

# The ethics of designer babies philosophy essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Today my TOK presentation will be on the topic of 'designer babies'. In 2003 the Human Genome Project was completed. This simply means all the DNA and genes of humans have now been 'mapped'-so we know where each gene is and what it does. This led to the possibility of DB's. So what are DB's then? DB's is a colloquial term for embryos that have been genetically modified outside the body. In which they go through these 2 procedures. Like most new medical procedures DB's have caused a lot of controversy and have raised many ethical issues. So this led me to construct the KI " how can we justify whether it is ethical to 'design a baby' ". Before looking into this I feel it is necessary to give a general definition of what ethical means. To me, if something is ethical, it complies with a system of moral principles. However for each perspective there will be a different system of moral principles in which this issue is or is not justified.

My first perspective is that of religious people, and I will use the example of Christianity. For Christians it is believed that God gave us our children for a reason, the child was God's doing and we should take it as it came. So by selecting or modifying an embryo is effectively playing God. This knowledge claim is constructed through the way of knowing of Religion and also Authority, where God is the authority. This is how Christians would justify the issue. But what is ethical for Christianity? The moral system for Christianity is the bible. From this perspective it can be concluded that, through the way of knowing of religion and a religious authority designing a baby is not ethical when following the moral code of the bible.

From my perspective it is hard to relate to this perspective as I am not Christian. However, using deductive logic this perspective makes a lot of

sense. If I was following the moral code of the bible, which said that God creates each of use for a reason, then it is very logical to conclude that DB's cannot be justified.

This perspective may make sense to a Christian person, however if someone is not religious/Christian, therefore God does not exist, so we're not playing God? But then they will have a different ethical code. This is also only from a Christian view point, other religions may be more open to DB's. Another issue with this perspective is that we live in a growing secular society, and in the AOK of Natural sciences religion is not valued as highly as other ways of knowing to justify medical ethical issues. However, how I have gained this knowledge through Empiricism may not be true. So today's society may in fact be less secular and therefore Religion perhaps has some credibility in medical ethical issues.

The next perspective I want to address is that of parents/potential parents. For many people who want to be, or are parents, DB's can offer a lot of benefits. For parents with a hereditary genetic disease they can 'design' one that won't have the disease. For parents have a child who has a genetic disease, a DB's that is genetically similar can cure the existing child. This is called 'Saviour Siblings'. These problems can be solved with DB's. An embryo can be modified so it doesn't have the genetic disease or an embryo can be selected to fit the genetic makeup of a sibling. From this a knowledge claim arises, if we want the best for our babies why shouldn't we design our own babies? This claim is based on logic, empiricism and of course emotion. If we can save lives then it seems very logical to allow DB's. From empiricism it is known the effects genetic diseases can have on children and families,

<https://assignbuster.com/the-ethics-of-designer-babies-philosophy-essay/>

therefore it can be justified. If you think about it, both these ways of knowing are influenced by emotion. The deductive logic used in this perspective is based on the premise that saving lives is the most important thing. And when looking at the use of empiricism in this case it is based on the experience of emotions. It is a claim made through an emotional experience. But what ethical system does this perspective follow? Well for everyone it will be different, but it would seem that doing something to save a human life and reducing future suffering are 2 moral values that most people hold. So from this perspective DB's are being justified through logic and empiricism based on an emotional experience with a personal ethical view of human life as priority.

Like the religious perspective I cannot empathise as I am not currently a parent that has to deal with this 'issue'. However I can only sympathise with how a parent would feel if their child was at risk of dying before birth or living a restricted life, it is easy to say we should just take what we get if we haven't had to deal with this situation. The emotion that this perspective is based on makes a convincing case. However I also feel that the emotion takes away from the credibility of this perspective. The conclusion made has used deductive logic, with the premise that human life is paramount. But emotion can cause us to look past the methods of how DB's are made. From the embryo's fertilised only 1 embryo which does not have the genetic disease or matches the sibling is chosen. This means the other embryos which had an equal chance of becoming a baby are effectively killed. This contradicts the idea that human life is priority. I have deduced that an embryo which has potential to become a baby is a life form. Through logic

and in the field of natural science I know this is true, once fertilisation begins it is a life form. So emotion can cause us to make conclusions without looking at the reality of what happens with designer babies'. Yes you are preventing a probable death, but in doing so you are preventing potential lives. In the case of 'saviour siblings' I feel the child is being produced as a commodity just for the first child which I view as unethical. And what happens when a parent wants to design the aesthetics of the child? This is where the medical organisations are important...

So my last perspective is that of the medical organisations. When you look at this issue from a medical view it has the advantage of a legal ethic system derived from the WOK of authority. In Medicine an authority states whether it ethical or not. Despite authority being a way of knowing you also have to ask where the authority gets its knowledge from to justify what is ethical. In this case the authority would get its knowledge from empiricism, logic and language. Logic and empiricism are very similar in this situation; many of the legal medical ethics are derived from what has happened in the past.

Through the AOK of history authorities know they need to prevent situations such as the Nazi Eugenics from recurring. Cases where medical practices caused harm in the past have led to, through logic and experience, the moral principle of doing good and doing no harm. This shows how the AOK of history can help us to construct a moral system. So this authority has obtained its knowledge and applied its ethical system to medicine which Doctors must follow.

But each country has different authorities controlling what is ethical; there is no global authority for medicine. This is where the issues are raised. Medical

authorities might all state that medical practice must do good and do no harm. But what defines something as good or harmful? Each authority will have a different interpretation. In some countries such as the UK certain cases of 'saviour siblings' have been allowed. Whereas in other countries like America this is illegal, but sex selection is legal. So it is a case of where do authorities draw the line, for authorities the WOK of language is very important in defining certain terms in ethics. For this reason I feel it is difficult to justify whether authority as a WOK is sufficient to justify whether DB's are ethical. However, ultimately the legal authorities have the final say about whether it is ethical, and this can change over time.

My overall viewpoint on this issue is that, currently it cannot be fully justified that designing a baby is ethical. In terms of the religious perspective I feel it is a good justification, but only if today's legal ethical system was the bible. As for the parents I can only sympathise with a parent's viewpoint but I feel that although their emotional experience has credit, it also seems to me as almost a selfish viewpoint. In more cases than not parents would prefer not to have a child with a genetic disease. But I believe this is often for their own happiness. There are people who have a child with a genetic disease who are happy, and although they may not live as long as the average person it was the natural cause of events. I don't believe in God, but I do believe in letting things happen naturally. I also feel that preventing a child that has a genetic disease is devaluing a potential life form. Does this mean that people with genetic diseases are not 'normal' or as 'good', personally I don't think so. I also feel 'saviour babies' are devalued as a commodity not a child. Every life has the same value, including embryos. As for the medical authorities I do

not agree with some of their rulings, such as the 'saviour babies' in the UK. However in a medical situation medical ethics systems seem the most appropriate as it is medically related. I made my perspective based on emotion and empiricism. In terms of emotion, I'm quite scared of the potential for DB's. From experience, in particular history I fear a similar situation to the Nazi Eugenics could potentially occur again. We could start producing 'super humans' leading to discrimination against non-DB's or DB's. Also, only the upper class society would be able to afford these procedures so it could create a social class split with 'healthier humans' in the upper class. Designer babies have a lot of potential but the potential may not always result in a positive outcome.