

WE ARE THE D E C I D I N G ANIMAL

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I am that pleased that "Dolly," the world's first adult-to-offspring clone, is inciting the world to the **deeper** questions such as "What are the limits?" & "Who are we (as a species & as individuals)?" & "What is 'the soul'?" & "Where is God as we face this new world-situation?"

1 The 1st underlined word in the ¶ above is "**limits**." The 4th word in this Think-sheet's 1st line is (Ger.) "Grenzsituation," a technical philosophical term in Karl Jaspers' semantic core, the small cluster of words signaling the essence of his teaching, which is that we as a species/group/individuals are up against it, in an extreme situation in which deciding is forced upon us & we become aware of our being ("Existenz") as deciders-- in "Entscheidung," decision/sentence/judgment/crisis, forced to take one road "separate" ("scheidung") from (Robt. Frost, then M. Scott Peck) "the road not taken." We may be the objects of decision (as an accused receiving sentence); or the subjects deciding to "depart" (again, "scheidung") from one place/situation/idea to another or imposing decisions on others (as, in sports, the umpire).

2 "Extreme" (the only underlined word in §1) means "exceeding the ordinary, usual, or expected" (lit., what's "outside" the everyday) & therefore demanding conscious deciding. Think how clearly, dramatically, the central biblical characters illustrate (Jaspers) "Grenzsituationen," interruptions of dailiness (eg, Moses & the Bush, Jesus in Gethsemane) in which they have "no choice" but to choose, at the minimum to choose an attitude toward what is happening to them (Frankl's "Existenzpunkt," point where one's being is at stake after having lost the freedom to create & even the power to appreciate). EXERCISE: Begin reading the Psalms, marking as you go all the limit-situations (yes, "Grenzsituationen") they are experiencing & the deciding leading them to "prosper" or "perish" (Ps.1), partly depending on the "advice" (1.1 NRSV) they take.

3 The phrase *in extremis* means near death, which is the ultimate limit-situation. I can recall some who, in resisting my resurrection (gospel) witness to them, have scoffed that all the religions are nothing but whistlings while passing the graveyard. Sometimes I've responded "I like whistling, so thank God for graveyards." Besides, nothing-but thinking is nothing but, or little more than, nonsense, so rich & complex is spiritual (total-inner) life. Death as the ultimate frontier challenging the meaning of life? Of course. Religion as response to "Grenzsituationen," esp. death, the final one? Of course: we are the deciding animal, & any particular religion has the shape given it by its answers to the question of death--its anticipation, its experience, its aftermath for the dead & for the bereaved....Dolly the Clone came into existence on the life-death boundary, so she's by definition a religious phenomenon throwing religious folk into "Entscheidung," decisional crisis.

4 Please bear with me for a bit more German. A "Scheid-e" is a boundary, border, limit, divide. The "Ent-" of "Entscheidung" intensifies, suggesting leaving one side of a decisional divide & passing over onto the other; & the "-ung" adds the abstractive or generalizing note, deciding viewed as a category of human action or a situation, a crisis, in which deciding is unavoidable (incl. the poster, "Not to decide is to decide")....My sharpest memory of the word is from my reading in German, long ago, Bultmann's JESUS: meeting **Jesus** throws you into a decisional crisis in which your "Existenz," your very being, is at stake (an idea that goes back a generation, to Albert Schweitzer during this century's first decade): "What should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" (Mt.27.22). As we Christians see it, this is the watershed ("Wasser-scheide") question, the Continental Divide. This Jesus whom we have to do with, one way or another, shows us in his Temptations (Mt.4.1-11 & parallels) how to be deciders for God (whom he mentions [in Mt.] in each of his replies to the devil/Satan): the "Entscheidungspunkt," the point on which the deciding center, is God, not self in provision (of "bread"), presumptive protection ("angels...will bear you up"), or power (over "all the kingdoms of the world") or prominence ("glory"). In each of the three Temptations, our Lord was in a "Grenzsituation," lured toward violating the **limits** of the humanity which he had taken upon himself (Phil.2.7).

5 Did Dolly's cloner exceed those limits? If not, would cloning humans do so? If +

not, would any noncoercive scientific experiments vis-a-vis the human bodysoul exceed those limits? (Eve was the 1st clone, but the Cloner was not a human being.) Surely the technological imperative--the mindless acceptance of the notion that what science makes possible, technology will do--exceeds those limits--as in Kirkpatrick Sales' **REBELS AGAINST THE FUTURE: The Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution: Lessons for the Computer Age** (1997): "the technological imperative...is inevitable in a culture built on the myth of human power and the cult of progress" (7Mar97 NYT)....Because of fear of Hitler, we didn't say no to atomic weapons: is there now some fear preventing our saying no to human cloning? if so, what is it?

6 How is Dolly a new "Grenz-" (limits) & "Entscheidungs-" (decision-crisis) "situation"? (1) It's a challenge to our **distinctiveness** as a species: are we special, being as clonable as other mammals? (2) It threatens the simple concept of the human **individual** as distinct: humans can now be made that are genetically *not* individual, unique (though they become unique in their second womb, the world). (3) It augments **awe** (as both respect & fear) of science: cloning a mammal from an adult (which is what's new about Dolly) gives us Frankenstein jitters while tempting us to deepen scientific idolatry (the belief that science has the godlike potential to solve all problems, answer all questions, & heal all hurts). (4) It enlarges humanity's decisional sphere vis-a-vis both **nature** (contra "Don't mess with Mother Nature") & **God** (contra "Don't play God"). The paradox: Dolly reduces us by decreasing the gap between us & the rest of nature, but bloats us by decreasing the gap between us & the Creator. A double temptation: to think too little, & too much, of ourselves. (5) She (Dolly) sharpens our awareness that for a long time, & in many ways, we have refused to let nature take its course: contraception, abortion, in vitro fertilization. It's time now, more than ever before, to redefine "**natural law**." (6) We're in for an intensification of the **mind-brain-soul**-nexus debate, with hope for more light than the inevitable high temperatures. (7) Dolly sets at a new angle the conversation between the **more-than**-ers (we're more than animals) & the **nothing-but**-ers (reductionists, relativists, positivists). (8) New thoughts about God's incarnation in & as Jesus.

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