

## Ambiguous Selves: Examining Psychological Repercussions of Human Cloning in Mildred Ames's *Anna to the Infinite Power*

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### *Abstract*

Artificially created human beings are speculated to grapple with psychological struggles, including identity crisis, existential angst, societal discrimination, and complicated family dynamics resulting from their unorthodox genealogy, which is portrayed in posthuman narratives that feature genetically diversified society that integrates artificially created human beings with sexually reproduced individuals. Apart from cloning humans for procreation, the concept of cloning a historical figure who could make tremendous contributions to the world has intrigued the proponents of cloning. In a hypothetical space where cloning achieves rampant societal acceptance, addressing the moral, ethical, and legal rights of the clones becomes paramount to preserving the sanctity of human life. This article conducts a bioethical analysis of the possible psychological repercussions of human cloning that culminate into complexities in identity formation, individuation and family dynamics among human clones in Mildred Ames's *Anna to the Infinite Power*.

**Keywords:** Human cloning, Identity formation, Family Dynamics, Bioethics

### **Introduction**

The ethical implications surrounding the practice of human cloning have been a subject of considerable controversy ever since the groundbreaking creation of the first cloned mammal, Dolly, the sheep, in 1996 by Ian Wilmut and Kieth Campbell, as it marked a pivotal moment in the terrain of scientific progress, unveiling the potential of cloning complex mammals using Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT). Human cloning was widely considered a deviation from the natural order and a violation of the intrinsic value attributed to human life. The inevitability of human cloning is a widely acknowledged proposition within moral philosophy and scientific discourse. Within the context of a fictitious technocratic societal framework, the normalisation of human cloning is postulated to serve a multitude of purposes, encompassing but not limited to the facilitation of procreation for infertile couples by enabling the creation of biologically related children, the potential recreation of historical figures, and the utilisation of



human clones as organ donors. Apart from cloning humans for procreation, the concept of cloning an individual who could potentially make tremendous contributions to the world has intrigued the proponents of cloning. The replication of the genetic composition of a preexisting individual to achieve a particular objective raises numerous ethical considerations, as it facilitates the deliberate engineering and manipulation of human lives. *Anna to the Infinite Power* (1981) by Mildred Ames illustrates the ethical implications of human cloning by delving into the multifaceted dimensions of developmental, psychological, familial and sociological complexities that human clones designed to replicate historical figures might encounter. Human clones created to replicate a historical figure are speculated to grapple with identity formation and individuation as their genetic identity is shared with their original, which creates ambiguity in their perceived identity. Although clones are comparable to monozygotic twins (MZT), who are subjected to environmental influences in shaping their personalities, the cultural perception of clones being an extension of their original can potentially have detrimental implications on their identity formation and individuation. This article is a philosophical inquiry into the speculated complexities that may arise in identity formation, individuation and family dynamics in Mildred Ames's clone narrative *Anna to the Infinite Power*.

The concept of duplicating an eminent historical figure, whose enduring influence on society remains significant, has been present in academic discussions since the advent of the potentiality of human cloning. The phenomenon of cloning facilitates the replication of an organism, thereby creating an individual with an identical genetic composition. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that genetic identity does not encapsulate the entirety of one's personal identity. Human cloning does not enable the creation of a replica of their original, as genetically identical twins can develop distinct individualistic psychological and physiological traits due to environmental influences. As Thomas Bouchard asserts in his article, "Whenever the Twain Shall Meet," "Selves, unlike cells, can never be cloned" (52). Self-identity is a blend of inherent genetic makeup and external experiences, encompassing familial environment, intrapersonal relationships, the prevailing socio-political context, and the autonomous decisions made by the individual, so creating a perfect replica necessitates the provision of comparable environmental circumstances. They should be raised within a familial environment identical to their original and simultaneously surmount equivalent challenges and adversities. In clonal narratives, the clones are frequently portrayed to be manufactured to fulfil a predetermined objective and subjected to systematic conditioning. They are raised in specific



social and familial environments designed to shape and alter their cognitive abilities, inherent personality traits and individual preferences. They struggle with the deeply ingrained conditioning assimilated into their psyche since their developmental years, impeding the process of their identity construction. Manipulating the living environments of individuals, irrespective of their underlying intentions, gives rise to a plethora of ethical conundrums.

