

Human genetic engineering research: where to draw the line

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Abstract Human genetic engineering is the manipulation of an individual's genotype with the goal of choosing the phenotype (Singers 1). This has already been a very controversial issue when it has been done on animals, but tampering with humans takes this issue to a whole different level. It holds the promise of curing genetic diseases like cystic fibrosis and improving the immunity of people to viruses (Conner 4). However, it also opens up a whole new world where the laws of nature can be broken.

Parents can choose to change the gender of their baby; they can choose to change their appearance, and they can even choose to change the mental faculties of their baby like memory and intelligence (Sanded 1). This seems like something out of a science fiction movie but with our rapidly increasing technology, it is definitely more than a possibility. The genetic engineering of humans can be the greatest thing to ever happen to us, however, such power can lead to corruption and cause us to regress as beings. Are we trying to make the world a better place for each other or are we just making the world more superficial or should I say artificial?

That's the main question that is asked as the intriguing issue of human genetic engineering is further evaluated. Human Genetic Engineering: Where to Draw the Line Perfection is something that human beings really haven't been able to relate to very well, but thanks to our rapidly advancing technology, that could all change. Human genetic engineering may be the breakthrough we need to tear down the walls that keep us from being perfect. However, there are many questions that need to be answered and things that need to be considered before we attempt to break through the walls.

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For instance, what if those walls are there for a reason? What if those walls aren't supposed to be torn down? Maybe they are there to protect us from perfection or perhaps protect perfection from us. A disease-free world sounds good to everyone but what about a world where parents can actually design their own child? What if not only the sex of the baby could be chosen by parents but also the hair color, eye color, intelligence, and even their talents (Sanded 1)? This is the path that human genetic engineering is leading us to; however, our main concern should be where that path will end.

Human genetic engineering should be used only to cure diseases or other disabilities and not to the extent where we start treating human life like a computer game. We all should strive to be perfect but we should also have a certain level of respect for life and the lessons it teaches us. Otherwise our quest for perfection will only lead us into destruction. Jacqueline Vaughn Sister's article Assistance and Treatment is about the struggle disabled people go through to fit into society. They are stereotyped as pitiful and pathetic and they are often discriminated against (Sweeter 3).

There seems to be a prevailing belief in our society where people who are "in need of charity are thought to be incapable of living the same life as others" (Sweeter 3). Because of these beliefs and stereotypes, the progress to fully include the handicapped in American life made even more difficult (Sweeter 3). The disabled are a minority group and they have fought hard to be recognized as one, however, there's no doubt that if every handicap had a choice they would choose not to be handicapped whether they were being treated equally or not.

No one would miss being blind or being deaf. That's why Sweeter, who is raising awareness for the discrimination of handicapped, would agree with the argument that the use of genetic engineering should be limited to curing diseases and disabilities. The cruelty shown towards the handicapped is the exact reason why we shouldn't allow parents to design their children. It will just leave us with more inequality because our human nature tends not to show humility and respect for those who are less advantaged than us.

Jack Donnelly article The Concept of Human Rights explains how humans can have rights naturally. Human rights are supposed to be equal rights (Donnelly 2). Therefore every human being has the same rights (Donnelly 2), but how does this work when relating to children. On one episode of the Steve Wilkes show, there was a transgender man who was upset about being born a woman because his parents decided to go through with a gender selection operation despite being told that he would have more male hormones than female hormones.

So this man felt that his rights were violated even though he was still unborn and he's right. You can't force any human to go through a completely unnecessary procedure, so why would the rules change if they're your own kid? Are kids not human too? Parents are supposed to make decisions for the better of their children but this was just an act of selfishness. Donnelly would agree with the argument that genetic engineering shouldn't be allowed to the extent that parents can design their own kids for that very reason. It's unethical, irresponsible, and potentially harmful to the child.

Melvin Sooner's article Genetic Enhancement Should Be Left to Personal Choice is about why human genetic engineering should be a personal choice like getting breast implants or taking steroids (Conner 3). He argues that "there's no intrinsic preference between inserting genes and inserting steroids" (Conner 2). People are always finding ways to enhance life and this is just another way to do it. He does agree, however, that "the weightiest moral problem in the quest for perfection is that, it increases inequality" but that doesn't mean we shouldn't complete the quest (Conner 7).

Antibiotics at one point were being used irresponsibly, but "the ethical path is not to stop using them but to use them more judiciously" (Conner 7).

Conner would disagree with the argument that human genetic engineering shouldn't be allowed to the extent that parents can design their babies because he takes a very liberal approach on this issue. The problem with his argument is that he fails to understand that the quest for perfection involves eliminating inequality, not increasing it.

If we are increasing inequality, all we're doing is backtracking on the progress we've made as human beings and that's not what we want. Michael Sandel's article Genetically Designing Babies is Unethical explains why human genetic engineering shouldn't be allowed at all. He argues that "changing our nature to fit the world rather than the other way around is an ethical defeat" and an attack on our freedom (Sanded 6). He looks back at the dark history of eugenics and how it was the driving force behind the Nazi Holocaust (Sanded 1).

It was done to eliminate all of whom the Nazis considered as undesirables. Sanded argues that in the same way, " the successful would be even more likely than they are now to see themselves as self-made and self-sufficient, and those at the bottom of society would be seen not as disadvantaged, but simply as unfit" (Sanded 6). Sanded would disagree with the argument that human genetic engineering should be allowed to a certain extent because he is against the whole idea of genetic engineering. What he fails to realize in his argument is that as human beings, we have an obligation to improve our lives.

If we can have a cure for the flu or for bronchitis, why not have a cure for blindness, ATA Cash disease, or any other sickness or disability that doctors can do nothing about? Human genetic engineering should only be allowed for use in the medical field to cure diseases and disabilities and not to the point where human life becomes a game. Genetic engineering is a scientific concern, but without boundaries t becomes a moral concern. Life is the most sacred thing anyone can have and it needs to be approached with caution and respect.

It is also a great teacher and one of the main lessons it tries to teach us is humility. Humility involves accepting others for who they are and plays a key role when it comes to our relationships. When you think about what really matters in life, family and relationships with others tend to come up first which is really no coincidence. The purpose of life seems to be to lift up those around us and genetically designing babies will do the exact opposite

of that. Parents who would choose to do this are doing it for cynical and selfish purposes.

They are taking the child's freedom away so they can satisfy their own desires and out of those desires will come corruption. That's why a line needs to be drawn about to what extent human genetic engineering can be used. With great power comes great responsibility, so this is something we really can't afford to play around with. If genetic engineering to cure diseases becomes almost accessible as the flu shot, we will be that much closer on our quest to perfection. One day we will get through that all, but it's going to take one brick at a time.