the interests of the state. In this respect, Carter affirms the role of religious communities as “independent moral voices” in a pluralistic society. They are “independent” from state authority, thus avoiding religious establishment, but also providing a basis for political and social critique. Such communities are also independent from more narrowly-defined special interest groups in society, who may often seek to appropriate religious language and symbols to achieve particular political goals. Finally, religious communities are constituted by internal normative practices whose validity may be assessed with respect to how faithfully they reflect and

24. R.C. Lewontin, *The Confusion over Cloning*, THE N.Y. REV., Oct. 23, 1997, at 18-22 (reviewing NATIONAL BIOETHICS ADVISORY COMMISSION, CLONING HUMAN BEINGS: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NATIONAL BIOETHICS ADVISORY COMMISSION (1997) [hereinafter NBAC REPORT]).

25. CARTER, *supra* note 4.

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 615

cohere with the formative moral values of the religious tradition, which have been developed and articulated independent of secular norms and perspectives.²⁶

In these respects, Carter contends, religious communities are politically relevant as “autonomous communities of resistance and independent sources of meaning.”²⁷ They are communities that can and should “resist” the moral authority of social institutions, e.g., political, scientific, or economic. Their traditions of moral reflection can also infuse substantive meaning into not only the lives of community members, but also into civic discourse, which may otherwise be deflated due to a focus on procedural issues. The traditions can display what *ultimately* is at stake in the resolution of moral controversy on one side or another.

In analyzing religious issues concerning the cloning of human beings, I rely on the twin themes of “resistance” and “meaning” that Carter identified. They provide a constructive framework by which to explicate what is morally at stake in scientific inquiry on human cloning.

IV. THEMES OF RESISTANCE

Five major themes of “resistance” are identifiable in religious interpretation of cloning human beings. These themes include: (1) the technological imperative; (2) the transformation of procreation; (3) the culture of choice; (4) the constriction of policy discourse; and (5) the compartmentalization of citizenship. These themes do not predispose a permissive, regulatory, or prohibitory conclusion on cloning, although collectively they may work to shift the burden of moral and policy proof from the demonstration of immediate and tangible harms by the opponents of cloning to the advocates of cloning, who would be required to demonstrate the substantial benefits, the minimization of risks, and the equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of cloning human beings.

A. Resistance of the Technological Imperative

The technological imperative refers to the overriding of moral claims or religious convictions on the grounds that if the technology is available, it must or should be used. Currently, of course, the technology to clone a human being is not known to be developed, but scientific and biomedical research is bringing this threshold ever closer. If the technology is developed, the imperative holds

26. *Id.* at 35-43.

27. *Id.* at 40.

that society will then find itself having recourse to cloning technology regardless of individual or collective benefits or harms.

Religious values do not support resistance to technology per se. Instead, they affirm support of technology insofar as it is *justified* and *limited* by human ends. In religious traditions, the primary human end toward which medicine and biomedical technology ought to be directed is that of "healing," of seeking to "make whole" persons and their communities. Thus, the core religious questions regarding cloning technology concerns what human ends are furthered or served by the technology and the extent to which cloning facilitates human healing.

By contrast, the technology to clone human beings reflects the reductionistic spirit characteristic of scientific inquiry in general. Human biological nature is reduced to the makeup of a somatic cell; human relational identity becomes conditioned by genetic bonds. While traditions of spirituality have generally presupposed that human beings are more than the sum of the parts of their biological being, cloning technology begins with the smallest human biological organism and leaves open the issue of the extent to which personal identity is merely the enacting out of genetically-coded behaviors. In short, cloning technology presumes the human self to be infinitely malleable and brings all realms of human identity and sociality within the scope of technical manipulation. Thus, to the religious question posed above, the response embedded in the arguments of advocates of cloning human beings is that the notion of human ends must be fluid and elastic, as cloning will work to re-frame and re-conceptualize what it means to be "humans." Indeed, it will perhaps relieve society of these conditions that, as one character in a novel by C.S. Lewis puts it, most offend human dignity: birth, breeding, and death.²⁸

The redefinition of humanity and human dignity cannot but be seen as theologically problematic. Like the Luddites of the 19th century who resisted the inroads of the Industrial revolution on the grounds that industrialization destroyed "commonality,"²⁹ religious resistance may be directed against a specific technology, such as cloning, that seems to call into question common patterns and ways of life, or that transforms the human condition and meanings foundational to human dignity.

