

On Human Nature: Anthropological, Biological, and Philosophical Foundations (Ethics of Science and Technology Assessment)

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Modern molecular technology in the so-called life sciences (biology as weil as medicine) allows today to approach and manipulate living beings in ways and to an extent which not too long aga seemed Utopian. The empirical progress promises further and even more radical developments in the future, and it is at least often claimed that this kind of research will have tremendeous effects on and for all of humanity, for example in the areas of food production, transplantation medicine (including stem cell research and xenotransplantation), (therapeutic) genetic manipulation and (cell-line) cloning (of cell lines or tissues), and of biodiversity conservation-strategies. At least in Western, industrialized countries the development of modern sciences led to a steady increase of human health, well-being and quality of life. However, with the move to make the human body itself an object of scientific research interests, the respective scientific descriptions resulted in changes in the image that human beings have of themselves. Scientific progress has led to a startling loss of traditional human self-understanding. This development is in contrast to an under standing according to which the question what it means to be "human" is treated in the realm of philosophy. And indeed, a closer look reveals that - without denying the value of scientific progress - science cannot replace the philosophical approach to anthropological questions.

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