

Embrace Human Cloning

Cloning, 2012

"Nature wants us to pass on our genes; if [cloning](#) assists in that effort, nature would not be offended."

In the following viewpoint, Gregg Easterbrook argues that reproductive cloning is ethical. Easterbrook argues that cloning is not offensive to nature. Instead, he says, nature produces clones all the time, and the passing on of genes, which cloning does, is "natural." Easterbrook says there are some issues to consider about reproductive cloning; however, it should not be dismissed as being unnatural or unethical. Gregg Easterbrook is an American writer, lecturer, and a senior editor of the *New Republic*. His books include *A Moment on the Earth: The Coming Age of Environmental Optimism* and *The Progress Paradox: How [Life](#) Gets Better While People Feel Worse*.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. What is Easterbrook referring to when he says chances are you already know a clone?
2. According to Easterbrook, what reason does Leon Kass give for arguing that [human cloning](#) is offensive?
3. What reproductive technology does Easterbrook say was once seen as depraved God-playing?

Why shouldn't science create carbon copies of people? Nature does it every day.

Human clones, it is widely assumed, would be monstrous perversions of nature. Yet chances are you already know one. Indeed, you may know several and even have dated a clone. They walk among us in the form of identical [twins](#): people who share exact sets of DNA. Such twins almost always look alike and often have similar quirks. But their minds, experiences, and personalities are different, and no one supposes they are less than fully human. And if identical twins are fully human, wouldn't cloned people be as well?

Suppose scientists could create a clone from an adult human: It would probably be more distinct from its predecessor than most identical twins are from each other. A clone from a grown-up would have the same DNA but would come into the world as a gurgling baby, not an instant adult, as in sci-fi. The clone would go through childhood and adolescence with the same life-shaping unpredictability as any kid.

The eminent University of Chicago ethicist Leon Kass has argued that human cloning would be offensive in part because the clone would "not be fully a surprise to the world." True, but what child is? Almost all share physical traits and mannerisms with their parents. By having different experiences than their parents (er, parent) and developing their own personalities, clones would become distinct individuals with the same originality and dignity as identical twins—or anyone else.

Others argue that cloning is "unnatural." But nature wants us to pass on our genes; if cloning assists in

that effort, nature would not be offended. Moreover, cloning itself isn't new; there have been many species that reproduced clonally and a few that still do. And there's nothing intrinsically unnatural about human inventions that improve reproductive odds—does anyone think nature is offended by hospital delivery made safe by banks of machines?

Nature Wants Us to Pass On Our Genes. Cloning Assists in That Effort.

This does not necessarily make human cloning desirable; there are complicated issues to consider. Initial mammalian cloning experiments, with sheep and other species, have produced many sickly offspring that die quickly. Could it ever be ethical to conduct research that produces sick babies in the hope of figuring out how to make healthy clones? And clones might be treated as inferiors, rendering them unhappy.

Still, human cloning should not be out of the question. In vitro fertilization was once seen as depraved God-playing and is now embraced, even by many of the devoutly religious. Cloning could be a blessing for the infertile, who otherwise could not experience biological parenthood. And, of course, it would be a blessing for the clone itself. Suppose a clone is later asked, "Are you glad you exist even though you are physically quite similar to someone else, or do you wish you had never existed?" We all know what the answer would be.

Further Readings

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Periodicals

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