*Anna to the Infinite Power* is set in a technocratic world where the genetic material of a historical figure is cloned multiple times to create a perfect replica. Ames's clone narrative traces the developmental trajectory of its central character, an adolescent girl named Anna Hart, cloned in an attempt to recreate Anna Zimmerman, a Holocaust survivor and prodigious scientist who died when she was forty-six years old in a laboratory fire before she could finish her groundbreaking invention that had the potential to alleviate the widespread scourge of global famine and ultimately safeguard the human race from the brink of extinction. Anna is clandestinely brought into existence under government authorisation despite the prevailing public disapproval towards genetic engineering. Various factors pertaining to Anna's birth, including her genetic composition and familial environment, are manipulated to influence her personality traits and characteristics. Anna experiences a profound psychological breakdown triggered by the revelation of her status as a clone. The novel documents Anna's arduous endeavour to disentangle herself from the intricate complexities arising from unorthodox familial dynamics and shared identity due to her peculiar genetic origin. As the narrative unfolds, Anna deliberately chooses activities that ameliorate her creative abilities rather than focusing on scientific proficiency. Her determination to distinguish herself from her imposed identity becomes her rebellion against a societal framework that marginalises clones, depriving them of individuality and autonomous action. The novel traces the journey of its protagonist, who undergoes a profound transformation from an egoistic, kleptomaniac, robotic girl to an empathetic, sensitive, artistic young woman with a strong sense of self and identity. Additionally, the novel addresses the complexities in identity formation and individuation among human clones created for a predetermined purpose.

In the novel, human clones are created to fulfil a specific role and are nurtured within specific contextual frameworks to influence their inherent disposition, complicating their subjective sense of self. They struggle to disentangle themselves from their profoundly ingrained conditioning, systematically embedded within their psyche during their formative years. Anna's creators evince a conspicuous disregard for the intrinsic worth of human existence, perceiving clones as objects for empirical research. Anna's surrogate mother, Sarah, facilitates and



contributes to governmental interference in engineering Anna's living environment, which is designed to develop her mathematical and scientific acumen while simultaneously stifling her emotional intelligence. In the novel, the government's stance on clones is non-recognition, deeming them as entities devoid of personhood, chattel owned by the state created solely to serve a predetermined purpose. The utilisation of individuals to meet specific objectives violates the categorical imperative of Kantian ethics that states, "Act so that you use humanity, as much in your person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end and never merely as means" (22). Anna is subjected to immense pressure to measure up to her original and save humanity from the brink of extinction, which becomes an enormous psychological burden. The determination of her value is contingent upon her purpose fulfilment, and the governing body is resolute on terminating the clones if they prove incapable of meeting their obligation (Ames 68). However, Anna, diverges from this trajectory by redirecting her attention from science to that of the humanities and vehemently refuses to confine herself to a preordained role dictated by her status as a clone. Eventually, akin to all the clones of Anna Zimmerman, Anna Hart undergoes a process of individuation during their adolescence, developing a distinct identity, making the experiment a failure.

Adolescence is a pivotal developmental phase where individuals move from childhood to adulthood. During this period, individuals assess their distinctiveness from their family and peers and assert their individuality, which becomes integral in the process of identity formation. Erik Erikson, a highly influential figure in the field of developmental psychology during the twentieth century, espoused that our identity is moulded by external experiences and social interactions across eight discrete stages, encompassing the entirety of an individual's lifespan. The process of identity formation is influenced by the successful resolution of a specific conflict that arises during each developmental phase. At twelve, Anna undergoes an identity crisis upon uncovering the truth regarding her genesis. Based on Erikson's psychosocial stages of development, Anna is currently in the fifth stage, classified by the conflict between identity formation and role confusion. During this stage, individuals explore potential adult identities, ultimately making a selection that harmonises with their innate abilities and personal inclinations. The phenomenon of role confusion commonly observed in adolescents is particularly pronounced in the case of Anna, as the state defines her role through genetic manipulation and systematic conditioning, which resulted in the composition of her skills and character traits. Anna grapples with the challenge of discerning between her societal conditioning and her inherent individuality, and she engages in a comprehensive examination



of each facet of her personal identity during her identity crisis, which becomes pivotal in the arduous journey of her identity formation.

