

COMMITTEE II
The Value of Human Life

DRAFT - 11/15/86
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Discussant Paper on Waldemar Molinski's Paper

MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE MANIPULATION OF
THE GENETIC NATURE OF MAN

by

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The Fifteenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences
Washington, D.C. November 27-30, 1986

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Professor Molinski has divided his paper "Moral Implication of the Manipulation of the Genetic Nature of Man" into two parts. In Part I, which is entitled "The decisive ethical problem," he has given preliminary consideration to it. The Part II is named "Ethical consequences," in which he has developed the main discussion.

First of all, let me follow briefly his way of consideration. The Part I is subdivided into two chapters. In the first chapter, he has mainly introduced us catholic view on the genetic engineering, quoting Hans Jonas: the reason why genetic engineering more than nuclear engineering raises the question can be found in the fact that man can change his nature through direct interference with his genotype. Yet man may not do so: he has to break through the anthropocentricity of his understanding of life and the world, and he has to conceive himself again as part of nature. Man's well-being must form an alliance with that of life as a whole. Human beings should be self-restricted not only toward the manipulation of their lives but also toward that of non-human lives.

Saying that Jonas stands in the reverential christian tradition, Molinski has tried to show his own view in the second chapter. In short, it seems to me that Molinski allows us to take both nature and human life for object to be scientifically handled to some extent. As for genetic engineering, he rightly concludes in the following: one can only support new technologies if they benefit everybody concerned equally instead of being an obstacle. At the end of the chapter, he proposes to distin-

guish between three kinds of human-genetically important activities of man:

first, manipulations of nature which are not directed at any particular genetic purpose;

second, manipulations of nature which have genetical objectives, that is to say, to influence the gene structure symptomatically;

third, manipulations of nature which have direct genetical objectives, namely to influence casually the genetic structure.

but also on many other factors

These three stages of manipulation are discussed one by one in Part II, which is divided into three chapters.

In Chapter 3, the first stage of manipulation is mentioned. Having found little ethical problem in this stage, Molinski adds to advise us to remind: the genetically far reaching consequences are tremendous and of greater importance for the appropriate use of human genotype than our directly gene oriented activities.

In Chapter 4, firstly he treats with an interesting and important matter, namely genetic counselling. Its object is, according to him, to try to lessen or exclude the dysgenic consequences: to prevent hereditary diseases. At the end of the discussion, he rightly pays an attention to the following fact: life is dependent not only on genetic factors, that have to be taken into account if an appropriate ethical judgement has to be taken. Secondly in the same chapter, he has referred to the limitation of breeding. In concrete, he mentions "genome analysis" on the embryo. He concludes: the breeding of human being has to be rejected ethically if it serves the interests of the breeders. Especially, he is strictly against the breeding of embryos by cloning blastocytes in an early stage of development.

At the last chapter of his paper, he has discussed the direct manipulation of the gene structure, minutely and passionately at the same time. Molinski divides direct manipulations of the genotype into three stages:

first, to determine the causal relationships of the genotype through genome analysis and to draw the relevant conclusions;

second, to clone the genotype --if possible;

third, to cure or change the genotype --if possible.

As you might notice, the first stage is the preparatory one for the second and third. In this stage, it matters whether researchers can have any right to kill embryos even for the best purpose or not. Furthermore, Molinski has picked up another problems of genome analysis which are brought up onto the stage: looking-for-a-job matter, insurance trouble, marriage problem, knowing-oneself-too early-and-too much problem, etc.. Molinski has pointed out: we are faced with the question whether genome analysis should be allowed or not. For the ethical justification of genome analysis, he requires the advantage should outweigh its disadvantage. I wonder if this requirement might not be satisfactory. In addition, the results of genome analysis, he rightly says, should not lead to the discrimination of the analysed person.

About the second stage, cloning is already applied to mammals. Is this technology allowed to be applied to human beings? Molinski just says: We may do anything that is recognized as being purposeful. I'm not sure what the word "purposeful" implicates.

At the end of the paper, he refers to gene therapy. This item is also subdivided into three levels:

- first, exchanging body cells with other body cells;
- second, modification of germ-cells through gene modification of a gene situated at a particular genome;
- third, modification of germ-cells through gene-surgery.

Molinski rejects the interference with the germ-flow because of three reasons: to change the personality, danger of misuses of the technique, requiring of experiment of human embryos.

In conclusion, he insists on rejecting any kind of interference with the genotype by means of gene-modification.

Now we have briefly looked over Molinskis' paper. We can easily find that he has correctly and compactly grasped the matter of gene-manipulation. It might be one of the most suitable guide-books to non-specialists for gene-manipulation. I appreciate his devotion.

Last of all, I hope Mr. Chairman is kind enough to allow me to ask Professor Molinski one question. In order to realize or put into practice what you have proposed or advised in this paper,

I'd like to ask you to show us a concrete plan or procedure.
That is to say, in order to protect human rights, we sometimes
should restrict excessive research of genome analysis. How can
we do that? Who should do that? If you have any idea, please
show it to us, and let's discuss it, shall we? Thank you.