

2.5.2 PREVENTING A BRAVE NEW WORLD

LEON R. KASS

In this selection, Leon Kass, Addie Clark Harding Professor at the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago and member of the President's Commission on Bioethics, argues that modern medical science is poised to cross an ethical boundary that will have momentous consequences for the future of humanity. Harking back to the dystopian vision of Aldous Huxley's classic *Brave New World* (1932), Kass argues that "the technological imperative, liberal democratic society, compassionate humanitarianism, moral pluralism, and free markets" are leading us down a path that places us at risk of losing our humanity. Kass argues that we should enact a worldwide ban on human cloning as a means of deterring "renegade scientists" from engaging in the practice. His proposed ban would apply to both reproductive and therapeutic cloning of human embryos because he believes that banning only reproductive cloning would prove impossible to enforce. Kass believes that we have the power to exercise control over the technological project but can only do so if we muster the political will to just say "no" to human cloning.



FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What are the three main factors that Kass identifies as limiting our ability to control the onward march of the biomedical project? What other factors contribute to our inability to avoid the dangers Kass is concerned about?
2. What reasons does Kass give for "drawing the line" at human reproductive cloning by prohibiting the practice? Are these reasons convincing? Do the same arguments apply with equal force to therapeutic cloning? Explain.
3. Why does Kass believe that employing cloning or genetic engineering techniques to produce human children is "profoundly dehumanizing, no matter how good the product?" Explain.
4. Is there a moral difference between applying genetic engineering techniques to humans and to plants and nonhuman animals? Explain.



KEYWORDS

dehumanization, genetic determinism, infertility, reproductive cloning, reproductive freedom, somatic cell nuclear transfer