In addition to resistance of the technological imperative based on considerations of human ends, the common good, and dignity, other religious objections may be raised on grounds of justice and exploitation. Members of

28. C.S. LEWIS, *THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH* 174 (1946).

29. KIRKPATRICK SALE, *REBELS AGAINST THE FUTURE* (1995).

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 617

indigenous and eastern religious traditions, for example, see in the scientific drive to pursue the cloning of human beings a profound skewing of social priorities and values. Native American scholars find it immoral that social resources may be directed to facilitate cloning technology when native peoples, with the lowest life expectancy of any demographic group, are already deprived of access to basic primary care, as well as maternal and neonatal care. Scholars from eastern religious traditions, while not objecting to cloning per se, nonetheless see cloning as a diversion from the primary pursuit of life, the achievement of self-knowledge and actualization. Cloning presents another manifestation of western society's attempt to gain insight into metaphysical questions through technological means.³⁰

The African-American religious response, meanwhile, raises an additional justice objection to cloning: the prospect of disproportionate impact and exploitation. This must be interpreted against the background of the community's generalized distrust of the biomedical research enterprise, itself attributable to a long-standing misuse and victimization of African-Americans at the hand of research medicine. It remains to be seen whether the use of cloning technology would facilitate a healing and trusting relationship between medicine and this marginalized religious community, or whether it might encourage study of illnesses of specific concern to African-Americans, such as sickle-cell disease.³¹

B. Resisting Transformed Procreation

As illustrated in the historical overview, a long-standing concern of religious thinkers about cloning human beings is its impact on the human significance and meaning of procreation. While all agree that cloning promises a transformation in meaning, for some, this is a transformation to be celebrated; for others, one to be resisted. Here I will focus on the motivations for resistance.

³⁰. Courtney S. Campbell, Examination of Views of Religious Traditions on Issues of the Cloning of Humans 40-49, 56-59 (May 1997) (unpublished manuscript prepared for the National Bioethics Advisory Commission, on file with author).

³¹. See Marian Gray Secundy, *Can Science Be Trusted?*, REFLECTIONS (Program for Ethics, Sci. & the Env't, Oregon State University), May 1997, at 5; see also Kenneth S. Robinson, *Regulating Cloning Technologies*, REFLECTIONS (Program for Ethics, Sci. & the Env't, Oregon State University), May 1997, at 5-6.

Many religious thinkers affirm a moral ideal of how children are to be brought into the world, namely, through the intimacy and sexual union of procreation in a committed relationship. The child so conceived and created becomes a "gift," a profound symbol of love, mutuality in relationships, an experience with "otherness," and sign of God's creative intention.³²

Moreover, parenting is a practice that requires deep moral commitments and character, neither of which may be present when parenting is mediated by legal and contractual concerns. The parents' relational identity to the child is not sufficiently captured by the ties of genetic relationships. The social and, for females, gestational binding of parent to child are our most significant moral relationships and constitute adults' most important obligations. While it is possible to be a parent without biological or genetic ties (e.g., adoption), it is not possible to be a parent with *only* these ties.

Cloning seems to rearrange the priority of these relationships, by stressing the genetic contributions to a child's formation. Moreover, insofar as a child is conceived through intention and deliberate human design, facilitated by the artifice of technology, procreation appears transformed into re-production, that is, the language of the child as "gift" gives way to that of "product." This shift in discourse raises the prospect of the kind of impersonal and mechanistic processes of reproduction that early opponents to cloning human beings foresaw.

An important response can and should be directed at this religious critique of cloning. Arguments similar to those above could be made regarding virtually all other forms of assisted reproductive technology, including donor insemination, IVF, and surrogate pregnancy. As noted above, the Roman Catholic tradition in *Donum Vitae* treats all these categories of reproduction as morally similar because they violate the child's right to be born as the fruit of the conjugal union. However, many other religious traditions accept the legitimacy of these technologies in certain circumstances. Because ethics requires us to treat similar cases similarly, the question for religious resistance to transforming procreation is whether it is possible to draw a distinction between cloning and other reproductive technologies already accepted as legitimate. If not, then the religious objections distinctively directed against cloning human beings seem to lose their force.

32. See Gilbert Meilaender, *Remarks on Human Cloning to the National Bioethics Advisory Commission*, BIOLAW, June 1997, at S114-18; Dorff, *supra* note 14.

