

PREFACE

It is widely believed that new genetic knowledge and technology posed challenges not only to traditional social practices but also to ethical theories. I believe, as nearly everyone does, that ethics should provide guidance for social practice. I also believe that our ethical understanding — the reasons, principles, and theory we draw on — itself has developed in response to specific challenges of social life. Consequently, it is thought that the new human capabilities that genetics creates requires an examination of ethical theory, not just an application of it. While writing the thesis the conviction that worked was that we must look deeply inward to the core of our field as moral and political philosophers as well as outward from it toward the engagement of social practices with new genetic powers.

From the outset of this work I was keenly aware of a fundamental limitation. Although our topic clearly has interdisciplinary dimensions, I am student of philosophy and hence my knowledge about genetics or as a social scientist was limited. However, the tremendous development in the field of human genetics raises some questions in every curious mind. I know that it is difficult if not impossible to find out the answer of these questions. Genetics is a science whereas ethics is not. Hence any definitive answer of all the questions that haunt our mind about these momentous changes cannot be expected. Still an ethical enquiry is relevant, as we shall see; no scientific progress can take place in an ethical vacuum.

Actually what happened in this field of enquiry that even before many of the ~~of the~~ developments that we hear in genetics had emerged as a tangible actuality, the human mind, by virtue of its ability

to visualize and fantasize had toyed with the idea, fictionalized it and painted a picture of the possible consequences which would occur if these became a reality. Therefore, for many of our attitudes and positions were born out of our understanding derived from these sources, which invariably involved around a situation in which untethered and unmonitored application of this technology had been done. The importance of understanding the implications of such situation is very great because science fiction is the product of brainstorming, in which ideas come out free and spontaneous which may appear improbable at one point of time but may become distinct possibilities at some other. Taking cognizance of such dangers helps man to evolve a suitable framework and system of inbuilt safeguards within which the functioning of various endeavours should be contained.

However, equally important is the fact that an objective, dispassionate view which takes account of merits and usefulness should be taken. Many aspects of this scientific achievement contain potential for the welfare and well-being of mankind. The application of genetic cloning, for example, for the understanding and control of disease, that is, therapeutic cloning, is one such aspect. Focusing on the possibility of achieving better understanding at molecular level and thus more effective treatment and control, one find optimistic evidence in the area of genetic engineering.

While selecting the topic of my research I was drawn gently to the area of bioethics because it is during this time that cloning and other issues of genetic engineering such as reversal of the process of ageing and so on became a matter of discussion into intellectual circles. While I was taking a keen interest in this field, it is the discussion with my supervisor that pulled me violently to choose for

such a topic. Thus the topic became obvious. During the entire time of my work, discussion with him was fruitful and enlightening. Without his constant inspiration it would not have been possible for me to complete this work. Hence I would like to convey him my heart-felt gratitude.

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