

Why do
we fear
biological
cloning
and copying



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Biological cloning of nonhuman animals is already practiced. Pet owners can pay for the creation of a genetically identical copy of their deceased dog or cat. Human cloning is technically feasible too—and more controversial. If asked, most people would be aghast at the prospect. Human clones are supposedly “unnatural.” The Appeal to Nature fallacy is common. Whatever is “natural” is supposedly good; whatever is “unnatural” is bad. Curiously, this argument for the wisdom of Nature is normally delivered while wearing clothes. But imagine if today’s monogenetic twins were called “genetic clones” rather than “identical twins.” Under that description, most people would probably be more relaxed about the prospect of deliberate human cloning. Human bioconservatism runs deep. Of course, other reasons exist for our status

quo bias. When we try to imagine the future, we typically “remember” the science fiction we have watched or read. In this case, perhaps we imagine—or rather remember—Franklin J. Schaffner’s film *The Boys from Brazil* (1978).¹ Such schemes don’t end well.

In future, human cloning may also be used to create AI-enhanced biological superintelligence. As a first step in such an ambitious project, we might clone hundreds of scientific and artistic geniuses, each gene edited with a few interesting allelic variations.² Then we could hothouse the genetically tweaked “products” in a recursive cycle of self-improvement. Full-spectrum superintelligence could potentially benefit the world in countless ways. However, most existing people would oppose such a momentous genetic experiment. Some of their fears are sensible: what might go wrong? One recalls the fate of previous utopian experiments in history. Other reasons for opposition amount to little more than status quo bias. After all, any kind of sexual reproduction involves reckless and untested genetic experimentation, not just creating “designer babies.” If we reject anti-natalism and intend to experiment with creating new life—and hence potentially new suffering—then at least let’s load the genetic dice in favor of our offspring and create (super)happy, (super)healthy babies.

As a transhumanist, I think we should reprogram the biosphere. Transhumanists believe in creating a “triple S” civilization of superintelligence, superlongevity and superhappiness. Let’s create post-Darwinian life based entirely on gradients of intelligent bliss. “Good health” as defined by the World Health Organization (“a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being”) entails becoming transhuman, if not posthuman. As a species, are we willing to modify the germline and deliver good health for everyone?

- 1 *The Boys from Brazil* is a science fiction film based on the novel of the same title by Ira Levin about an underground neo-Nazi society in South America trying to clone Adolf Hitler to restore the Nazi movement.
- 2 Derived from allene, “Allele, any one of two or more genes that may occur alternatively at a given site (*locus*) on a chromosome” (Encyclopedia Britannica).