The initial characterisation of Anna delineates her as a robotic girl exhibiting a predilection for kleptomania. Furthermore, the narrative demonstrates her as remorseless with a conspicuous dearth of empathy towards the hardships of others. Anna is isolated in her adoptive home and alienated by her paternal figure, Graham, and adoptive brother, Rowan, as her mechanical disposition and insensitivity repel them. Upon Graham's realisation that Anna does not bear the filial connection he presumed, he is relieved, as she evokes a sense of revulsion and fear within him due to her prediction of theft and lack of human emotions. Graham reveals his perception of Anna in the novel:

Not only does she scare me, but at times, she makes me ashamed. For one thing, take her sticky fingers. I've talked to her about why stealing is wrong. I've even made her return things. Oh, she promises to behave, but her promises mean nothing. I just can't seem to get through to her. Even worse is her lack of feelings for other human beings. Then there's her dislike of animals -- that certainly doesn't seem normal for a young kid. (Ames 20)

Graham displays immense disappointment in Sarah's decision to conceal the truth, engendering a palpable sense of discord within the family. Following his initial response, Graham empathises with the precarity of Anna's circumstances and subsequently instructs Rowan to be compassionate towards her suffering. Initially, Rowan exhibits a sense of disdain towards Anna, asserting that she is soulless due to her lack of human emotions: "If there's any such thing as a soul, Anna doesn't have one" (Ames 19). Upon the revelation of veritable facts concerning her existence, which subsequently causes intense distress to Anna, Rowan assumes the responsibility of providing solace, bolstering up her emotional well-being in the anguish she endures. In this process, he attains a newfound perception of her inherent humanity, hitherto concealed from his perception. Her relationship with Rowan inspires her to cultivate a constructive familial atmosphere, prompting her to engage in their interests and to treat them with sensitivity and compassion, which eventually culminates in Anna's integration and acceptance within the domestic sphere. The cloning of Anna Zimmerman, referred to as "The Great Experiment" in the novel, severely impacted all members of the Hart family, especially Anna, as her formative years are defined by the estrangement she experiences in her family due to her apparent distinctiveness.

*Anna to the Infinite Power* is a captivating narrative that delves into the ethical considerations surrounding cloning by exploring the experiences and perceptions of its characters. Anna's



mother, Sarah, a scientist, and her husband, Graham, a musician, espouse distinct perspectives regarding its ethical implications. Graham believes that human cloning is a flagrant violation of the fundamental principles of human dignity and questions Sarah's decision to assist the government in cloning Anna Zimmerman. Despite the necessity to end global famine, manipulating human lives through cloning is a transgression against the fundamental rights of cloned children as it reduces them to experimental subjects. He quotes Leon. R. Kass, "We stand in the greatest danger from the well-wishers of mankind because folly is much harder to detect than wickedness" (Ames 21), summarising the results of human experimentation in the novel. He believes that attempting to clone humans can have catastrophic effects as it enables scientists to recreate any genetic material for any intended purpose. It grants scientists an unjustifiable amount of power, allowing them to manipulate and create human life. Graham's deontological ethical perspective stands in stark contrast to that of his logical and scientifically tempered wife, Sarah, who espouses a utilitarian viewpoint. The decision made by Sarah to participate in the cloning of Anna Zimmerman while deliberately concealing this crucial information from Graham detrimentally impacts the integrity and stability of their familial unit. The environment in which Anna was raised fostered the cultivation of her scientific acumen, stifling the development of her emotional aptitude. Her inherent deviation from her family members and deficiency in emotional intelligence obstruct Anna from cultivating a positive atmosphere in her personal sphere. After realising the truth regarding her genesis that denies her biological ties, Anna recognises the significance of familial ties and strengthens her relationship with her adoptive family members. She strives to separate herself from her genetic identity and emancipate herself from her predetermined purpose, which reduces her to a manufactured commodity designed to meet a specific end. In her pursuit of individuating from her original and connecting with her family members, she excels in music, an area previously disinterested to her due to its inherently subjective characteristics. Anna eventually evolves into an artistic individual with enhanced creative instincts. She rejects previously held notions of structure, order, and uniformity, challenging her inherent temperament by developing her creative side. The most significant factor in her individuation is her relationship with her brother, Rowan, as the connection with him significantly influences Anna, augmenting her inclination to assert herself. Rowan redirects Anna's cognitive development by cultivating her emotional aptitude and empathy, concurrently fostering her sensitive side through unwavering support and compassion. She develops robust interpersonal connections with her familial members, undergoing a transformative process that culminates in developing a well-rounded



person characterised by a discernible sense of self. The absence of emotional profundity exhibited by Anna cannot be attributed to her unconventional genesis but rather stems from the lack of experiential knowledge, personal development, and the establishment of nourishing interpersonal connections.

