

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion: The Intent of the Ethics of Responsibility

#### 6.1. Introduction

The study takes its course from the ethical issues and challenges related with cloning, primarily to bring to the fore the question of human dignity of life, personal dignity and the spontaneity and creativity of life. It highlights that it can be noticed that ethical theories can be applied to a problem to explain our thoughts and challenges. As the study elaborates the major ethical frameworks, such as, virtue ethics, consequentialism and deontological ethics, the study makes an attempt to lead as per the theoretical necessity the ethical issues and challenges of cloning/human cloning to the single most important concept of autonomy.

The challenge that is faced here is the unequal presence of the autonomy principle which leaves out of consideration the fact that lots of people are unable to live with their autonomy. In this sense, autonomy tends to become more and more restricted for the privileged. Thus, the principle of autonomy in the case of human cloning or any ethical grounding requires further foundation which takes us to the concept of human nature. The basic theoretic lead that the study highlighted in grounding and framing human nature was that it is always assumed that the human nature was based on some hard and pre-given mode of understanding. In other words, it is also found that the complicated nature of the human experience lends us neither to a clear and convincing theory of human nature, nor to a satisfactory moral philosophy, which according to most thinkers rests on corresponding metaphysical principles.

While the ancient and medieval thinkers aspired for the ontology of human being on the basis of the ‘cosmogonic’ metaphysics of human nature, modern Philosophy as rationalism and empiricism fashioned themselves as ‘human mind’-centred metaphysics of human nature. The scientific metaphysics, which could be called scientific realism, on the basis of its ideals of objectively and mind-independent reality, describes human nature as that which is environmentally made-modifiable on the one side and as made by a collection of epigenetic rules, the genetic patterns of mental development, on the other extreme. The hint is that there is an invariable abidingness of human nature in the respective metaphysical principles.

The study at this juncture, negotiates with the postmetaphysical argument, which comes mainly from Jurgen Habermas. Such an engagement challenges the tussle to which ‘autonomy-human nature-traditional metaphysics’ leads the ethics of cloning. Therefore, the study encapsulates its findings as concluding observations under three heads. They are:

## **6.2. The Route: Challenging the Concept of Autonomy**

The study, as it highlights that the major (ethical) justificatory ground of the ethical reflectivity on human cloning is the concept of autonomy. It is so because the ethical moral challenges related with human cloning would ultimately rest on free self choice and ability to choose. But, as many contemporary ethicists point out the autonomy justification is simply an insufficient basis for justifying a practice like human cloning since an honest, complete autonomy-based evaluation of human cloning would have to consider the autonomy of all persons involved, including the people produced through cloning, and not just the autonomy of researchers and people desiring to have clones. Therefore, the study puts up a conceptual corridor that leads the ethical ideas that sustains the theoretical foundation of autonomy–human

nature/person relation to a broader critical hermeneutic understanding of the concept of autonomy. Such a stance of the study takes it to view and argue that the ethical autonomy question should be grounded on a concept of human nature and any concept of human nature falls back on certain metaphysics. The study argues that traditional metaphysics, which includes the metaphysics of science, delimits it (themselves, i.e., different stances of metaphysics) in such a way that it (they) cannot foster the above highlighted autonomy deadlock. In other words, the study highlights a single point argument that since the moral and ethical arguments for and against human cloning as they are cast into an ethics-bioethics mould of the concept of ‘autonomy- human nature- corresponding metaphysics’ and makes fall into an ethical dilemma, which induces an irresolvable hermeneutic horizon between ‘autonomy for’ and ‘autonomy against’.

### **6.3. The Decisive Turn: The Postmetaphysical Standpoint**

Therefore, the study takes a decisive turn here to extend its investigation on the basis of a Postmetaphysical idea of ethics. As pointed out “The postmetaphysical stance in Habermas has two wings (implications): One, Habermas calls the post-metaphysical ethical implication ‘the concept of being able to be oneself’- autonomy and the right to be postmetaphysically self-organized; the other, is the intersubjective framework to associate self with critique<sup>1</sup>. Again, the idea of post-metaphysical thinking of Habermas takes a counter stance position against the identity thinking, *prima philosophia* as the philosophy of consciousness and the strong concept of theory by bringing to fore a lineage of a procedural rationality initiated to problematize the totalizing thinking.<sup>2</sup> Habermas’ postmetaphysical position of cloning observes that “slavery is a legal relationship signifying that one person disposes over another as property,” then, “it therefore cannot be harmonized with the currently valid