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 619

Religious commentators on cloning have seemed to presuppose such a distinction in describing the possibility of a clone as a genuine "revolution" in history or as "unprecedented" in the history of human reproduction.³³ However, the content of this distinction has proved very elusive and difficult to delineate. One can conclude, however, by indicating that cloning provides for society, as well as religious traditions, an opportunity to give meaningful consideration to the significance we attribute to procreation and parenthood.

C. Resisting the Culture of Choice

Whatever control human beings have over procreation and reproduction, this is not, from religious viewpoints, an unlimited and absolute dominion. Rather, an understanding that processes of reason-giving constrain human choices limits the dominion of control over procreation and reproduction. Such processes presuppose the values of accountability, mutual respect, and public justification. However, these moral requirements are absent in the world of reproductive medicine. For example, infertility clinics are not subject to public oversight or regulation; clinical practice (and success) may vary considerably between clinical settings. The ethical integrity of policies and informed decision-making depends on voluntary compliance with guidelines developed by professional organizations, rather than accountability before independently constituted ethics committees. These features explain why President Clinton could ask only for the good-faith adherence of the reproductive medical community to his initial moratorium on efforts to clone human beings.

In addition to this clinical autonomy, philosopher Daniel Callahan has observed that individual choice and personal autonomy govern the ethical decision-making of clients and the theoretical justification of client options. The operative ethic of reproductive medicine is that "anything goes" to such an extent that concern for the best interests of the child is simply lost. Indeed,

[n]owhere has anyone suggested that cloning would advance the cause of children. . . . But it has been one of the enduring failures of the reproductive rights movement that it has, in the pursuit of parental discretion and relief of infertility, constantly disassociated the needs of children and the desires of would-be parents.³⁴

33. See Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Hearings on Cloning: Religion-Based Perspectives*, BIOLAW, June 1997, at S100-03.

34. Daniel Callahan, *Cloning: The Work Not Done*, HASTINGS CTR. REP., Sept.-Oct. 1997, at 18, 19.

Thus, a culture of choice reigns in reproductive medicine, with its moral logic increasingly influenced by an economic paradigm that sees medicine's job as satisfaction of consumer preferences. It becomes difficult in this setting to make any credible ethical judgments. The language of parental "desire" or "preference" suggests that requests to have a boy rather than a girl through reproductive technology carry the same moral significance as a preference for vanilla rather than pistachio ice cream. Put another way, there are no criteria internal to the practice of assisted reproductive techniques to enable a distinction between a legal right to choose on the part of prospective parents and a morally right choice.

Religious resistance to this culture of choice characteristically takes the following pattern. While few theological ethicists are willing to recommend an outright prohibition on the cloning of human beings, most tend to argue that its clinical application be limited to a very restricted set of compelling circumstances (saving a life, continuing a family line) as a *last resort*. This seeks to draw a line against the culture of choice based on a distinction between "acts" and "practices." Uses of cloning would be limited to well-defined indications rather than being offered to clients as yet another option in the panoply of assisted reproductive options. In this regard, it is important to indicate that no contemporary theological ethicist has expressed any willingness to follow the position of Joseph Fletcher and permit cloning as a generally available option for infertile couples or as a preferred mode of human reproduction.

D. Resisting Constricted Policy Discourse

Two core moral principles, autonomy and utility, structure the public hearings held by and the report issued by the NBAC on the ethics of cloning human beings.³⁵ Appeals to autonomy were especially evident in claims about the overriding importance of scientific freedom to pursue promising research directions and about the rights of prospective parents to procreative liberty. The principle of utility was embedded in discourse that sought to weigh and balance possible benefits to parents, infertility specialists, biomedical researchers, and society in general against potential risks to children or harms to other interested parties. In short, the essence of the policy questions turned on: (1) whether risks or harms could be identified, (2) whether these outweighed the promise of benefits, and if so, (3) whether the magnitude and probability of the risks or harm were so serious as to justify restricting scientific and procreative autonomy.

35. See Courtney S. Campbell, *Prophecy and Policy*, HASTINGS CTR. REP., Sept.-Oct. 1997, at 15-17; NBAC REPORT, *supra* note 24, at 1-10.

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 621

The NBAC came to a consensus that restrictions by way of a temporary moratorium could be justified on the grounds of protecting children. Should ongoing research on cloning over the next five years diminish the risks of harm from the cloning process, the grounds for restriction would no longer hold, and cloning would be regulated as per any other legitimate medical procedure rather than continuing to be restricted.

