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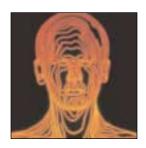
INDEX

A Buddhist Perspective on Clone and Human Gene Technology

Rev. Kobun Sasaki P. 1~3

Looking for A New Culture of Death

Professor of Sophia University Alfons Deeken P. 4~5





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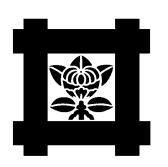
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A Buddhist Perspective on Clone and Human Gene Technology



Myogyo-Ji Buddhist Temple of Boston Rev. Kobun Sasaki

n July 5, 1996, a cloned lamb named Dolly was born at a laboratory in Scotland. She was created not out of the union of a sperm and an egg, but out of the genetic material from the udder cell of a six-year-old sheep. In other words, Dolly was the identical twin of the original sheep that provided the udder cells, but born six years later.

being which most scientists had considered an impossibility, and hypothetically appeared only in science fiction movies for a long time, was created by an embryologist, Ian Wilmut.

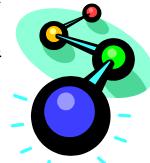
It has been five years since that shocking news. The research of cloning technology has continued after Dolly's birth, and several cows and sheep have been cloned today. This includes cloning from an embryo cell, cloning from an adult skin cell, and so forth. Cloning technology has secretly and

steadily advanced. There are many scientists who reveal that technically, it is not unusual a clone of a human be born in the near future.

Simultaneously, human gene research has made rapid progress as well. Recently, the press reported that scientists finally deciphered the entire structure of the human gene. This means that the human gene which was the mystery of life could be handled by ourselves in the near future. In the genetic engineering field, genetically modified food (biofood) has already been realized in our society. As everyone knows, it has been a grave social issue because the safety of genetically modified food for human bodies is still unknown.

People with a normal ethic probably think it is an act of sheer madness to create a human clone or a genetically

modified human being who is extremely intelligent and healthy. The cult group in Canada, however, boasted they will create a clone of a

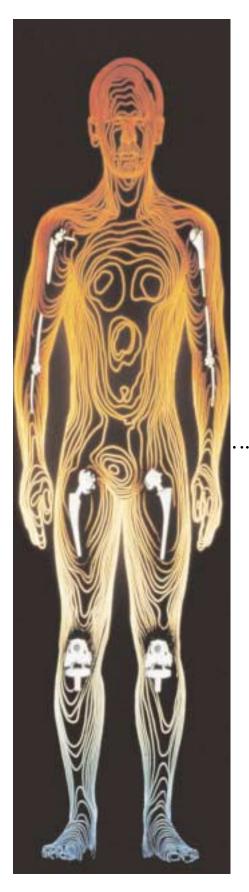




human baby within this year, and a doctor of sterilization in Italy declared he will succeed in cloning a human within two years. While cloning technology is advancing, in some countries, Japan and Germany promptly established a law which forbids the study regarding cloning humans. Nevertheless, in England, a bill, which approves the research concerning cloning a human organ, was passed by the House of Lords. In the United States, there is no regulation regarding clone research except the study supported by the Federal Government.

But here complicated problems arise. Prohibiting only cloning a human or handling a human gene as an ethical issue is indeed contradictory to approving in-vitro fertilization, artificial abortion, and even selling frozen sperms/eggs. Namely, as a result of medical technology, having developed and moving ahead before establishing regulations, we have already broken into "sanctuary of life." Issues, where we should set ethical limits in developing medical technologies, would be much complicated from now on. I do believe that in the 21st century, human beings will confront knotty problems and significant ethical issues that they have never faced in history.

Then, let me think of the actual purposes and problems in clone and genetic research. Dr. Wilmut who created Dolly stated that he believed that the birth of Dolly was the first step in order for the new treatment for human disease. That is, if it is possible for us to create clone human organs, we do not need to use an animal organ or another person's organ on the occasion of an



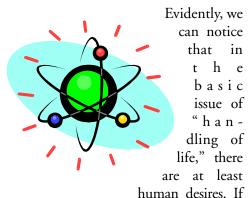
organ transplant. Therefore, it could solve various kinds of problems in an organ transplant. He also stated that he ethically distressed himself about creating Dolly, in the meantime, he honestly revealed that many scientists have been looking for the benefit of patents, financial supports from medical companies, and research organs as engaging clone research.

