

**SOCIAL, ETHICS,
RELIGION AND SCIENCE
IN REPRODUCTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES**

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SOCIAL ASPECTS

- The infertile couple's point of view
- Feminists' view on assisted reproduction

Infertile couple' s view

- A world dominated by fertiles - Bad advice
- “What are you two waiting for?” - Isolation

“The view of the infertile are superfluous; They could in fact prove counterproductive because they may contradict those of their doctor. What is required of the infertile is that they submit in silence to the claim that they are desperate.” (Pfeffer)

- The 3 phases of infertility:
 - Narcissistic injury
 - Grief over the loss of their reproductive function
 - Alternatives to biological parenthood
- IVF success rates / costs

The feminist perspective

- New possibilities of sex selection as a strategy to be used against patriarchy (daughters, boys, China)
- Modern woman: Pushing reproductive age
- Reproductive language is often a derogatory language —
(“Uterine environment”, “Incubators”)
 - Maria Mies, German feminist: “If the individual - the undivided person – has been divided up into his/her saleable parts, the individual has disappeared. There is only the individual which can be further divided up.”
 - “Habitual aborter”, “incompetent cervix”, “hostile cervical mucus”, Sexist language. Implied woman’s fault in infertility.
- Reproductive techniques prone towards medical ambition and adventurism over the bodies of women - Third World women
- Lesbians’ rights

ETHICS

Present and future:

- Reduction of pregnancy
- Cloning

Reduction of pregnancy

- Britain: Maximum no of embryos: 3
- Other countries: No limitations-Max pregnancy rate
- Life threats to the mother
- Increased possibility of abortion, foetal abnormality and prematurity.
- Many couples do not have the financial resource to support many children at once.
- Great psychological impact:
 - Babies being killed
 - Whole of the pregnancy could be affected.
- Pro-choice / Pro-life dichotomy
- Misconducted infertility management

Cloning (Ethical aspects)

FOR:

- Allows a couple to exert their reproductive freedom
- Relieve many couples from infertility
- Enable couples not to transmit hereditary diseases to their offspring,
- Organs and tissues could be obtained for transplantation,...
- Allow to deepen our knowledge of the scientific world

Cloning (Ethical aspects)

AGAINST:

- Violation of moral rights to a unique identity.
- We don't know what risks or abnormalities a clone could carry along
- Psychological distress caused in the twin.
- Socially: lessen the worth of human life and the respect for individuals.
- What financial and exploitative purposes cloning might carry along? Humans may become, after all, "artefacts"

Cloning (Ethical aspects)

FINALLY:

- Reproductive human cloning has been ethically unaccepted because of the high abnormality risks, but therapeutic cloning is more easily acceptable by society
- Debates will probably continue for a long time

RELIGION

- Sex-selection attempts in ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt / Pharaoh / PGD
- Most controversial issue: cloning

Cloning (Religious considerations)

1st cloning of frogs in 1968 / Dolly (Dr. Ian Wilmut in Scotland).

Protestants and Roman Catholics:

Warning not to play God.

- Life's mysteries belong only to Him.
- Human beings are fallible and evaluate their actions according to their narrow minds.
- Catholic Church sees human cloning as “a violation of human dignity” (letter from the Pope John Center, 1997).
- Humans are supposed to be created by God's image (“a divine prototype”): cloning is a violation of God's very image.

Cloning (Religious considerations)

Jewish:

- Rabbi Elliot Dorff : “no clone may be denied any of the rights and protections extended to any other child”.
- Under certain conditions, cloning can be accepted:
 - Cloning a sterile person so they can have a child (survivor from the Holocaust who has lost all the rest of his family, ensuring then the genetic line).
 - Cloning biological material for a terminally ill person.
- Technology would be morally neutral.

Islam:

- Only non-reproductive cloning is allowed and encouraged.
- PGD also regarded less toughly than Christians (Islam allows abortion on the grounds of severe foetal abnormality)

SCIENCE

“The father of IVF”, Robert Edwards:

- No evidence in all the studies practised in non-human primates of an increase in the number of foetal abnormalities
- “There is no point in delaying the work on human infertility”.
- Today abnormalities are easily screened through many kinds of prenatal diagnosis.
- To accusations that infertility treatments don’ t solve the initial infertility problem: Patients can have their children.
- To accusations that transferring embryos to a mother is the first step towards human cloning... That would probably be like saying that nuclear physics are responsible for to the atom bomb

URUGUAY

- Many years to bring along a law
- Strong Catholic opposition: Costa Rica
- Patients from many religions
- Left winged parties: against lesbian IVF
- Cryopreservation: the root of opposition
- Starting a 2nd family
- First attempts at PGD