Regarding this policy process, the question for traditions of religious reflection was whether the policy framework of autonomy and utility was really sufficient to address the ethical issues presented by cloning. Such principles appear to many religious thinkers to reflect a constricted and ever-contracting realm of policy discourse, and one that negates any substantive consideration to religious perspectives. Religious arguments sought to expand the discussion by focusing on issues of the "common good," distributive justice, and symbolic harm. In so doing, such arguments attempted to shift the burden of proof for purposes of fashioning policy from those who sought to impose restrictions on proceeding with cloning to those who would permit cloning, under some form of regulatory oversight.

The religious arguments raised questions about the desirability of placing the burden of proof upon positions advocating restrictions or prohibitions of cloning. In the first instance, duties to prevent the infliction of harm on others are much more stringent than duties to benefit others as a matter of general social morality. Thus, it would seem that the case for benefits must be much more compelling than the case for harms. As one theologian argued before the NBAC, the moral primacy of non-harm over beneficence means that "strong evidence of positive benefits" must exist before proceeding with cloning.³⁶

Second, if the burden remains on the showing of harm, it becomes virtually an impossible case to prove. In the nature of the case, the demonstration of immediate and tangible harm can be established only by permitting cloning to proceed. Erik Parens has expressed the point this way:

How, after all, does one prove to those not already in the choir that such harms [degrading quality of parenting and objectifying children] will occur? How does one measure their magnitude? Friends and foes of such worries have to appreciate how difficult it is to make public policy in light of claims that are so difficult to demonstrate and so easy to disprove.³⁷

36. Nancy J. Duff, *Theological Reflections on Human Cloning*, *BIOETHICS*, June 1997, at S106-13.

37. Erik Parens, *Tools from and for Democratic Deliberations*, *HASTINGS CTR. REP.*, Sept.-Oct. 1997, at 20, 22.

In advance of either research or actual cloning attempts, however, concerns about harm can be (and were in testimony before the NBAC) considered "speculative" and thus relevant but less decisive for policy than promised benefits. In addition, risks of harm that are long-term and intangible or symbolic (e.g., the impact of cloning on the symbol of a child as "gift") receive minimal policy consideration in this framework of autonomy and utility.

The German sociologist Max Weber discussed two forms of rationality, "instrumental rationality" and "expressive rationality," which summarize the policy clash over the burden of proof and the constriction of policy discourse that it typifies.³⁸ The secular arguments that appeal to autonomy and utility are representative of what Weber designates "instrumental rationality." That is, they see acts and policies as instruments to the achievement of certain ends. The central questions in policy deliberations concern the most effective and efficient means to achieve these ends. The ends themselves, however, are immune from moral and policy scrutiny or, as suggested previously, may be redefined by the nature of the technological project. As Weber contends,

Whether life is worth living and when—this question is not asked by medicine. Natural science gives us an answer to the question of what we must do if we wish to master life technically. It leaves quite aside, or assumes for its purposes, whether we should and do wish to master life technically and whether it ultimately makes sense to do so.³⁹

By contrast, a second set of arguments, including but not limited to religious arguments, is characteristic of Weber's "expressive rationality." Such claims view acts and policies not primarily in terms of the goals they achieve, but rather with reference to the values they express about persons, their practices, and their communities. Expressive rationality also subsumes moral and social scrutiny of desired ends as part of ethically responsible life and citizenship.

In its policy deliberations over cloning human beings, the NBAC clearly gave primacy to the arguments and positions of instrumental rationality. This diminishes the policy relevance of the values embedded in expressive rationality, and the ends affirmed or critiqued by those values. In many circumstances, moreover, the arguments made by religious traditions display expressive rather than instrumental rationality. It remains an open question whether society is well served by exclusive reliance on instrumental forms of rationality in policy-

38. See Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, in FROM MAX WEBER: ESSAYS IN SOCIOLOGY 77-128 (H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills eds. & trans., 1958).

39. Max Weber, *Science as a Vocation*, in FROM MAX WEBER: ESSAYS IN SOCIOLOGY 129, 144 (H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills eds. & trans., 1958).

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 623

making, but there is little question that such reliance impoverishes public and policy discourse.

