

Abstract/Executive Summary

**FROM THE CONCEPT OF AUTONOMY TO THE
ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY: AN ENQUIRY
INTO THE NATURE OF ETHICAL
REFLECTIVITY ON HUMAN CLONING**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO ASSAM UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL
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The Scope of the Present Study/Statement of the Problem

Cloning is a term originally applied to a botanical technique of asexual reproduction. But, the ethical concerns and issues that it has generated are engrossing. As the debate on the ethical moral issues related with cloning/human cloning has reached a climax position in present day among all stages of people, which include, the scientists, legislators, religious leaders, philosophers and different international organizations of the world. Unfortunately of these diverse groups of people none of them thought harmoniously and worked together for a common objective.

The present study discusses the issue of human cloning from an ethico-philosophical point of view. It makes an attempt to chart out definite ethical concerns with human cloning in all its forms. The ethical problems generated by human cloning have been customarily grounded on the concept of autonomy in ethics and bio-ethics. The concept of autonomy, sometimes also referred to as ‘self-determination’ or ‘respect for persons’, has played a central role in the modern field of bioethics. The ethical idea of autonomy tells us that how people’s personal experiences and values play the most important role in determining what is right and true for them. As a conceptual pillar of enlightenment modernity, the concept of autonomy has been the leading idea in defining human identity. It brings in the justificatory ground that we ought to respect an individual’s/person’s and people’s autonomy in their ethical decisions as a matter of principle.

The present study, as it explores into the theoretical insights of understanding human cloning from the ethical point of view, seeks to problematize the theoretical ground of the concept of autonomy which has been worked out in bioethics-ethics justificatory negotiations between their conceptual domains. The study argues that the concept of autonomy as the justificatory ground presupposes a corresponding framework of human nature for further grounding. The study, therefore, intends to highlight from a distinct perspective the 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.

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Justification of the Study

The major (ethical) justificatory ground of the ethical reflectivity on human cloning is the concept of autonomy. As many contemporary ethicists point out the autonomy justification is simply an insufficient basis for justifying a practice like human cloning. 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. It becomes all the more true when we approach the concept of autonomy as relying on the concept of human nature/ person for further grounding. The grounding of the concept of autonomy in different frameworks of human nature makes further grounding inevitable in corresponding metaphysical frameworks which annuls and invalidates the philosophical claim of human autonomy and freedom. The present study, along with the above mentioned view point/argument, assumes that scientific or other traditional metaphysical frameworks of human nature and the corresponding concept of autonomy are incapable of proposing a competent ethical framework to address the moral problems related with human cloning. Therefore, the present study problematizes the link between ethical framework and the concept of autonomy and the supportive dimension of human natures which sustain them in order to register a postmetaphysical concept of autonomy (as discussed by Habermas). The study looks forward to further elaborate the postmetaphysical concept of autonomy from a hitherto unexplored angle and perspective of a new ethics of responsibility.

The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- To register the ethical understanding of the concept of human cloning.
- To critically disclose how the ethical grounding of cloning in the concept of autonomy ultimately rests on a corresponding framework of human nature.
And finally,
- To highlight and formulate a post-metaphysical framework of ethics for grounding the ethical understanding of human cloning which is expected to offer a distinct and wider- in- import model of the ethics of responsibility.

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Methodology

The present study is a concept-based, philosophical enquiry. Initially, it aims the conceptual description of the scientific-technological state of affair called human cloning and the ethical queries which emerge out of it. Secondly, the study attempts to translate the theoretical constructions which it descriptively aligns with the ethical understanding of human cloning into an interpretive conceptual framework. Therefore, methodologically, the present study resorts to conceptual assessment based on textual description and interpretation.

The textual and inter-textual engagement that the study indulges in is spread out into three fields of enquiry: Bioethics, Contemporary Western Ethical Theories and the Meta ethical and Philosophical Discourses on Morality and Human Nature. The literature/materials which constitute the data of the study are mainly texts available in English or translated into English.

