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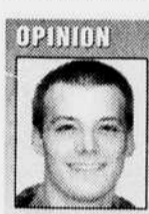
Cloning humans should be debated, not dismissed

By copying the irrational claims of cloning's foes, the Oregonian and others haven't proven why human cloning is immoral

I opened the Oregonian editorial page Tuesday morning, skimmed through the usual collection of uncontroversial, poorly thought out editorials and paused in anger when I reached the bottom entry.

The Oregonian couldn't be more wrong, I thought to myself. Then I realized this was foolish. Of course the Oregonian could be more wrong. It regularly weighs in with a delightful combination of mainstream ignorance and Christian moralizing that would be offensive if it weren't amusing; witness the five-part diatribe during the doctor-assisted suicide debate.

The editorial in question, titled "No cloning around" (man, those headline writers sure make me laugh), argued in favor of a ban on human cloning in the United States. According to the piece, a decision to impose such a ban is



OPINION
 Mike Schmierbach

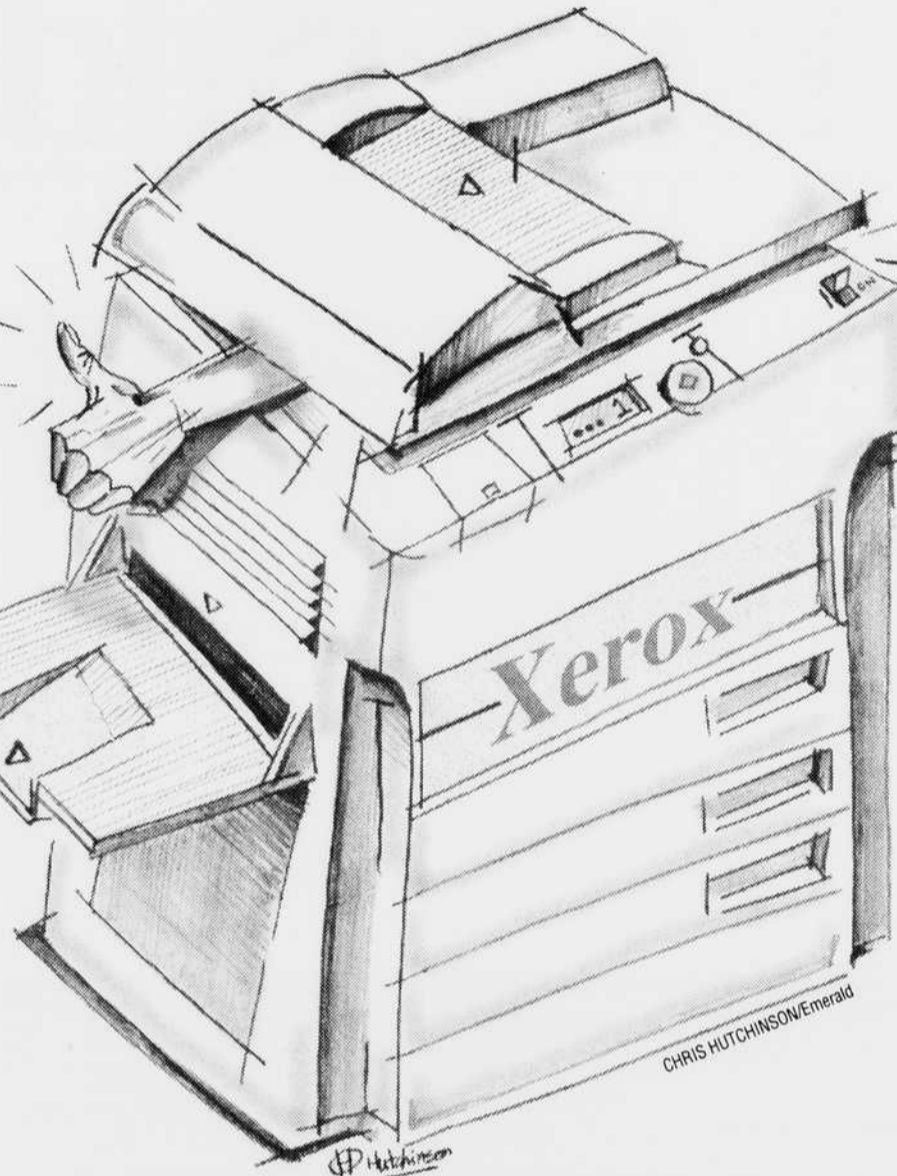
"an easy one for Congress" because "no constituency, organized or unorganized, opposes" such regulations.

I may not constitute a constituency. Nor may my friends, who, scattered across the country and debating the issue over e-mail when it first arose, generally agreed with me. Nevertheless, a substantial number of people are having a hard time understanding how President Clinton can justify the claim the Oregonian echoed — that human cloning is "untested and unsafe, and morally unacceptable."

Whom exactly does cloning threaten? The scientific community may have little to gain from experimentation with human cloning, but it is difficult to see how increased knowledge about the subject could harm science.

Many European nations have already signed a treaty putting a five-year ban on human cloning experiments. According to an Associated Press story, Dr. Axel Kahn, a medical ethicist at the National Institute for Health and Medical Research in Paris, the harm of cloning would be that it represents "an insult to human rights."

Khan argues that "to clone humans in this completely new way means they will no longer have autonomy, because someone decided what their hair color and their other characteristics would be." If such a



pathetic claim were not laughable, it would be infuriating. I'm not sure what the case was for Kahn, but the rest of us were born without control of such genetically determined traits as hair color.