E. Resisting Compartmentalized Citizenship

Liberal democratic political theory emphasizes reasons that are accessible to the general public as a criteria for inclusion in democratic discourse. This may impose a burden of "translating" religious convictions from their original context of a religious community for, as in the case of the NBAC, an audience of appointed commissioners representing the diversity of American culture and paths of life. This burden manifests itself in what I designate as the "informed citizen" standard of information intelligibility. That is, arguments that are rooted in religious premises or values must be able to articulate their claims or positions in language accessible and comprehensible to a citizen generally informed about the scientific and social implications of cloning. In general, in the case of the NBAC cloning hearings, scientists who discussed cloning research or philosophers who presented ethical arguments using secular language were not held to this standard of accessibility and understanding. This occurred even though much of the scientific testimony was very technical in nature and some philosophical claims presupposed epistemological assumptions no less inaccessible than comparable religious perspectives.

In this respect, a question may be raised about the extent to which a person with religious convictions can submit these to the crucible of public discourse *as a citizen*. One prominent theorist, for example, has advocated a posture of citizen "non-reliance" on religious convictions in forums of public policy.⁴⁰ This seems to suggest that a religious believer must either withdraw from civic discourse or become a citizen without convictions to participate. In either case, a person's claim to the rights of citizenship seems compartmentalized and their integrity to their deepest convictions potentially compromised.

At one level, this is not an unreasonable request. If, as in the cloning debate by the NBAC, restrictions on scientific, personal, or procreative freedom are contemplated, it is not satisfactory to reply to an inquiry about the rationale for imposing limits on liberty: "because my religious convictions do not permit the exercise of your freedom." However, it is important to distinguish appeals to religious convictions as a *warrant* for a specific policy from the roles of such convictions in political discourse or the policy *process*. While the former represents a form of religious tyranny or authoritarianism, citizens' claims to freedom of expression and religious liberty clearly permit the latter, theories of non-reliance notwithstanding.

40. See KENT GREENAWALT, RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS AND POLITICAL CHOICE 49-84 (1988).

Arguments on cloning that appeal to explicitly religious norms should thereby be subjected to the same standards for inclusion and exclusion in civic discourse as non-religious arguments. These standards include tolerance and mutual respect. The success of a religious-based position will thereby depend on the efficacy of persuasion rather than coercion, and persuasion will in turn depend on the extent to which such an argument resonates with values already accepted by the society or embedded in its practices. For *this* reason, religious thinkers may find it more prudent to present an intelligible translation of their claims for public discourse, even if some important religious content gets lost in the translation. This does not mean such translations are required, however, nor that explicit theological arguments should not receive a public hearing. It does suggest, however, that the competing claims of citizenship and conviction can in most cases be successfully negotiated.

Section IV has focused on themes of religious “resistance” in the public debate over cloning human beings. It is important to consider such issues because one important test of a public policy in terms of its political feasibility is “the nature, extent, and depth of opposition to those policies by various religious and secular communities.”⁴¹ However, religious communities not only present resistance, but can infuse meaning into the practices and beliefs of the general society. The next Section will examine themes of meaning presented by religious thinkers in the context of cloning.

V. THEMES OF MEANING

Religious discourse on the cloning of human beings has invoked several issues of meaning that are at the core of religious life and philosophical inquiry. The term “meaning” here refers to the ultimate questions of human experience, including our origins, nature, and destiny; our response to powers beyond our control, such as the genetic lottery of life; our finitude and fallibility; the character of the good society; and our mortality. These are questions toward which the liberal state assumes a posture of neutrality, for they raise profound metaphysical issues over which persons and communities have deeply different understandings. In order to maintain a cohesive and relatively peaceful social order, the liberal society is agnostic on these issues about the good life for human beings.

Yet, these questions become unavoidable if we are to approach the prospects of human cloning with theological seriousness and philosophical rigor. This Section examines three claims of meaning that have been particularly important in perspectives of religious reflection on cloning: (1) the moral

41. Childress, *supra* note 2, at 11.

viability of intermediate communities; (2) a narrative understanding of human life; and (3) human nature as creative. I do not claim that there is a univocal religious interpretation on these themes; indeed, as my analysis will illustrate, these are issues in which there is disagreement within and between religious traditions. However, this should be taken as an indication that, even if no consensus on the answers presented by the religious traditions exists, the questions they pose are really unavoidable in ethical and policy debates on cloning.