concepts of constitutional law: human rights and human dignity.”<sup>3</sup> According to Habermas, reciprocity is unrestricted by definite historical communities, whose logic certainly leads us to positing an “unlimited communication community” to which our claims for appreciation are addressed. It demands recognition from us, if in no other way that the joint acknowledgment of definite unanimously binding norms. “Because of [the] inter-subjective relations inscribed in moral norms,” Habermas tells us, “no norm, regardless of whether it involves negative or positive rights and duties, can be justified or applied privately in the solitary monologue of the soul with itself.”<sup>4</sup>

Habermas argues decisively that, “Liberal eugenics would not only affect the capacity of ‘being oneself.’ It would at the same time create an interpersonal relationship for which there is no precedent. The irreversible choice of a person makes for the desired make-up of the genome of another person initiates a type of relationship between these two which jeopardizes a precondition for the moral self understanding of autonomous actors.”<sup>5</sup>

#### **6.4. The Destination: The Ethics of Responsibility**

The study, therefore, invokes the concept of the ethics of responsibility as the tenor of communicative and discourse ethics that can negotiate the ‘ethics- bioethics’ dilemma of ‘autonomy for’ and ‘autonomy against’ in situating the moral and ethical challenges of human cloning. **In this grave context the study attempts to define the ethics of responsibility as the postmetaphysical space regenerated to recreate the relation between autonomy and human nature. It has been achieved by going across Habermas’ effort to link morality with respect for autonomous agency, in following the dictates of impartial reason, and simultaneously following the dialogical willingness to listen, talk and respect other such agents. In other words, the study accepts the most important postmetaphysical idea that**

**Habermas proposes that the ethical and theoretical (philosophical) decisiveness is attained in intersubjective unity of reason through communicative action that has been realized through real discourse which accomplishes itself through ethical and communicative dialogue.**

Habermas takes a dialogical approach to practical reason, as his discourse theory requires. Habermas's discourse principle articulates this dialogical requirement. If one assumes this requirement, then one can arrive at Habermas's specific conception of reasonable moral discourse by working out the implications of his argumentation theory for the discursive testing of unconditional moral obligations. Habermas's discourse ethics depends on some very strong assumptions about the capacity of persons for moral dialogue.

However, in this context, Habermas exhibits the postmetaphysical significance of understanding of meaning and primarily pointed out the reality of discursive dialogue by making obligatory by modern pluralistic societies, according to whom the metaphysical security is unbelievable. A postmetaphysical framework as a model that can accommodate Meaning-Understanding-Interpretation and the universalizability of dialogue-social dialogue in a constructive manner.<sup>6</sup> For Habermas, such an attitude highlights autonomy- otherness, inter-subjectivity-agency and the situated critic and rationality, in a new light of "inter-subjective procedural rationality"<sup>7</sup>.

**The study concludes with the concluding observation that the post-metaphysical intent of communicative-dialogical concept of ethical justification, substantiated by the ideal of the intersubjective unity of reason, which goes along with the concept of the postmetaphysical self understanding of the species, is to be achieved by rational discourse, as the ground for renegotiating the concept of human nature. Therefore, the 'ethics-bioethics' dilemma of 'autonomy for' and**

**‘autonomy against’ in situating the moral and ethical challenges of human cloning, goes a step further in groundings itself with the ethics of responsibility of the species.**

## *Notes and Reference*

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- 1 Thomas, Pius V. 'Habermas and the Significance of the Depth Hermeneutics of Understanding', in *Assam University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. V111, No.1, June, 2013. p.145.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 "An Argument Against Human Cloning: Three Replies," in *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, translated and edited by Max Pensky. Cambridge: MIT Press, p.164
- 4 Habermas, Jurgen.1993. "Remarks on Discourse Ethics," in *Justification and Application*, translated by Ciarin Cronin. Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 64.
- 5 Habermas, Jurgen. *The Future of Human Nature*, London: Polity, 2003. P.63.
- 6 Thomas, Pius V. 'Habermas and the Significance of the Depth Hermeneutics of Understanding', in *Assam University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. V111, No.1, June, 2013.
- 7 *Ibid.*