

Narcissists Have Rights Too: The Case for Solo Reproduction

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In-vitro Gametogenesis (IVG)

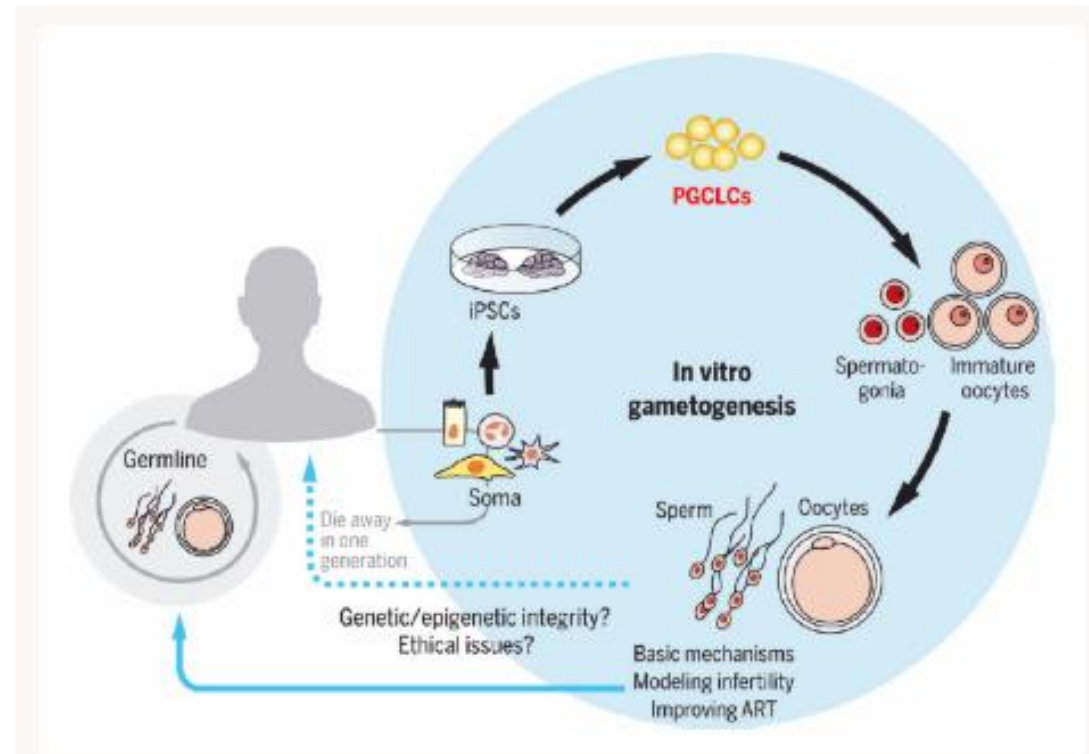


FIGURE 1-1 In vitro gametogenesis.

NOTES: In vitro gametogenesis aims to reconstitute gametogenesis using PSCs, including iPSCs reprogrammed from somatic cells. ART = assisted reproductive technology; iPSCs = induced pluripotent stem cells; PGCLCs = primordial germ cell-like cells.

SOURCES: Presented by Paula Amato, April 19, 2023; Saitou and Hayashi, 2021.

IVG (contd)

- Could be used to treat forms of infertility which affect ability to produce gametes.
- Natal males could give rise to eggs and natal females could give rise to sperms.
- Help same sex couples have children who are (roughly) equally genetically related to both of them
- Help transgender individuals become the biological parent that matches social identity. (i.e. trans-women could become biological mothers, trans-men could become biological fathers)

Solo Reproduction

- Same individual could produce both sperms and eggs
- Combine the two to produce a child who is 100% genetically related to one parent
- Not a clone (not even approximately genetically identical)
- But still asexual reproduction → faces basically many of the same objections as cloning

Two qns:

1. What (if anything) is wrong with it?
2. Should it be banned? why or why not?

Solo reproduction should not be banned because people can reasonably disagree about whether its wrong

Objections to cloning

Two kinds of objections

- ~~1. Based on limitations of current technology (e.g. chance of birth defects/premature aging)~~
2. Based on intrinsic features of the process
 - i. Dignity
 - ii. Disorder
 - iii. Vice

Focus on 2 because we want to explore whether cloning/ solo reproduction is wrong/should be prohibited even if the technology was good enough.

Dignity

Cloning/ solo reproduction violates dignity of resultant child.

