

Genetic enhancement beyond the moral and ethical issue

[Science](#), [Genetics](#)



In "Genetic Enhancement Allows for Even Greater Freedom," author Ronald Bailey presents a strong case in defense of allowing parents to take advantage of the advances in genetic engineering technology mainly by debunking the argument that it would result in the homogenization of the human species. Bailey illustrates that, on the contrary, giving parents the choice to enhance their children's genetic composition would result to an unprecedented time in history where humans have a greater chance at living their lives to the fullest.

Therefore, Bailey observes that the focus on the moral and ethical question of genetic enhancement is largely insignificant since the process is not dissimilar to the use of genetic engineering to cure diseases. He therefore concedes that the remaining point of contention is on the proper use and appropriation of the technology. Clearly, Bailey writes from the perspective of parents who wish to "defend their children against the manifold cruelties and indignities that nature so liberally dispenses."

The main point of Bailey's argument is that parents should be allowed to use genetic engineering to prevent illnesses in their children and give them a physical constitution that is conducive to maximum development of potentials such as higher I. Q. or greater stamina. In this aspect, he echoes the aspiration of majority of parents who will do anything for the perfection of their children. It is a desire that, as Bailey appears to believe, is perfectly normal and is in the best interest of children.

Bailey's point regarding the parental right to choose the decision to increase the odds of positive outcomes for their children is indeed valid. No parent

wants to see his or her children suffer from failure and disappointment caused by an inherent weakness due to poor genes. On the other hand, Bailey's arguments for gene enhancement is clearly informed by the assumption that "nature" will remain unchanged or stagnant in the face of these major changes in humanity's genetic composition.

It assumes that humankind will be able to prevail over nature's preference for randomness through a technological breakthrough that can strengthen the immune system or raise intellectual levels. Bailey fails to consider, however, the fact that nature is not a rigid, stoic entity, but an immense system that interacts and reacts with human-made changes through its own coping mechanisms. It is not by accident that more resistant germs, viruses, and bugs are created; it is the law of nature itself that certain species adapt to and evolve naturally for survival.

Likewise, the moral and ethical implications of genetic enhancement should not be so easily dismissed as unimportant. Although Bailey's argument that no kid would protest to a process that would boost his capacities is fairly reasonable, it is also worth noting that the issue of ethics is inextricably linked to the issue of responsibility and accountability. Bailey admits, for instance, that this technology can be abused just like any other existing technology.

Thus, aside from proving that genetic enhancement does not need to adhere to the principle of informed consent, the supporters of genetic engineering technology should also clarify the question of who should control decisions

and priorities on genetic engineering technology and whether the market-principle would actually guarantee equitable access to the technology given humanity's experience of the failure of the prevailing political and economic order to even out socio-economic inequities. It is indeed true that, as its supporters claim, the debate over genetic engineering should move beyond arguments regarding the " sanctity of human life.

Both the supporters and opponents of genetic manipulation in human beings and other species clearly have the best interest of human life in general. The questions and anxiety that remain, however, are indications that the issue of genetic engineering is not only a moral and ethical one but is also a political consideration. Thus, although advances in genetic engineering and human gene manipulation may be inevitable, its fate—how and by whom it will be ultimately used—will depend on how the supporters and opponents of the technology will finally be able to resolve lingering doubts.