The only clear harm I can see originating from cloning is that it would further weaken the claims of religious leaders, who have long complained that the "sanctity of human life" was not being adequately respected because of practices like abortion and birth control. Sex without reproduction is wrong, according to these groups. So, too, apparently, is reproduction without sex.

Like the author of the Oregonian editorial and many other cloning opponents, I too have read "Brave New World" and its

warnings about a society where class is determined by the bottle in which you were cloned. Regardless, I don't think mentioning the book constitutes an effective argument against a new technology.

If cloning represents the moral evil opponents suggest, there ought to be a clear justification for the anti-cloning position. References to books and stories about people being raised for organs do not constitute such an ethical justification.

Human cloning could certainly be used in an immoral manner. Creating a person simply for organs is ethically wrong, whether done by parents using "traditional" reproductive methods (as some families with children who need bone marrow or organ transplants do now) or

using human cloning. Conducting medical experiments upon human beings without their autonomous consent is ethically wrong.

The problem is that cloning doesn't necessarily equate with these practices. Rather than condemning the technology for what could potentially be done with it, opponents of human cloning should either forbid only the unethical practices or should come up with a compelling reason why human cloning is inherently unethical.

Unfortunately, the people the media have selected as proponents of human cloning aren't doing much better. Richard Seed, a physicist, has announced he intends to conduct experiments with human cloning, either in the United States or elsewhere if the practice is banned.

The Oregonian, Clinton and others are using this threat, made by a man who probably lacks the facilities or the scientific knowledge to follow through, as justification for immediate action to stop cloning. An artificially created deadline for debate should not prevent intelligent, rational discussion about the issue.

This discussion needs to look beyond both reactionary responses from religious leaders and their "bio-ethicist" kin and threats from technophiles like Seed. Instead, it should consider individual plans to conduct cloning experiments on their ethical merits.

I certainly don't think science should occur simply for the sake of science, without ethical discussion or moral consideration. Too often, scientists trapped in their own amoral discourse ignore the realities of the world they experiment on.

Nor do I think the work of medical ethicists or the autonomy of human beings can be ignored. There is a clear ethical justification for protecting both human life and autonomy. (For that matter, there is a clear justification to protect the rights of animals, although the Oregonian, in its rush to protect human dignity, has no qualms about conducting similar experiments on sheep.)

The question is whether life or autonomy are threatened by cloning. Thus far, I have seen no argument that would prove they necessarily are.

What I have seen is flip claims by the Oregonian and other "authorities" who use metaphors about golf and pun-laden headlines in the absence of persuasive rhetoric or logical debate.

Mike Schmierbach is the editorial editor for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Knight or Nike?

Duncan McDonald (ODE, Jan 6) says that Dave Frohnmayer didn't receive a \$1 million salary increase, that there is a provision for the creation of a "Knight Chair" to the tune of \$40,000 per year (for 25 years based on \$1 million) and that the gift was "private."

The gift may have been private, but didn't it still come from Uncle Phil? Isn't Knight in some way still affiliated with Nike? Bottom line: Knight or Nike, el presidente is still bought and sold.

One million or \$40,000 for 25 years? Bottom line: Buy not just one president, buy all presidents for the next 25 years.

McDonald doesn't explicitly state there are no corporate ties on our fair campus, but he does ask Claudia Villena for examples. Well, it seems that the folks over

at the athletic department wear little besides Nike products these days. Oh yeah, that banner protesting Nike at one of last year's football games sure didn't last long.

James Palandri
 Graduate student

Modify money committee

Student Action for Labor and Equity held a rally Wednesday, Dec. 3 in favor of holding private donations to the University accountable to the University's mission statement. SALE believes that money made by exploiting the environment or human rights should not be allowed to benefit the University.

SALE asks that the University allow student involvement in the review of private donations over \$10,000. Speaking on behalf of the University, Duncan McDon-

ald stated that "there is a standing committee made up of deans, directors and the University president as well as representatives from the Department of University Development and the Oregon Foundation who review donations on an individual basis if there are substantial questions about a gift" (ODE, Dec. 4). There is something that this committee desperately lacks: student representation. I respect the hard work the Oregon Foundation puts forth to raise needed money for our public institution. However, the University currently accepts large amounts of money from donors with no policy that upholds the University mission statement throughout this process. Large private donations undoubtedly give donors access to the University and pose a potential danger to the direction the University is

taking into the 21st century.

McDonald claims that Nike is not "doing something so egregious and so outrageous to offend the greater public's sensibility." So, McDonald does not find it offensive that Nike has taken its manufacturing jobs away from the United States and brought them to Indonesia and Vietnam for cheap labor. Cheap labor and expensive products give Nike massive profit margins. This makes it possible for Nike to make \$25 million donations to the University. While these donations benefit the University, I encourage all members of this institution to ask a question or two. Why was this money not used to keep the jobs here in the first place? Why doesn't Nike share the profits with the current labor force? After all, without the sweat of many Third World people,

Nike's financial success would not be as sizable as it currently is. Sure, by Nike's own reports, conditions are great for overseas workers. On a comparative scale, this may be true. Several other manufacturers have taken jobs away from the United States and given them to the Third World labor force in pursuit of massive profits.

McDonald and SALE both want the University to grow in excellence. That is precisely why SALE has drafted a policy pertaining to the acceptance of private dollars to our public institution. McDonald rejects the need of a policy of this sort: "There are no corporate ties at the University that dishonor us." If we as a university have no dishonorable ties, why is an acceptance policy problematic?

Michael Olson
 SALE