Identity formation is a crucial aspect of the transition into adulthood, where individuals separate themselves from familial and social relationships by identifying the primary determinants that distinguish them. The formation of an individual's core value system is subject to multifarious influences, encompassing family dynamics, personal experiences, and chosen ideologies. Individuals assert their distinctiveness by resonating with a worldview that mirrors their principles and singular cognitive process, demarcating them from their peers. Based on the theoretical framework proposed by Jeffrey Arnett in "Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood", the process of identity formation in young adults is influenced by three primary factors: romantic relationships, work, and worldviews. While choosing a profession, establishing relationships, and adopting an ideology, individuals need to engage in introspection to comprehend their personal preferences. A sense of purpose is linked to the conscious selection of a vocation, as it eventually becomes an extension of an individual's identity. Familial and romantic relationships engender a profound sense of belongingness and shared identity, defining an individual's social standing. During adolescence, individuals exhibit a pronounced inclination to establish a sense of differentiation from their peers based on unique characteristics and attributes. In the novel *Anna to the Infinite Power*, the central character, Anna, is denied biological ties, autonomous action and agency due to her status as a clone. In an attempt to distinguish herself from her imposed identity, she embarks upon a journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance facilitated by Rowan's constant support. The author comprehensively analyses Anna's journey towards individuation, where she asserts her individuality. The text traces her emotional maturation and eventual acceptance of her inherent humaneness alleviated by positive relationships.

In a hypothetical space where cloning achieves rampant societal acceptance, addressing the moral, ethical, and legal rights of the clones becomes paramount to preserving the sanctity of human life. The act of artificially creating life with a particular objective flagrantly transgresses the fundamental right of autonomous action, reducing the status of an individual to a mere commodity through genetic predetermination. The proponents of cloning, consisting of preeminent philosophers and scientists, contend that the conceivable ethical transgressions stemming from this procedure can be mitigated by rearing the cloned child under parental



guardianship. The contention positing the moral permissibility of cloning to aid infertile couples for procreative purposes is inherently futile, for it jeopardises the fundamental rights of the resultant children. They are born from a non-consensual medical procedure that causes their unconventional existence, culminating in societal stigmatisation and seclusion. The children created using cloning may potentially manifest grave pathological conditions and have a diminished life expectancy compared to that of an average human, as developmental issues at the cellular level are strenuous to detect. Sexual reproduction allows the child to evolve and develop natural defence mechanisms against diseases and, thus, gives them a better chance at survival. Cloning as a method of reproduction lacks the evolutionary advantage in comparison. A cloned child is devoid of biological ties, except its original, making it the property of the creators, vulnerable to exploitation. Even under parental protection, such children will develop identity issues and undergo severe psychological stress due to their unconventional genesis.

### **Conclusion**

The replication of an individual with identical character traits through cloning is scientifically inconceivable with the existing technology due to the inherent complexity of reproducing the intricacies of the human brain. For clones to resemble their originals, they should surmount comparable adversities and experiences, making similar choices. Notwithstanding the altruistic intentions underlying the endeavour, in Mildred Ames's *Anna to the Infinite Power*, it is evident that the experiment yielded deleterious consequences for the subjects involved and their respective families. Furthermore, Anna's creators could not successfully generate a clone that impeccably encapsulates the distinctive attributes inherent to Anna Zimmerman. They recreate certain aspects of Zimmerman's life to regulate the characteristic traits of the resultant clones, which becomes insufficient in replicating individual identity. The phenomenon of cloning facilitates the replication of an organism, thereby creating an individual with an identical genetic composition. However, as Mildred Ames states in the novel, genetic identity does not constitute one's personal identity. *Anna to the Infinite Power* comprehensively explores the individuation of the protagonist, enabling the readers to understand the unique obstacles human clones might encounter, especially in identity formation. The author espouses a strong stance against the prospect of human cloning, as illustrated by the ethical discussions interwoven within the fabric of the narrative. The intentional alteration of genetic identities and living environments of individuals, regardless of the underlying motivations, engenders psychological, sociological and political ramifications, emphasising the importance of ethical regulation of biotechnological inventions.





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