

No Magic

Stem cell researchers in South Korea say they have managed to **create** stem cells with the same DNA as sick donors. Some pessimists have claimed that this isn't possible. If someone has found a way to do it anyway, we are not surprised. Human beings are unique among animals in our capacity for critical and imaginative thought. However, we are made of cells that are not spectacularly dissimilar to those of other mammals. Some mechanism that we don't yet understand arranges these cells in a pattern that instantiates thoughts and feelings and so on. For any disease you can think of, one day doctors will understand the human body well enough to be able to cure it. We find these reflections not only robustly plausible, but far more cheering than the idea that the key to immortality is a sufficiently determined refusal to think critically about magical ghosts called 'the soul' and 'God'.

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