



Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri

NATIONAL BIOETHICS COMMITTEE

CLONING

(17th October 1997)

abstract

The opinion deals, in technical-scientific, ethical and juridical terms, with the issue of the possibility of transferring cloning techniques to man as an organism in its entirety or human cell lines. The main point of the proposed bioethical observation is the recognition of the moral obligation to treat the human embryo, from the very moment of fertilisation, according to the criteria of respect due to a human individual that is commonly attributed with the characteristics of a person. This is regardless of the fact that the embryo from the very beginning may be given with certainty the characteristics of a person in the philosophical sense, or that one may prefer not to use this concept and refer only to its undeniably belonging to the human species. Therefore, the Committee, from an ethical standpoint condemns the creation of embryos for experimental, commercial or industrial purposes, as well as multiple generation of genetically identical human beings through twin fission or cloning.

According to the NBC the cloning of species of human beings is to be condemned as: it is an attack on the biological uniqueness of the human being generated through cloning and affects each human being's right to personal dignity and self-determination; its methods involve manipulation and/or commercialisation of the human body or its parts, or the mixture of genes of different species; it is a threat to biological diversity and future generations.

The NBC does not consider open to ethical condemnation: intervention on the human genome for therapeutic purposes; biological techniques having as an objective the cloning of tissue or single organs and a therapeutic aim; the practices of animal and vegetable cloning, provided that they are aimed at promoting man and the environment's good and do not implicate unjustified or disproportionate animal suffering. The Committee hopes that research in the field of cloning will be conducted in conformity with strict protocols that are scientifically and ethically examined and subjected to suitable controls.