

Gattaca defying all
the premises
philosophy essay



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Imagine a society where everyone is more intelligent and healthier than you. Imagine a society where your genetic makeup-engineered or natural-determines the job for which you are eligible, whether or not you can be insured, and who associates with you. Gattaca by Andrew Niccol tells the story of Vincent, a young man naturally and traditionally engendered in a world where genetic engineering is the followed pattern to have a child. Few minutes after his birth, Vincent's fate is revealed through a DNA analysis. His first genetic test revealed high probabilities of hyperactivity, sight troubles and serious heart diseases, a life expectancy of 30 years and 2 months and quite low intellectual faculties. At that time, the artificial insemination of test tube babies selected according to their genetic potential had become for many people " the natural way of making children". But Vincent's parents had preferred to let the other nature take its course. Of course they regretted it, and for their next child they went to see a geneticist. A perfect son has been born to them, a son who deserved to be called Anton, like his father. While Vincent was forced by his genetic code and the system to study at home, Anton was taller and better at anything than his elder brother. They used to play at " softy". The game consisted of swimming in the sea as far as possible and being the last to make an about-turn. Vincent was always the softy. But besides his weak health, he had a very strong will. His lifelong dream was to join Gattaca, probably the most prestigious company on earth whose activity was to explore galaxies, and go into space. To achieve his aim, he did not stop studying during his whole adolescence, despite his father's discouragements. The film shows a world where life is highly determined by genetics, and happiness is mostly based on the quality of the genetic profile, a kind of identity card for people. Vincent, who wants to

become an astronaut and work for Gattaca, overcomes all the difficulties presented to him defying all the premises of the genetic engineering.

However, it is not so clear that only free will is which will lead him to his dream; that significant amount of determination has to do with his success.

At a time when we read about cloned sheep and the unraveling of the human genome, the science in Gattaca is theoretically possible. In the futuristic world of Gattaca, society has developed the technology to manipulate human procreation and designed children with impeccable genetic compositions. I suspect most people will “order up the make and model they wanted” rather than “take chances on a throw of the genetic dice.”

Everyone will live longer and healthier in the Gattaca world. As a result, a new social caste system is created in which the artificially created, genetically superior humans called “valids”, dominate all major aspects of society. In contrast, the naturally born humans, called “invalids”, become a mistreated minority. Although all aspects of society are affected by the new genetic technology, the greatest impact is on the job market. As a result, the easiest way to analyze the job market is to compare the occupations of the valids and to the occupations of the invalids. Valids are instantly granted powerful, high-paying jobs, regardless of their training or background. For example, when applying for a job at the Gattaca Aerospace Corporation, Vincent, under an alternate identity, is only required to provide a blood test before he is hired and prepped for flight missions into space. Valids also tend to have computer-based jobs so that they make full use of their genetic intelligence. Invalids are only allowed to have demeaning, low-paying jobs. For instance, before assuming an alternate identity, Vincent is only allowed

to work at the Gattaca Aerospace Corporation as a cleaner. In addition, invalids are forced to take jobs in which they perform manual labor.

I think the Gattaca world is a realistic future even though it might face a lot of social and ethical problems. Firstly we are getting to the technology that is needed for the level of genetic engineering in Gattaca. Human Genome project begun formally in 1990, the U. S. Human Genome Project was a 13-year effort coordinated by the U. S. Department of Energy and the National Institutes of Health. The project originally was planned to last 15 years, but rapid technological advances accelerated the completion date to 2003. The goals were to identify all the approximately 20, 000-25, 000 genes in human DNA, determine the sequences of the 3 billion chemical base pairs that make up human DNA and store this information in databases. The knowledge about the effects of DNA variations among individuals can lead to revolutionary new ways to diagnose, treat, and someday prevent the thousands of disorders that affect us.

However there are many social and ethical problems that human might face on the way to Genetic engineering in Gattaca. Firstly people were taking other people's DNA without that person's consent in Gattaca, and this could also happen in reality too. Just like what Vincent said in the movie " Of course, it's illegal to discriminate. But no one takes the law seriously." People were unable to choose their own destiny. You would never be able to hope or dream of anything because your life is already planned out for you. If it's not a part of your " life plan," then that would be something you dealt with. Invalids were being discriminated against. According to the Nuremberg Code, which is a set of ethical rules a doctor or scientist must follow when <https://assignbuster.com/gattaca-defying-all-the-premises-philosophy-essay/>

experimenting on a human, it states that “ The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential” (Nuremberg Code, 1949). In Gattaca, when applying for a job, the interviewer often takes saliva or a sample of urine from the interviewee without telling him/her why. Normally, if a person says no, after the interview, the interviewer would simply take DNA from a handshake, the doorknob, or even the seat without the interviewee’s permission. This is serious violations of the free will and rights of human beings. Secondly, discriminations could be anywhere. In the movie, people can actually choose the traits and gender of the child. This can cause a lot of problem: e. g. in China most people want boys rather than girls because people think boys could do more labor works than girls and boys can pass down their family name. As a result, the male-female ratio of world population could change drastically. The discrimination against “ in-valid” in the movie could happen in reality too. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has duties to the community which allow the free and full development of a person’s personality. Vincent has the right to express himself, which he is unable to do because he would never be allowed to because of his heart disease. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “ in the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due to recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just society” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). Vincent worked really hard and strived to become an astronaut but was held back because he wasn’t “ perfect” enough. This article is saying that a person should be allowed to express oneself as long as it is legal and not disturbing the public

order or general order or general welfare of others. Vincent becoming an astronaut wouldn't affect any of these, he cannot even get a chance to try in the Gattacan world. " All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection to the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights). The " invalids" were treated inhumanely, as if they were all criminals. Discriminations problems can be one of the biggest concerns of most people if Gattaca world becomes real. Thirdly if everybody uses genetic engineering, people would have a longer life span. Earth may face an energy crisis and cause the extinction of human beings. Another problem might come from different religions, a lot of people believe in natural process too. Furthermore this is not something that could be undone easily, once people start using genetic engineering, they will just rely on it. Fortunately, most of the problems I came out with were considered by experts from the Human Genome Project. One of the main goals of the Human Genome Project is to " address the ethical, legal, and social issues (ELSI) that may arise from the project." (Human Genome Project 2003) The whole project has nine principles: 1. Fairness in the use of genetic information; 2. Privacy and confidentiality; 3. Psychological impact and stigmatization; 4. Reproductive issues; 5. Clinical issues; 6. Uncertainties; 7. Conceptual and philosophical implications; 8. Health and environmental issues; 9. Commercialization of products. Those nine principles can ensure everyone that the problems happened in the movie Gattaca will not occur in reality. I think there is a bright future for Human Genome Project as long as the nine principles are followed.

I really enjoyed Gattaca. It raises some very good points that question the uses of technology in the not so distant future. The use of genetic research has led to humanity bio-engineering children to be free of defects and disabilities. Furthermore, I feel really pleased for Vincent as he mixes with members of the “ valid” world despite his own “ in-Valid” condition, he manages to gain considerable respect and admiration because of his persistence, even from people unaware of his status as a genetic impostor. Although Vincent is at the lower end of the genetic hierarchy, it is due to his ferocious determination and unquenchable desire that he is able to rise above his colleagues and achieve his dreams. It is these qualities that deem the central protagonist unique in the world of Gattaca. In the end, this movie also made me question where we should draw the line between science and ethics.