A. The Moral Viability of Intermediate Communities

Much of the policy and philosophical discussion over cloning human beings has proceeded on an assumption that the primary stakeholders are individuals or couples and the authoritarian state. Thus, as portrayed above, the moral question of cloning tends to get framed as an issue of what, if any, restrictions on liberty (scientific or procreative) are permissible. What is omitted from this construction of the question is the moral significance of intermediate communities, which, after all, are the context for most of our meaningful life experiences. It is through these intermediate communities, such as family, friendships, religious communities, and professional associations, that the relationship between the autonomous citizen and the authoritarian state is socially enacted and that values are transmitted and mediated. Moreover, they provide the most genuine, and most difficult, test of the integrity of our moral character, because our ethical convictions are always on display in these intimate and proximate relationships. These intermediate communities thus have their own identity and integrity that influence how a question of social ethics and policy is framed and resolved.

Within these contexts, religious voices in the cloning debate have given particular attention to the moral meaning or value of a child and the primacy of familial relationships. The availability of reproductive technologies of various kinds and the prospects of human clones tend to make the child a human project, or as expressed by legal scholar John Robertson, a matter of "choice."⁴² By contrast, religious argumentation stresses the sentiments of awe and wonder evoked by the embodied child. A child is thus understood as a "gift" and a "mystery" rather than an artifact of human choice and design. The language of "gift" situates the child within our general social conventions and discourse about "gifts," that is, as entities that convey and embody personalization, foster

42. JOHN A. ROBERTSON, *CHILDREN OF CHOICE: FREEDOM AND THE NEW REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES* (1994).

mutuality and community, and encourage reciprocity. Gifts thereby represent a form of human exchange that cannot be reduced merely to market forces.⁴³

In this context of the child as "gift" rather than "product," cloning may be problematic to the extent that it risks eroding the value we attribute to a child, or those sentiments that a child evokes in society in general, and within parents in particular. It is important to keep in mind that the entity of scientific interest in the cloning process is the (somatic) cell and the processes of cellular division, and the child-to-be who is the outcome of the process may be of secondary interest. Scientific and philosophical arguments in support of cloning have tended to emphasize the benefits of basic knowledge to researchers, or to potential treatments for human diseases, or to parents. Yet, as Callahan pointedly observes, "children in our world do not suffer from an absence of cloning."⁴⁴

Of course, the understanding of the value of a child shapes and forms the context of familial relationships. In one sense, many religious arguments on cloning human beings express concern about parenting situations where the child is the result of a calculated benefit-risk analysis to the parents, or the product of an unlimited right to reproductive autonomy, rather than the symbol of parental love. Parenting involves profound moral commitments to preserving, nurturing, receptivity, and mutuality that are not adequately accommodated by moral frameworks of utility or autonomy. Moreover, some religious traditions, particularly Judaism and Islam, give prominence to the importance of generational integrity and moral responsibilities that are rooted in genealogical lineage. This suggests a deep commitment to the kinds of ties that bind families together, as spouses, as parents, and as generations, and in turn why some theologians ultimately reject the prospects of human cloning on the grounds of "a good life in a family."⁴⁵

The stability of family is not a sufficient moral perspective by which to evaluate human cloning, but it is a necessary context within religious frameworks, and an indication of the extent to which intermediate communities are given serious consideration in democratic discourse. Islamic thought, for example, affirms that, because the family is intrinsic to a well-functioning society, cloning procedures that separate the spiritual and moral relations of spouses, and those of parents and children, may undermine the foundation for

43. See Paul F. Camenisch, *Gift and Gratitude in Ethics*, J. OF RELIGIOUS ETHICS, Spring 1981, at 1-34. See also Thomas H. Murray, *Gifts of the Body and the Needs of Strangers*, HASTINGS CTR. REP., Apr. 1987, at 30-38.

44. Callahan, *supra* note 34, at 19.

45. Allen D. Verhey, *Theology After Dolly: Cloning and the Human Family*, CHRISTIAN CENTURY, Mar. 19-26, 1997, at 285-86.

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 627

human community in general.⁴⁶ It is not a compelling counterargument to contend that social realities of familial life and relationships do not match theological idealism about the "good life in a family," because the political and philosophical framework of citizen and state as the primary moral relationship is itself a distortion of ordinary moral experience.

