

PHIL 226
Biomedical Ethics
 Week 11

Exercise Nov. 22.
 Exam Nov. 29.
 Reproductive ethics
 No electronics



1

Zombie Ethics

1. Do Zombies have rights?
2. Do voodoo Zombies have different rights than virus Zombies?
3. Are Zombies persons? Do Zombies have needs?
4. Should ethical decision making consider consequences for Zombies?
5. Should Zombies be covered by universal health plans?
6. Is killing Zombies euthanasia?

2

Discussion question

- John and Mary were normal until they were both bitten by a Zombie. Now all they want to do is to eat the brains of others. What should be done with them?

Reproductive Issues

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| • Birth control | • Surrogate motherhood |
| • Genetic screening for birth defects | • Genetic enhancement |
| • In vitro fertilization (IVF) | • Cloning |
| • Sperm and egg donors (voluntary, paid) | • Parthenogenesis |
| • Stem cell research | • Chimeras/hybrids |
| | • Gene patenting |

4

The Vatican View

1. God created human life.
2. Human life is sacred.
3. Persons begin at conception.
4. Procreation requires marriage and the conjugal act.
5. So, in vitro fertilization is wrong.

5

In Vitro Fertilization

- Homologous (married couple) vs heterologous (1 or 2 donors)
- Arguments for:
 - Consequences: wanted child, happiness of parents.
 - Right to have children.
- Arguments against:
 - Conjugal duties.
 - High failure rate, expense. Multiple births.

6

Overall's Criteria

- Informed choice: risks and alternatives.
- Eliminate irrelevant barriers, such as marital status.
- Track long term effects. Donors not vendors.
- Provide support for participants in IVF programs.

7

Conceiving a Child to Save a Child

Arguments that the parents acted wrongly.

1. Marissa is being used as a means to an end, treated as an object.
2. Marissa would be harmed by learning why she was conceived.
3. Personal relationships are endangered.

Arguments that the parents acted rightly.

1. The parents planned to love Marissa fully, so she is not just a means.
2. Marissa would already have a good relationship by the time she was told.
3. Families have a right to privacy.
4. Good consequences for Marissa's sister and parents.

8

Discussion question

- Antoine and Marie have a daughter with leukemia who needs a bone marrow transplant, but no matches are available.
- Should they have another child in order to provide a transplant?

Gene Therapy

Distinctions

- Therapy: treat a disease.
- Enhancement: improve human functioning.
 - E.g. athletic, mental, cosmetic.
- Somatic gene therapy: modify genes that affect only the current patient.
- Germline gene therapy: modify genes that will be passed on to offspring
- Claim: Gene therapy is moral, but genetic enhancement is not.

The Concept of Disease

- Biological approach: Diseases are defects in functional abilities.
- Value-laden approach: Disease concepts depend on social values.
- Makes it much harder to defend therapy/enhancement distinction.

10

Against Genetic Enhancement

- Inequality: some people would get an unfair advantage.
- Bad consequences: different tiers of society would arise.
- Slippery slope: Nazi type eugenics would follow.
- Enhancement changes the human form.
- Germline enhancement violates the rights of the unborn.
- Genetic enhancement could have negative side effects. Compare steroids.

11

For Genetic Enhancement

- Autonomy: People have a right to alter their bodies.
- Consequence: People would be happier and more successful.
- Consequence: Humanity would be improved.

12

Discussion question

- Hans and Inge are both good athletes, but they want their children to be much better, and they have heard that gene therapy might produce more fast-twitch muscles.
- Should they give their children gene therapy?

Cloning

- Reproductive cloning: Transfer genetic material from a donor adult cell to an egg whose nucleus has been removed. Stimulate cell division, then implant in a uterus.
- Result: New individual with almost the same genetics as the donor.

14

Arguments Against Cloning

- Cloning humans is unnatural.
- Cloning humans is playing God.
- Cloning humans is contrary to human dignity.
- Cloned people would be used as means, not ends, e.g. as replicas.

15

Arguments for Cloning

- Technology should not be limited.
- Cloning would increase happiness of parents of cloned children.
- Species enhancement: Cloning could be used to improve the quality of humanity, e.g. altruism, competition with machines.
- Misapplications of cloning could be prevented.

16

Embryonic Stem Cell Research

- Human embryos, no matter how small, are human beings with full rights.
- In vitro fertilization and stem cell research lead to production of embryos that should not be killed.
- Stem cells can be obtained from umbilical cords and other sources.
- Embryos would be used for non-medical research, e.g. toxicology.

17

For Stem Cell Research

- This research can lead to better understanding and treatment of diseases, e.g. diabetes, increasing human happiness.
- Appropriate uses of embryos and stem cells can be regulated. Perform research only when good reasons exist for it.

18