

Week 5:

## Selective Reproduction Part I: Genetic Disease Screening

*Why worry that HGP will lead to revival of Eugenics?*

Genetic tests are the most *immediate fruit* of HGP

- Diagnosis and confirmation of disease - need for treatment and intervention
- Inform life planning
- **Reproductive decision making**
  - Acceptable IF individuals make their own choices about use of tests and their own choices about how to act on the results with aim to improve the well-being of family members.
  - SOUNDS like negative Eugenics.  
According to broad definition "*The employment of an understanding of heredity in the exertion of control over who gets born or reproduces, with the aim to improve the quality of human lives.*" - by definition, this is Eugenics.
  - Not Eugenics because not governmentally controlled.
- **Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion**
  - Genetic tests indicate near 100% likelihood that pregnant will result in severe mental and physical disability and short life full of severe suffering.
    - Key features: high likelihood/ extremely severe disease - life long suffering and disability
    - Motivations:
      - prevention of suffering,
      - parent's concern for own life,
      - impact on other family members,
      - aim to avoid burden on society,
      - aim to conceive a child with a higher quality of life.

Morally acceptable:

- Reproductive liberty/autonomy
- Mother's bodily autonomy
- Socio-economic factors
- Health and wellbeing of parents

// HARM PRINCIPLE // (midline)

*Any action is permissible as long as it doesn't harm third parties (parents?)*

Morally unacceptable:

- Right to life (abortion, not PGD)
- Non-identity
  - Only other option being non-existence. So long as their life is worth living, they are not harmed by the action. Can be harmed only if their life is so miserable that they would rather be dead.
- 'playing God'
- Child did not consent to being brought into the world as a disabled child (violate child's right to an open future)
- Undue discrimination towards those already existing with these conditions
  - (it is worse to be disabled than alive)

Abortion:

Everyone agrees that abortion is morally problematic (doesn't mean wrong)... it is not the sort of thing one should do for trivial reasons.

*How early in pregnancy/development would fetes need to be for abortion to be ethically acceptable?*

Week 6:

## Selective Reproduction Part II: Genetic Enhancement

### Pro-enhancement: Savulescu

*Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children* by Savulescu, Julian

- PGD
  - Used to select against disease
  - Could be used to select for non-medical traits
    - Wouldn't involve killing a foetus
    - Less invasive than abortion
    - Less psychological costs than abortion

Treatment-enhancement debate:

- eg. treating the sick is a form of advancement
- What is the technical difference?
- Is there a morally relevant difference between treatment and advancement?

### Savulescu: Procreative Beneficence

- *"You should use all the available information and choose the option most likely to bring about the best outcome."*
- *Couples should select the embryo that is expected to have the best life based on the information revealed in the genetic tests.*
  - **Implies couples should involve genetic tests to bring about the best outcome**
    - Enhancement is not just *morally permitted*, its *morally obligatory*
    - Should be permitted by law — but not legally enforced
      - *Why shouldn't it be enforced by law? Individual morality and ethical social policy*
  - Imagine genes for: "violent, explosive, uncontrollable temper"
    - Like disease genes, will lead to reduction of quality of life = difficult to have positive relationships
    - Savulescu argues that non-disease traits should also be selected for/against as they still impact the quality of life
  - Imagine genes for: "memory, intelligence..."
    - General purpose means
    - Valuable regardless of what is one's plan in life and/or on any account of well-being

### Against enhancement: Michael Sandel

*The Case Against Perfection: What's Wrong with Designer Children, Bionic Athletes, and Genetic Engineering* by Sandel, Michael J

#### Standard objection: Sandel's response

1. Cloning and/or other kinds of human enhancement are not safe.
  - It would be objectionable/problematic even if it were safe and effective
2. Cloning and/or enhancement would violate child's right to autonomy and open future.
  - Children do not have an open future anyway (e.g. genes we are born with impact)
  - Concerns about child autonomy capture some of our concerns but doesn't explain concerns about people who enhance themselves (affecting their own life rather than a child's)
3. The genetically enhanced (e.g. athlete) would have an unfair advantage over others.
  - Even without enhancements, there is unfairness as some people are better endowed than others.
  - So it must be for reasons other than fairness.
4. Enhancement poses danger of creating two classes of people - those with access and those without.

Week 10:

## Moral Enhancement

**Enhancement:** making something from normal to above normal (better than it already was).

- Average to high, or beyond

**Treatment:** making something from below normal to normal.

- Low to average, or less low

### Moral Enhancement:

- We already do various things to promote the morality of ourselves and our children
  - Suppose moral enhancement was possible via biotechnological means eg. pills or genetic intervention
  - These kinds of intervention take away free-will and liberty, undermining morality.
- Morality is a **good** thing
- Morality is part of what 'the good life' consists in - it is **good for an individual** to be moral.
- Promoting morality would have good social consequences - be **good for others** and make the world a better place.

Initial considerations perhaps necessary to save the world:

- Prevention of 'ultimate harm'
  - *Unfit for the Future* - Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Persson

**Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Persson:** moral enhancement would involve promotion of the following kinds of things for which they argue evidence suggests a genetic basis:

- argue that artificial moral enhancement is now essential if humanity is to avoid catastrophe.
- *Thanks to evolution, we are supremely well adapted to that world, not only physically, but psychologically, socially and through our moral dispositions.*
- *However, evolutionary pressures have not developed for us a psychology that enables us to cope with the moral problems our new power creates.*
- *Enhancing our moral motivation would enable us to act better for distant people, future generations, and non-human animals. One method to achieve this enhancement is already practised in all societies: moral education.*

**Thomas Douglas:** moral enhancements would involve interventions that lead us to act from morally better motives. (Douglas, 2009)

- as opposed to bad motives/ counter moral emotions: Aggression, Racial aversion

"A person morally enhances herself if she alters in a way that may reasonably be expected to result in her having **morally better future motives ... than she would otherwise have had**" (2008: 229)

Thomas Douglas, "Moral Enhancement," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 2008; 25(3): 228-245

### **IN FAVOUR FOR MORAL ENHANCEMENT**

Moral enhancement is not subject to usual objections to enhancement:

#### **1. Social consequence**

- Disadvantage of others — BUT moral enhancement will be to benefit of others

#### **2. Sandel's objection that we should accept giftedness**

- BUT why should one accept that giftedness of one's immortality?

### **OBJECTIONS TO MORAL ENHANCEMENT**

1. It would be better to promote morality via other means — 'means matter morally' (Erik Parens)
  - Douglas Response: we can agree that other/preferred methods should also be used - need not be choosing between alternative means)
2. It's not natural