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Embracing Change with All Four Arms: Post-Humanist Defense of Genetic Engineering

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Abstract

This paper sets out to defend human genetic engineering with a new bioethical approach, post-humanism, combined with a radical democratic political framework. Arguments for the restriction of human genetic engineering, and specifically germ-line enhancement, are reviewed. Arguments are divided into those which are fundamental matters of faith, or "bio-Luddite" arguments, and those which can be addressed through public policy, or "gene-angst" arguments. The four bio-Luddite concerns addressed are: Medicine Makes People Sick; There are Sacred Limits of the Natural Order; Technologies Always Serve Ruling Interests; The Genome is Too Complicated to Engineer. I argue that these are matters of faith that one either accepts or rejects, and that I reject. The non-fundamentalist or pragmatic concerns I discuss are: Fascist Applications; The Value of Genetic Diversity; The Geneticization of Life; Genetic Discrimination and Confidentiality; Systematically Bad Decisions by Parents; Discrimination Against the Disabled; Unequal Access; The Decline of Social Solidarity. I conclude that all these concerns can be adequately addressed through a proactive regulative framework administered by a liberal democratic state. Therefore, even germ-line genetic enhancement should eventually be made available since the potential benefits greatly outweigh the potential risks.

Keywords

genetic enhancement transhumanism

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