



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 26, 2011

Researchers Concerned About Creation of Human/Animal Hybrid “Monsters”

When we hear about the implantation of human genes in animals, it may conjure up images right out of the story *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Of course, present-day experiments of this kind take a more modest form, such as the Chinese’s introduction of human stem cells into goat fetuses or U.S. scientists’ proposal to create a mouse infused with human brain cells. Yet the possibility that H.G. Wells’ nightmare could one day be made reality is troubling some researchers, prompting them to ask for new regulations governing the humanization of animals. Writes Reuters:



Scientific experiments that insert human genes or cells into animals need new rules to ensure they are ethically acceptable and do not lead to the creation of “monsters,” a group of leading British researchers [from Britain’s Academy of Medical Sciences] said on Friday.... Extreme scenarios, such as putting brain cells into primates to create talking apes, may remain science fiction, but researchers around the world are constantly pushing boundaries.

The academy also conducted a poll showing that the general public shares their concerns. As *Reuters* reports, “There were serious concerns voiced [by the respondents] about experiments involving the brain, the potential fertilization of human eggs or sperm in an animal, and giving animals human characteristics such as facial features or speech.”

But as for our far less dramatic, present-day experimentation on animals with humanized traits, its supporters point out that it is an indispensable tool in improving human health; for instance, it has facilitated the development of new cancer drugs and neural stem-cell therapy for stroke patients.

These benefits are undeniable, of course, and some use them as Exhibit A in an argument to give science free rein; they will say that science mustn’t be constrained by Luddites who talk of “morality.” As one of the commenters under the *Reuters* piece wrote, “Non-scientists should keep their noses out of science. Their perspective is like that of indigenous people who think a camera will steal their soul.”

Perhaps — in some cases.

But I am more concerned about soulless people who think morality will steal their camera.

Science has given us great things, from the extension and improvement in quality of human life to labor-performing machines that give us more free time to the litany of luxuries we use to help fill that time. But science is not God. And I don’t just mean that it has also given us bad things, such as entomologist-turned-“sex researcher” Alfred Kinsey’s fraudulent research or the more recent Climategate scandal. I don’t just mean the more innocent missteps, such as many scientists’ long-held but mistaken belief that because males’ single Y chromosome cannot repair its DNA through the process of conventional recombination, which is when DNA is exchanged in pairs of chromosomes, it



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would progressively deteriorate, leading to the disappearance of men and hence the human race. (They later learned that the Y has a very fascinating way of recombining within itself and thus repairing its own errors. So, ladies, don't wonder at why men may not ask for directions. We do things singlehandedly even on the genetic level!) No, it's not news that scientists are like the rest of us, with frailties, egos, reason-clouding emotions, agendas, and a great capacity for rationalization. The point, rather, is that while a scientist can be a moral being, "science" itself has no acquaintance with morality.

Science deals only with what can be done, not what *should* be done. This is because no moral position can be proven scientifically; you cannot discern the wrongness of theft through a microscope or find a respect-for-life principle in a Petri dish. Thus, adhere to only what can be scientifically determined and you end up like a man I know of who once said, "Murder isn't wrong; it's just that society says it is."

And how would you rebut? You could say that murder is wrong because it hurts others, and he'll respond, "Prove that that's wrong." You may say, "Well, you're doing something that is bad for society" and he'll again demand, "Prove that that's wrong." And you could ride this merry-go-round of futility forever until you realized that morality, properly defined (i.e., not just consensus human preferences), is a matter of faith. So unless science can somehow gain access to the spiritual realm, proof of Natural Law, divine injunction — call it what you may — will elude it.

Thus, let science go where it may, governed only by insatiable human curiosity, and soon you have the inhumanity of a Dr. Mengele experimenting on twins, Shiro Ishii's [Unit 731](#) and the vivisection of living people, or "The Monster Study" on orphaned children in Davenport, Iowa. Science will tell us what we can do. But as to what science should, the sky — or maybe I should say Hell — will be the limit unless we look beyond science for guidance.

As to the matter of infusing animals with human parts, one obvious problem arises when the parts are taken without consent. This is the case with fetal stem cells. Of course, many will say that concern about using microscopic cells is much ado about nothing. But does size matter? Let's examine the issue.

Virtually all of us find the practice of harvesting organs from people without their consent, as sometimes happens in China, barbaric. And we certainly wouldn't want to see a person's leg amputated to benefit another over his cries of objection. But what about if we just took a foot? How about a toe? And however many cells constitute a toe, how about one less than that? And, then, how about one less than that, and then one less, and so on? Obviously, this line of reasoning takes us to the point at which we're asking the question about one microscopic cell. And then there are only two possibilities: One is that it's wrong to non-consensually use a person's body parts no matter how small. The other is that, somehow, it is wrong to do so with X number of cells, but all right if it is X minus one. And, well, if size matters to you, that is a huge moral leap between two microscopic cells.

Now, note that this can also be applied in reverse. If it's okay to non-consensually use that one cell, how about two? Then, how about one more than that, and then another, and so on? And unless we can somehow draw a line (and on what would be it based?), this leads to the conclusion that non-consensually using that grouping of cells called a leg, heart, lung or kidney can be morally licit, too.

The problem here is that people are very influenced by size and tend not to trouble over what they cannot see. This is no doubt why many scoffed at Louis Pasteur when he claimed that microscopic organisms can kill you just as surely as can an elephant. But just as a thing's size shouldn't influence our respect for its deadliness, it also shouldn't govern our respect for its life — or for the life from which it may be taken.



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Of course, one area where size does matter is intellect and hearts. May ours be large enough so that we can figure out the “should” — and want no other part of the “can.”



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