B. *The Narrative Context*

Religious arguments infuse a realm of meaning into debates on cloning by situating cloning within their formative narratives. Religious narratives are embedded within and express "mythic" dimensions of religious experience. Here "myth" is used not in the sense of a fabrication, but rather in a more academic sense of a story that functions in several ways: (1) it communicates a world-view or vision; (2) it is revelatory for self-understanding; (3) it sanctions models of behavior and moral norms; and (4) it offers explanations for the eruption of evil or harm and the need for liberation.⁴⁷

In this respect, it is perhaps no surprise that much of the discussion in religious communities about moral issues in general are given a narrative context. Moral norms are embedded in narratives, for example, the norm of neighbor love in the Christian parable of the Good Samaritan⁴⁸ and the norm of non-attachment in the Buddhist parable of the mustard seed.⁴⁹ In the context of cloning, in which researchers, parents, and policymakers contemplate the creation of new life, religious traditions, whether western, non-western, or indigenous, situate cloning within formative narratives of creation.⁵⁰

In the Jewish and Christian traditions, religious arguments about cloning rely heavily on the creation story related in *Genesis*. This story establishes a particular view of self-understanding that is crucial to Jewish and Christian ethics on cloning, namely, that human beings are created in the "image of God" (*imago Dei*). The *imago Dei* provides insights into both researchers who develop cloning processes, for example, and human selves as imaginative and creative, as well as the nature and value of the clone, where disagreements surface in religious arguments over whether the clone reflects the *imago Dei* or is rather a creation after the image of human beings, more particularly of man, and thus perhaps not authentically human. Religious traditions may differ over

46. Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Perspectives on Cloning*, *BIOETHICS*, June 1997, at S127-30.

47. JAMES C. LIVINGSTON, *ANATOMY OF THE SACRED* 79-90 (1989).

48. *Luke* 10:25-37.

49. E.A. BURTT, *TEACHINGS OF THE COMPASSIONATE BUDDHA* 44-45 (1955).

50. See generally *Human Cloning: Fact, Fiction, and Faith*, REFLECTIONS (Joan Woolfrey & Courtney S. Campbell eds., Program for Ethics, Sci. & the Env't, Oregon State University), May 1997, at 1.

the meaning of the *imago Dei* or in its application to the context of cloning human beings, but this claim about self-identity and understanding is a fundamental conviction of theological anthropology that cannot be neglected. And these convictions presuppose a background narrative and vision of the world.

Moreover, the narrative sanctions certain forms of behavior as acceptable based on moral norms. However, religious traditions may differ over which aspect of the narrative is morally normative. Christian thinkers, for example, tend to draw heavily on the first creation story of *Genesis* 1, in which male and female are created in the image of God. This provides a basis for normative judgments regarding sexual differentiation and procreation. When applied to the context of cloning, a common concern is the normative connection between the unitive and procreative purposes of sexuality, which is ruptured by cloning (as well as by many other forms of reproductive technology and contraception). The norm does not generate a definitive ethical assessment of cloning, but it does impose a presumption against cloning as a reproductive method to create a child.

By contrast, Jewish scholars in the cloning debate tend to draw more frequently on the second creation story related in *Genesis* 2, in which human beings are given “dominion” over creation and a mandate of partnership with God to improve human life.⁵¹ Thus, the Jewish tradition is less likely to come to a judgment that cloning violates anything intrinsic in human dignity; instead, the Jewish tradition focuses on whether and to what extent cloning research and cloning human beings may improve human welfare. Jewish scholars are generally more supportive of cloning research than they are of cloning a human being, because a better understanding of cellular division and embryonic development may provide the basis for progress against various kinds of diseases. However, no Jewish thinker seems willing to preclude the latter as a possibility in every and all situations. If cloning is the only recourse for a parent that seeks to have a child with at least partial genetic ties, or to continue a genealogical lineage, such circumstances may justify cloning a human under the norm of improving human welfare.

Theological narratives are thus a basis through which moral discourse about cloning may be infused with a substantive depth and meaning. When such narratives are invoked in public discourse, they serve the function of stimulating public imagination. They can enable moral perception by illuminating how cloning raises profound questions of human origins and human identity. Although I have focused here on the ways that different religious traditions may interpret a narrative tradition differently, and thus come to different moral

51. Dorff, *supra* note 14.

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 629

judgments about cloning human beings, it is important to keep in mind two themes that seem to be shared across religious traditions. First, cloning is theologically contextualized within myths and narratives of creation or human beginnings. Second, religious discourse about cloning does not invoke narratives of redemption or liberation. This is to say that, while cloning may be viewed as an alternative way of bringing a child into the world, it is at best a morally optional procedure, rather than morally required. Nonetheless, some religious thinkers understand cloning within narratives of eschatology or human destiny, as an expression of an evolving human nature.