Two accounts of dignity:

1. Dignity as capacity to reason – worry about instrumentalization (i.e. cloning/ solo reproducing for selfish reasons)
 - **Cannot instrumentalise** non-existent beings. (because whether an act instrumentalises is a constitutive feature of the act not a causal feature)
2. Eudaimonic Dignity – grounded in some account of flourishing life of a civilised person/member of certain group (e.g. being a Scotsman)
 - people can **reasonably disagree** about flourishing

Disorder

Cloning/Solo reproduction is an asexual method of reproduction and violates the telos of human sexuality.

3 conceptions of telos:

1. Telos as God's will: God intended for people to reproduce sexually
 - People can **reasonably** affirm Buddhism, Hinduism or Atheism
2. Telos as biological function: human (hetero-)sexuality contributes to biological fitness by encouraging reproduction
 - **Nothing wrong** with violating telos
3. Telos as eudaimonic function: human sexuality contributes to flourishing by encouraging reproduction
 - **Nothing wrong** with having children via methods outside of human sexuality

Vice (Hubris and Narcissism)

Cloning/Solo reproduction expresses hubris and narcissism.

- It expresses hubris because it is an attempt to impose control over the genetic makeup of a child and presupposes that we know what traits are good for the child.
- It expresses narcissism because it expresses that one's own genetic material is so superior that no other genetic material should be involved in producing a child.

Hubris and Narcissism (contd)

- The traditional “natural” method of reproduction supposedly encourages humility because it forces parents to confront the sheer randomness of reproduction.
- Solo reproduction/ cloning foregoes opportunity to develop humility



Elon Musk ‘has talked up far-right political violence in Britain without encountering any serious resistance’, says Eckart Hoffmann. Photograph: David Swanson/Reuters. Courtesy of the Guardian News and Media Ltd



‘Trump’s rage has worked for him in the past but it is not working against Harris and Walz.’ Photograph: Rick Bowmer/AP. Courtesy of the Guardian News and Media Ltd

Hubris and Narcissism (contd.)

- Cloning/Solo reproduction expresses and may exacerbate hubris and narcissism.
- But is it wrong?
- Distinguish two questions:
 1. How should we live? (Aretaic concept of right/wrong)
 2. What do we owe to each other? (Deontic concept of right/wrong)

Wrongness, in the more familiar sense required for legal prohibitions, is deontic.

Vice and Aretaic Ethics

Alice could go to Turkiye or Ibiza for vacation. Is it wrong to go to Ibiza?



Architectural and historical wonders of Turkiye



Photo credit: Pacha Ibiza

Ibiza has a vibrant nightlife

Vice and Aretaic Ethics

- Suppose that going to Ibiza expresses and encourages self indulgence, hedonistic dissipation, shortsightedness
- Suppose also that going to Turkiye expresses and encourages intellectual curiosity, self restraint, thoughtfulness
- Going to Ibiza is bad for Alice's flourishing and moral perfection
- She doesn't owe it to anyone else to not express certain vices or to develop certain virtues; only herself (since it is only her own flourishing/moral perfection at stake).
- **Aretaic wrong not deontic wrong**

Vice and Aretaic Ethics

- If Alice doesn't owe it to others, they don't have a claim on her to not express those vices
- It would be wrong to coerce Alice to go to Turkiye
- Cloning/solo reproduction has the same structure as the question of where to go for holiday.
- Cloning/solo reproduction is not a **deontic** wrong
- It would be wrong to ban solo reproduction on purely aretaic grounds

Reasonable disagreement?

- Of the various arguments against cloning/ solo reproduction, either a) the argument fails or b) the argument relies on a premise subject to reasonable disagreement
- Therefore people can reasonably disagree with whether cloning/ solo reproduction is wrong.

Public Justification Requirement

1. Since people can reasonably disagree with the claim that solo reproduction/cloning is wrong, laws banning solo reproduction/cloning are not publicly justifiable
 2. There is a Public Justification Requirement: Coercive laws are legitimate only if no one could reasonably disagree with the law
 - Civic Friendship
 - Stability for the right reasons
 - Respect for persons as equal moral agents
- C. Laws banning solo reproduction/cloning are illegitimate

Conclusion

- We have fewer reasons to think that other uses for IVG are wrong.
- Any considerations against other uses of IVG are basically the same as against solo reproduction
- Those arguments have been shown to fail or rest on premises subject to reasonable disagreement
- IVG should be permitted for infertility, same-sex couples and transgender individuals.

END