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Is an Immaterial Mind a Barrier to Human Cloning?

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5-6 minutes

I have [described](#) the strong scientific evidence for the fact that the human intellect and will—by which we can think about and act on abstract principles—are immaterial.

A materialist may object that we can't test for an immaterial cause in nature because science only deals with material causes. But that's nonsense, for a couple of reasons.

First, if we can't test for an immaterial cause, then neither can we test for a material cause. That is, if we cannot rule out immateriality scientifically, we can't rule in materiality scientifically because materiality is simply the negation of immateriality. It's a zero-sum game. If we can't test for an immaterial cause, how can we exclude it and thus confirm material causation? The testability of materiality and of immateriality turn on the same evidence.

Immaterial causes can be tested in the same way that other scientific inferences (the Big Bang, quantum mechanics, relativity, etc.) are tested. Materiality or immateriality of mental acts correlate with testable effects.

Second, immaterial causes are everywhere in science. The Big

Bang singularity was immaterial by definition. Quantum mechanics is permeated with spooky immateriality causality—the observer effect, collapse of the quantum waveform, quantum entanglement, etc. And the mathematics that underlies nearly all of physics is immaterial. Newton's laws and Einstein's tensor equations are immaterial concepts, not material objects. Science is saturated with immaterial inferences and causes.

Given that materiality and immateriality are testable and that inference to immateriality is a cornerstone of modern science, interesting—and sharply contrasting—predictions of the materialist and the immaterialist theories of mind ensue that are rather easily testable. They are being tested now.

The test is this: is human cloning (i.e. the production by artificial means of a rational human being) possible?

The logic is simple. If abstract thought arises from the material brain, then it should be possible to clone a rational human being by material means. Cloning of non-human (i.e. wholly material) animals has been done countless times and is now almost routine. If man is wholly material and if abstract thought is merely a material power of the mind, then cloning a human being with the capacity for abstract thought is possible and ought to be achievable. After all, it is the *matter* that is cloned. If man is wholly matter and the cloning is done properly, we ought to be able to manufacture a rational man out of matter.

On the other hand, if the human intellect and will are immaterial, a rational man cannot be cloned, because the immaterial power of the mind does not arise from matter and thus cannot be created merely by making a material copy. The power of abstract thought

does not arise from DNA or protein or any matter that can be duplicated. In the immaterialist view, more than matter is needed to make a man.

It is worth noting that the evidence to date strongly supports the immaterialist view: human cloning has thus far been a scientific dead end. Despite claims to have produced cloned human embryos by somatic cell nuclear transfer, the gestation of humans with growth to rational adulthood (i.e. humans capable of rational thought) has never been achieved.

That is not only strange but very much unexpected, given the enthusiasm for human cloning that followed upon the early successes with animal cloning. It is particularly strange given the fact that, biologically, human beings share much in common with animals. We are constantly hearing the claim.

Yet if man is nothing more than an animal, why can't he be cloned? Plants are routinely cloned. Countless animals have been cloned and nurtured to adulthood from adult cells, including sheep, mice, rabbits, horses and donkeys, pigs, goats, cattle and non-human primates. Why not man?

The ability to clone a rational man is a straightforward prediction of the materialist view of man, and the *inability* to clone a rational man is a straightforward prediction of the immaterialist view.

So far, the evidence—the peculiar and intractable inability to clone rational humans, despite the remarkable success of cloning of non-human animals—clearly favors the immaterialist view.

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Also by [Michael Egnor on the immaterial mind](#):

Four researchers whose work sheds light on [the reality of the mind](#)

The brain can be cut in half, but the intellect and will cannot. The intellect and will are metaphysically simple

Atheist psychiatrist misunderstands [the evidence for](#) an immaterial mind. Patients with massive brain damage were shown to have a mental life.

and

Materialism is an intellectual trap, out of which neuroscience [needs to climb](#). Neurologist Steven Novella refutes himself. He first asserts that everything he knows is an illusion. Then he insists that his illusions slap him in the face with reality.