C. *Human Destiny*

Even for religious traditions that embed cloning in narratives of creation, a question remains about whether creation is *normative*. Do human beings “look backward” for our moral guidance, hoping to respect the image of God in persons and, culturally, to regain or approximate a paradise lost? This perspective of a “closed” human nature is certainly central to arguments presented by many religious thinkers, and by and large, it leads to negative theological assessments of the ethics of cloning.

However, another theological interpretation is possible, one that emphasizes an “openness” about human destiny. This perspective begins from the insight that part of what it means for human beings to be created in the image of God is precisely to be *creative*, and to express that creativity in their interactions with other persons, with nature, and through the use of various technologies. This understanding is implicit in the more flexible stance on human cloning represented in Jewish thinkers that was noted above, wherein humanity is given a mandate to repair or mend creation. The human gaze is thereby redirected from a backward look to a forward vision, in which creation is understood not as static and fixed at a particular time, but as a dynamic *process*, within which normative humanity and human destiny evolves over time and is continually re-created. Creation is an ongoing process, a continual creation (*continuo creatio*) to which human beings are called to active participation. Such an account, which has emerged in more liberal Protestant thought,⁵² can accommodate, permit, or even encourage cloning of human beings as an expression of human creativity to the extent that the procedure promotes human welfare and dignity.

The problem with this account is that, in its attempt to emphasize theological openness to creativity and technological innovation, it does not seem to offer any basis for limitations. After all, if normative humanity is undergoing

52. See TED PETERS, *PLAYING GOD? GENETIC DETERMINISM AND HUMAN FREEDOM* (1997); see also RONALD COLE-TURNER, *THE NEW GENESIS: THEOLOGY AND THE GENETIC REVOLUTION* (1993).

continual re-creation and interpretation, then the concepts of “human welfare” or “human dignity” are themselves rendered theologically problematic. The theological emphasis on a creative human destiny, while avoiding a static standard of the normatively human, does not seem to be able to generate any viable standard in its place.

While such positions thus encourage human participation in creativity, and even co-creatorship with the divine, they have nonetheless wanted to maintain that human beings are *created* co-creators. That is, projects of our creativity and imagination, including technological innovations, are subject to the constraints of finitude and fallibility. We have limited capacities to predict or control the outcomes of courses of action that we initiate, and it is difficult (and some would argue impossible) for us to be morally disinterested in these actions to the point of being able to offer valid ethical assessments. Secular, theological, and popular literature are replete with examples of where creativity was not balanced with or checked by awareness of finitude and the possibilities of fallibility: almost every cultural tradition, including modern science, has its versions of the Promethean myth. If our human propensities for aspiration and pretension are dismissed, then stories from *Genesis* or from literature such as *Frankenstein*, *Brave New World*, or *Jurassic Park* remind us that what is created can ultimately rebel and consume the creator with catastrophic consequences. In this respect, religious narratives of eschatology and theologies of human destiny do incorporate some features of normative humanity as limits on our creative projects, including proposals for cloning human beings.

VI. CONCLUSION

This Article has sought to display both points of contact and conflict between religious ethical traditions and public policy in the debates over the cloning of human beings. It is an important challenge for public policy to accommodate the breadth of religious pluralism in our culture and to formulate similar standards of policy relevance for religious and non-religious positions. Religious traditions, as independent moral voices in society, can contribute to policy debates through the articulation of themes of resistance and meaning, but insofar as possible, religious thinkers should seek to express these themes in a discourse that an informed citizenry can generally access.

In the policy process, religious ethical traditions are vital resources for a liberal democratic society whose public imagination often seems incapacitated and whose public discourse seems contracted. In the context of the debate over cloning human beings, an emphasis on themes of resistance and meaning can enhance moral perception and “problem-seeing,” that is, traditions of religious ethics offer alternative contexts or narratives within which the controversy may be framed. This enables religious discourse to be incorporated within the policy

1998] *RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES & HUMAN CLONING* 631

process without being explicitly invoked as the warrant for a particular policy, an important goal not only for the secular state, but for religious communities who seek to retain their moral independence and integrity.