Next, one of the main purposes of genetic research is human gene therapy. By elucidating the whole structure and information of the human gene, it could be possible to remove part of the gene which has disease or which possibly causes disease in the course of time, and then, replacing a normal gene there. Therefore, this technology could prevent an intractable disease, and it could be a

human • clone

new treatment for incurable disease. Two years ago, a university research group in the States experimented a gene recombination on a living human body. The volunteer subject was a healthy male high school student. His parents agreed with the doctor's persuasion that says it is safe for the body. But right after the experimentation, his body started rejection and died suddenly. This case was brought to a trial by the accusation of the parents, and the judgment was fully given against the university because the doctor knew the danger of the experiment, and did not notify the student and his parents about the true risk. It is needless to say that in the background, in which the university was in a hurry for success even run a big risk, there was the university's egoistic pursuit of interests.

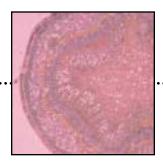




there is a family who suffers from an incurable disease, the family wants to cure him/her anyhow. If there are couples who are childless, they may choose any steps they could to get a baby. If there are parents who lose their loved child, they want to bring the child back to life anyhow. And

dle their lives. Nevertheless, I think that this basic teaching is significant for especially present day, that is, this doctrine can be interpreted as a strict precept that we, human beings must not step into "sacred precincts of life." In Christianity, if people part from with God's kingdom, there is only hell, so handling human lives given by God should be the path following to the hell.

Meanwhile, Buddhism is a religion which aims for the emancipation from sufferings and the attainment of Nirvana. Buddhism asserts that people can choose the right path and obtain genuine spiritual calmness by truly accepting the reality that all I think that human technology will certainly develop hereafter, and our society will be more and more complicated by various information. In such a world, we have to precisely make a decision what the right thing or the wrong thing is. A scientist argues that "The birth of a human clone is merely the process of evolution for human beings, and human beings should have free will to keep evolving." Do we really need clone and gene control technologies in order to prolong a human life? Do we really need a human clone? Today, we have come to an age in which we have to reconsider the "life of human." It is important for an individual to attain enlightenment,





but if our society goes to a wrong direction, and many people suffer from their delusions, there is no true salvation for an individual. Therefore, as Nichiren Shonin

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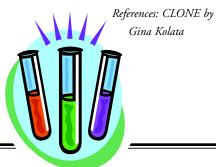
most of us have a strong desire to live long with good health. Moreover, as mentioned above, in the scene of medical research, the discovery of a new drug or new treatment for human diseases will cause enormous benefits for researchers, so there is a danger that the normal ethical view of researchers could be lost by an immediate profit.

Next, let me consider the issue of "handling of life" based upon religions. According to Genesis, all living beings were created by God. It seems to be that there is a gap between the teaching written 2000 years ago and today's world in which human beings can technically han-

things are transitory. Shakyamuni mentions in Chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, "In order to eliminate sufferings, people sow new seeds of sufferings." If replacing this Buddha's phrase with today's issue of "handling of life," it would be that "in order to avoid the suffering of disease and death by cloning technology or handling human gene, people sow new sufferings like the disorder of human society and destruction of human organism." I think that we should admit the truth of law of nature "all living beings will end at any rate" as it is, and live as hard as possible within a limited life. I believe that this is the way leading us to Buddha's enlightenment.

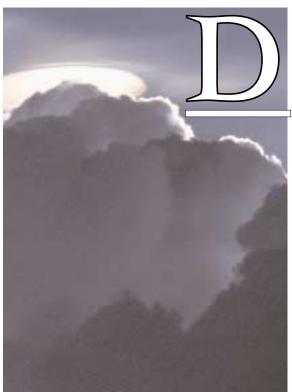
Therefore, as Nichiren Shonin turned his eyes to the society, nation, and entire world, it is indeed important for us to spread the teaching of the Lotus Sutra to our society, and positively practice its teachings in our society.

References: CLONE by





Looking For A New Culture Of



was born in Germany, and have lived in 12 countries so far, Lincluding France, England, and the United States. Today, I am teaching "philosophy of death" at Sophia University in Tokyo. When I came to Japan, I went to Japanese language school because I was not able to speak any Japanese. The teacher of the school told me that "If you want to understand real Japanese culture, history, and religion, you should visit Mt. Minobu." So right away, I visited Mt. Minobu. This visit was the first time for me to meet Nichiren Shonin, Since then, I have often visited Mt. Minobu.