The present study has been divided into the five main chapters excluding ‘Introduction’ and ‘Conclusion’. A brief summary of the chapters is as follows:

The Course of the Argument Developed in Chapters

The First Chapter titled, *Human Cloning and the Ethical Frameworks*, discusses primarily cloning from scientific and historical point of view. The word ‘clone’ has many connotations and is used to describe various different biological entities. Again, the term ‘cloning’ also refers to the production of genetically identical organisms via somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT). The scientists classified cloning into three different types. These three types of cloning are namely, (1) Embryo cloning, (2) Reproductive cloning or Adult DNA cloning and (3) Therapeutic cloning or Bio-medical cloning. The term “human cloning” is routinely used by the scientists to describe a kind of accepted and approved research. It also attempts to highlight the corresponding ethical frameworks which situate cloning as a moral challenge. When the moral challenge of cloning, particularly human cloning started to haunt the questions related with the scheme of life in general and the creativity involved in human natural evolution, the three broad ethical frameworks come to the force are virtue, consequentialist and deontological ethical frameworks. The Virtue ethics is an ethical approach which never emphasizes on rules, consequences and particular acts

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and places. Virtue ethics is one of three major ethical frameworks in normative ethics. Another very prominent ethical theory is consequentialism. According to this theory, an action is permissible if and only if the consequences of that action are at least as good as those of any other action available to the agent. Again the third common ethical theory is deontological ethics. According to this theory, the morality of an act is evaluated not by its consequence. In a nutshell, these three frameworks represent some of the most influential ethical thinking from across human history and around the world today. In case of human cloning procedures considering the right course of action we intend gradually to think about the consequences which are arising from the different options.

In the Second Chapter titled, *Ethics and the Concept of Autonomy*, an attempt has been made to discuss how autonomy is important in the field of philosophy, particularly in ethics and bioethics. The concept of autonomy came into philosophical importance for the first time in the work of Immanuel Kant. Again, in the nineteenth century, John strut Mill, has contributed to the discussion on the normative significance of autonomy. The chapter takes this discussion of autonomy and moral decision to bioethics, which situates the ethical questions related with cloning from a more concrete applied ethical point of view.

The Third Chapter titled, *The Autonomy Question and the Concept of Human Nature* also attempts to associate or highlight the relationship between the concept of autonomy and the concept of human nature. Human nature is the general inherent character or innate disposition of humankind. It is a unique concept which refers to the distinguishing characteristics, including ways of thinking, feeling and acting that humans tend to have naturally, independently of the influence of culture. The concept of human nature has been explored by philosophers of all ages. There are deferent philosophers and scholars of deferent period generally who are inclined to discuss about human nature based on the main schools of thought from the human history. In this chapter, an effort has been made to discuss different theories of human nature. It discusses Ancient Greek thoughts, Religious thought, Rationalist view, Empiricists View, Kant's view, Marxists thought, Existentialists thought, Modern empirical science thought, etc. This chapter farther clarifies that human nature is a concept which breaks down the boundaries between the sciences and humanities.

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Social and political problems around the world exclaim something for a better understanding of human nature. If there is nothing inviolable about human nature, there is no reason why it should be radically changed.

In the Forth Chapter titled, *The Concept of Metaphysically Grounded Human Nature* is therefore, provides a brief introduction to the concept of metaphysics and its historical development. etc. It also studies some of the important metaphysical theories which influenced the concept of human nature. The study includes 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. Kant’s qualitatively differently linked human nature and metaphysics with the dialectic between the possible impossibility of the structure of human mind. When it comes to scientific or critical realism, it advocates that existence of object does not depend upon knowledge in any way, that object is possessed of qualities and is directly known.

The Fifth Chapter titled, *Towards an Ethics of Responsibility* brings to the fore the major concern of the study that how the underlying principle that ultimately leads the chain of justificatory arguments which takes off from human cloning, the moral and ethical challenges against cloning in the modern philosophy, ethics and science, which shares the same platform of a metaphysically induced concept of human nature, doesn’t satisfactorily validate itself. Therefore, the study resorts to the Postmetaphysical arguments to argue along with them more contextual reframing of autonomy and related justificatory grounds.

Therefore, the study takes a decisive turn here to extend its investigation on the basis of a Postmetaphysical idea of ethics.

Towards the Conclusion of the Study

By way of conclusion, which is the final chapter of the study and titled, *Conclusion: The Intent of the Ethics of responsibility*, 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,

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which induces an irresolvable hermeneutic horizon between ‘autonomy for’ and ‘autonomy against’. The concluding stance of the thesis, therefore, extends the above stance of the study to invoke the concept of the ethic 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.