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# OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

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## Unnatural Selection

OPINION



Laura Daniel

The technology behind cloning is indeed dangerous, but also potentially valuable

A small, inexplicable fear nudged the back of my mind the moment I learned Scottish scientists had cloned the first mammal from an adult sheep cell. Something inside of me said we were all headed down a dark, one-way alley and that evil was lurking just beyond the shadows.

We've had the news for a while now, and though that primal fear of "unnatural" creation still sits in the back of my mind, I've realized I just can't justify the anxiety over cloning that I first felt.

So many aspects of cloning are easy to ignore when suggestions like "superhuman race" and "army of clones" are repeated over and over again. But saying, "Cloning is evil. We shouldn't do it" is not going to stop the world from engineering the first human because if we have the technology, somebody, somewhere, is going to use it.

If cloning is a danger to humanity, one possible solution is to stop all research. President Clinton has already ordered a federal bioethics panel to report whether the federal government should regulate or ban human cloning. Though imposing regulations on such a precarious science is a necessary precaution, banning the practice before a thorough understanding of what cloning will mean to the 21st century is presumptuous and nonsensical. A cloning ban in the United States does not ensure a cloning ban in the rest of the world.

But will the rest of the world clone?

American or not, unless a huge stumbling block rolls into the path of science, a human will be cloned in the near future. The technology, like all human advances, is not in-

trinsically evil; it is the humans who abuse this technology who are dangerous, not the technology itself.

The dangers of cloning are very real. Extensive cloning would cause an inordinate amount of problems. Because cloning uses only one set of genes, there would be a lack of genetic variability. This means members of a genetically similar population could be susceptible to the same kinds of diseases.

If, for example, a particularly nasty virus hit, and the original DNA used for cloning lacked a gene that might ward off the attack, the entire population could suffer and perhaps eventually die off. Recessive genes like the ones for sickle cell anemia and cystic fibrosis could appear more often, causing more disease. Overall human biological diversity could decline, causing numerous problems.

Controlled cloning, however, could open up many possibilities for saving lives. When the technology is advanced enough, there is the possibility of growing human body parts for transplants. A burn victim could receive a skin graft made of the victim's own cloned skin, or a liver attacked by hepatitis could be replaced with the patient's cloned liver. Using cloned body parts for transplants could provide the patient with tremendous advantages, since it would be far less likely the body would reject the new part.

Of course, the idea of cloned body parts brings up the question of immortality. Could humans continue cloning parts of themselves forever? Well, never say never. But brain cells die, and replacing the brain is not much of an option unless we learn how to download our memories. Were that to happen, regula-

tions stating that this sort of cloning can only be used for necessary (and, of course, necessary would have to be clearly defined) transplants could be set into practice.

Realistically, abusing cloning would not be easy. The majority of the world doesn't even have a telephone, much less the resources to clone themselves. Even in wealthier countries, where the quality of life is such that they could afford expensive cloning procedures, I doubt people would generally want to clone just for the sake of doing so.

Most people I know still prefer sex to any other pregnancy method, and though most people want a child who is a part of him or herself, the desire to have a child carry on half of your genes is a far cry from the desire to have a replicate child who carries on all your genes. As for that army of superhumans, it could happen. But, then again, we could blow up the world with nuclear bombs. The U.S. government didn't have a problem funding that research.

Whether we like it or not, one day, a human will be cloned. This is unavoidable. We must question this power to create; to learn what sort of monstrosities this technology could render and suppress them; and to seek out what properties of cloning can benefit us. If we treat cloning with respect and caution, we may find this "unnatural" creation to be one of the most beneficial to the human race.

Laura Daniel, a junior majoring in biology, is a columnist for the Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper. E-mail: moonpie@gladstone.uoregon.edu

### WINNERS

#### Coan Wachsicht

The 20-year-old snowboarder who was lost for three days on Mt. Hood last week will not be charged by Clackamas County for the cost of the rescue search, which was \$3,500.

#### Duck Basketball

Both the women's and men's teams earned a spot in the postseason — the women in the NCAA tournament and the men in the NIT.

#### School of Journalism & Communication

Donations to the University journalism school helped fund a \$750,000 electronic media arts studio.



#### Eugene Public Schools

A GOP-sponsored plan could wipe out almost all of the \$6-10 million deficit that the district would suffer as a result of Measure 47.

### LOSERS

#### Hip-Hop

The death of east coast rapper Notorious B.I.G. sent shock waves through the hip hop community similar to those sent by the recent deaths of rappers Tupac Shakur and Eazy-E.



#### Hilary Rodham Clinton

After the First Lady's chief of staff Margaret Williams accepted a \$50,000 check from a Democratic contributor, Hillary's image is in question again.

#### Newt Gingrich

The leaders of the Christian Coalition have continued to attack the leadership ability of the House leader, calling him a "muddle-headed moderate."



#### Penthouse Magazine

The adult magazine is being sued by former "Baywatch" star, Pamela Anderson Lee, for printing stills of a video showing her and husband Tommy Lee having sex.



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### Correction

In the March 11 issue, the story about Lauren Kessler's book *Full Court Press*, stated the book chronicled the 1993-94 women's basketball season. The 1994-95 season was the correct season. Also, the article stated that head coach Jody Runge was hired before the 1992-93 season. She was hired following the 1992-93 season. The *Emerald* regrets the errors.

### LETTERS

#### Heart of the Pit

As always, it is with mixed feelings that any discussion of McArthur Court occurs. I have sat in the Dean Dome (University of North Carolina), Littlejohn Coliseum (Clemson) and the O'Connell Center (University of Florida), among others. At UNC, I felt like I was watching from an airplane in the second-to-last row. None of the arenas match the uniqueness and the intensity that I have seen in the Pit. Like most historic structures, McArthur is a valuable place. But, like many others, maintenance has been neglected enough that its appearance is not what it once was.

I applaud the University for staying with a good place as long as it has — even if the

outside is not the most beautiful site on campus. I know, in order to compete in the recruiting battle, a new place is necessary. Recruits always come in starry-eyed, looking for the situation in which they feel the most investment and commitment will be given to their efforts. Mac Court hardly portrays that impression at first glance, and most of the recruits don't wait around for a second glance when there is always some other place to turn.

But when it comes to designing this new structure, I encourage this: Do not lose the intensity or the uniqueness of the Pit. Do not build an arena where the seats are pushed a half-mile from the court. The awe of Mac Court is hidden in its compactness. And do not, under any circumstances,

build an arena so Oregon looks just like Pauley Pavilion or Allen Fieldhouse. What advantage would there be if Oregon looked like every other big basketball school in the U.S.?

In the next few years, appreciate the Pit for this uniqueness — a wonderful, old building where Oregon played to the very first national championship in basketball — because one day soon, some other school will claim the oldest active arena. But you can say you remember when.

Steven Blashfield

President  
Associated Students  
for Historic Preservation