Today, I would like to talk about the significant duty of religion, "Looking for a new culture of death," and let us think of this theme together. When we consider

Professor of Sophia University Alfons Deeken

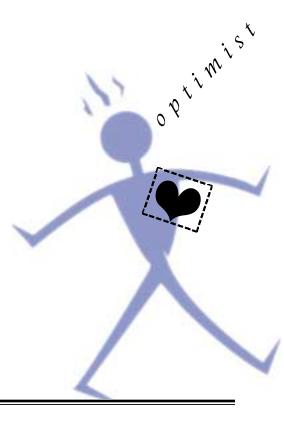
what death means for us over and over again, we can truly recognize that our lives are limited, and the preciousness of our lives. Therefore, we should think about how we can live meaningfully, and how we can live useful life.

There is no doubt that we will die sooner or later, so I think that looking for a worthwhile purpose in this limited life is the important subject for us. Of

course, religions as well as human beings have studied the subject of "death" for a long Nevertheless, in the 20th century, a concept of "taboo of death" was established throughout the world. As a result, we do not sufficiently think about the worth of a life, and we start to devalue our lives themselves.

I actually received notice of a malignant cancer three years ago. I think all people, including myself, cannot escape destiny, such as a disease. But the important thing is how we correspond to such a circumstance, namely, we choose ways to cope with difficulties and hardship by ourselves. Even if we receive notice of a cancer, it is possible for us to live harder than before by realizing the limited time. For that reason, I want to emphasize that "new culture of death" can be "new culture of life."

On the occasion when one chooses a way of life, there will be great differences if one selects being an optimist or being a pessimist. Repeatedly, our lives are limited, but we have time. We do not know how many years or how many months we could live in the future, but we surely have time now. In this view, at least we can be thankful for our present lives. Realistic thinking and attitude about death are very significant for





us. Accordingly, we should not waste our limited time and solely wait for death. The important thing is doing one's best, and fulfilling one's mission in the limited time.

I was born in 1932, so I experienced the second world war when I was an elementary student. In those days, Germany was governed by the Nazis. Under that circumstance, a philosopher, Fr. Alfred Derf, an anti-Nazi leader, was arrested by the order of Hitler, and executed at the age of thirty seven. Right before the execution, he left a beautiful phrase at the prison in Berlin. "If one brought a little bit of love, peace, light, and truth into the world, one's life was meaningful." Thus, he asserted that to live a useful life for some purpose is more valuable than to live long.

I think that his last words are wonderful as the norm of our lives. By his norm, every night, we can review whether or not we spent a worthwhile day. If we brought a little bit of love (compassion in Buddhism,) peace, light, and truth into the world, the day would be meaningful. Conversely, if we self-ishly slandered others, spread a bad rumor to people, instead of truth, we should regret that the day would be useless.

For the reason mentioned above, we need to bravely smash the "taboo of death" from now on. I think that we could look for the new worthwhile life by presuming your death or the death of your loved one, and thinking about the meaning of your death or your family. I also believe that to spread this way of thinking to our

society is one of our important duties.

Let me give an example. I annually hold a seminar named "Thinking of Life and Death" for two days at Sophia University. There was a 35 year-old woman who was diagnosed with a relapse of breast cancer, and had two months to live. I told her "There is a seminar in which around 800 medical workers gather, and would like you to share vour medical treatment and "struggle against breast cancer" to them." She accepted my request with great glee. She spoke to the large audience about the complicated feelings of a young woman diagnosed with breast cancer. Doctors shed tears as they listened to her story and learned the pain of a

40 days later, she passed away at the age of 36. Before she died, she repeatedly said that "I am glad to be useful for other people." I think the fact that she died at the age of 36, was her destiny, but it was her own choice that she tried to be useful for others. She was able to spend

young breast cancer patient.

meaningful time before she died, but if she was not notified about her cancer, she would merely wait for the day of leaving the hospital, and waste her last time in the hospital. There are many cases in which patients are not told they have terminal cancer. Therefore, they waste the precious last time of their lives.

As a result of "taboo of death" con-

tinuing for many years, doctors say it is difficult to communicate with patients if they do not mentally prepare for death. Today, medical staffs are well studied concerning terminal care, but a problem is in general people do

not study death at all. For instance, if the family of a patient has a concept of "taboo of death," it is not easy for doctors to tell the patient that he/she has an incurable cancer. For this reason, I believe people need mental support from religions. I strongly hope people overcome the taboo of death by the religious education of "preparation for death," and positively and freely think about a "new culture of death."

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