

# Moral dilemmas inherent in Scientific Progress

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## POINTS TO DEVELOP

Scientific advances have been made at a fast rate.

Scientific advances in some areas come into conflict with morality and ethics.

Cloning and ethics.

Other areas where scientific research clashes with moral values.

Scientific and technological progress is not to be equated with progress on the whole.

Scientific progress a double-edged sword for human-kind.

Over the centuries, humankind has made tremendous progress in the field of science. Scientific advancement in the last century has been overwhelming: by making the most productive use of various scientific discoveries and technological breakthroughs, humans have excelled in various fields in an unprecedented manner. We can explore the depths of ocean, send teams of astronauts to space to know more about the planets and the moon. We have made many wonderful scientific inventions and discoveries. We have been able to increase longevity, arrest the gradual decay of the human body and control the spread of lethal diseases by making extraordinary life-prolonging drugs and medicines. A number of killer diseases are now curable. Cancer, for instance, now is not feared as much, as it was earlier.

Scientific progress made by human has made possible a number of miraculous developments in most fields. From telecommunications to medical science, from space explorations to mapping the unfathomable depths of oceans man has been performing amazing feats. The technological breakthroughs achieved in telecommunications have now made it possible for us to stay in touch with the world easily and cheaply. As a matter of fact, now the world has become a small global village of sorts where everyone knows everyone. But the biggest, and perhaps one of the most amazing scientific achievements by man has been in the fields of cloning of animals. Scientists have cloned animals with great success and it is said that the day is not far when they would be able to clone human beings to produce perfect, healthy and disease-free specimens of human beings.

But the scientific development and advancement have been accompanied by dilemmas of morality and ethics. The truth is moral dilemmas and human ethics are inherent in scientific progress. Are all the progress and breakthroughs achieved in this field morally justified and in sync with our moral values? Are they, ethically right? For instance, by aspiring to clone human beings, are we not trying to become God in a world where even good human beings are hard to find and where despite all the progress made in various walks of life, thanks to scientific progresses, the fact remains that we are still beasts by nature and by instinct? Humans have tamed nature to a great extent and assumed its powers to make his own laws that have disturbed the delicate balance in nature. By assuming roles, he was never destined to play, we have become more selfish, greedy and insensitive to each other's sufferings. We destroy and kill helpless and mute animals and, at times, human lives are also sacrificed, for carrying out medical experiments, all in the name of scientific advancement. The fact is that scientific experimentation in the laboratory cannot proceed largely without involving destruction. Even an atom is split (smashed) to release energy. Animals are regularly dissected (killed) and the environment is experimentally modified (interfered with) all in the name of creative and scientific thought. Many such scientific efforts leave behind in their wake highly toxic waste products and this toxic waste creates environmental hazards and pollution of the worst kind. But this aspect does not cross the mind of the scientific and progressive modern man in pursuit of scientific knowledge and the benefits he can derive from it.

Progress made in the field of sciences come at a great premium. For all the progress achieved through scientific discoveries and creations, the world today is not a better – or safer and happier- place to live in. there is a great deal of violence that has made the world a dangerous place to live in. it appears that science has not been very successful in contributing to solve the world's real problems or in improving the overall life of man. In addition, since science lays more stress on physical aspects of a health/medical problem and often sees to find solutions accordingly, most of the time it manages to solve such a problem on faulty basis. Take for instance, the case of drugs and medicines. Despite the hullabaloo made, the preventive field in medical science is almost entirely undeveloped compared to curative medicine. This is obvious in cancer research where the destruction of cancer cells has long been considered the perfect panacea. But most scientific attempts have focused on therapies that can actually prevent the disease, strengthen cures. Therefore, in spite of the many billions of dollars spent on cancer, deaths by cancer continue to occur in great number s.

Despite giant strides made by man in achieving remarkable breakthroughs in various fields, the fact remains that the average age of man is still more or less the same. The scientific progress in the areas of military and war has seen creation of deadly weapons and technologies that have the capability of destroy not

only human beings but also the entire planet. Individual nations now have the power to destroy the world if they wish to. Biological and chemical means of warfare have already taken a heavy toll world-wide. Often helpless prisoners of war are subjected to torture and forced to undergo the so-called scientific experiments to discover more about the destructive abilities of dangerous weapons, gases and drugs. Most importantly, the fruits of scientific progress are largely enjoyed by a select and privileged few. The majority still remain unaffected and untouched by the modern blessings of science. Isn't it true that despite sending teams of scientists to space any times over, people still cover long distances virtually by foot?

Suffice it to say, scientific progress has been a double-edged sword for humankind. Scientifically, we may have achieved much and we can boast of advances in telecom medications, communication, transport, nuclear science, space and health; however, where humanity and moral values as such are concerned, there is still a great deal of pain, suffering and insensitivity in the world. None of these has been mitigated by science; rather, the world is now a more unsafe, unhealthy and sad place. Excellence in science and technological breakthroughs have, by and large, been at the cost of our moral and human values.