

Philosophy 9: Reproductive Ethics

Fall 2008

Instructor: Ann Bumpus

Office Location: 312 Thornton

Office Hours: W, F 1:45-2:30 and by appt

Class Time: M, W, F 10-11

Classroom:

Course Description

In 2000, Jack and Lisa Nash, decided to use genetic pre-implantation screening to save their young daughter who was ill with Franconi Anemia. In vitro fertilization allowed them to produce a healthy child who would be a transplant match for Molly. Stem cells were taken from the resulting baby's umbilical cord and used to save Molly.

In 2002, a lesbian couple who are both deaf used sperm donated by a friend with hereditary deafness to have a deaf baby. In response to criticism, they explained that they considered deafness to be a difference, not a disability.

Did Molly Nash's parents violate a right of the baby's by taking the stem cells? Were they using the baby merely as a means because of their aim in bearing it? By choosing to conceive a deaf baby, did the lesbian couple violate a right of their baby's? Was their decision morally problematic in some other way?

Technological advances, along with a rapidly growing understanding of human genetics, are giving humans new means to prevent and cure disease and disability. But along with this comes new ability to eliminate difference and even to alter human nature. Is it morally permissible to use genetic technology to avoid having a child with a physically disabling disease but not permissible to use the same technology to produce a 'super athlete'? Where do we draw the line and how do we draw the line? Do potential parents have far-ranging procreative liberty that would make any restrictions on the use of genetic intervention illegal and/or immoral? Should the state play a role in deciding which genetic interventions are allowed and under what conditions? Are there important aspects of human nature that should be preserved? Does the morality of bringing a baby into being depend at all on the parents's purpose in doing so? Is choosing our children's traits a form of "playing God", and if so, is that morally wrong?

Through philosophical reading, fiction, film and discussion we will seek to gain insight into these important questions surrounding the morality of destroying, creating, and altering human life and human nature.

Course Goals

This aim of this class is not only to familiarize you with a particular ethical issue but also, in doing so, to introduce you to major schools of thought in ethics, such as Consequentialism and Deontology. Additionally, the course is designed to help you improve your critical thinking and writing abilities and your ability to identify and evaluate the arguments of others. My hope is that you will leave the course not only knowledgeable about some central concerns in reproductive ethics but also with the tools to thoughtfully evaluate other contemporary issues of ethical importance.

Books:

Jody Picoult, *My Sisters Keeper*
Jonathan Glover, *Choosing Children*
John Robertson, *Children of Choice*
Michael Sandel, *The Case Against Perfection*

Films: (tentative list)

Gattaca
Genetic Testing and Dwarfs (Nightline episode)
Genetic Engineering & Humanness
Genetic Discrimination (from 60 Minutes)

Articles & Chapters

Dworkin, Ronald "Playing God: Genes, Clones & Luck" from *Sovereign Virtue*
Dworkin, Ronald excerpt from *Life's Dominion*
Boyle & Savulescu, "Ethics of Using PGD to select a stem cell donor for an Existing Person" from the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ.com)
Bostrom, N & Ord "The Reversal Test: Eliminating the Status Quo Bias in Applied Ethics" from *Ethics* 2006.
Bostrom & Sandberg, "Cognitive Enhancement: Methods, Ethics, and Regulatory Challenges" from *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 2007
Faison, Amanda, "The Miracle of Molly", 5280 (*Denver Magazine*)
Persson, I., Savulescu, J., "The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity" from *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, (forthcoming).
Kamm, Frances "What is and is not Wrong with Enhancement" (forthcoming, Reply to Sandel)
Warren et al "Case Studies in Bioethics: Can the Fetus Be an Organ Farm?" in *The Hastings Center Report*
Warren, Mary Anne, "Do Potential People Have Rights?" from *Canadian J Philosophy*
Warren, Mary Anne "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion" from *The Monist*
Parfit, Derek "The NonIdentity Problem", from *Reasons and Persons*
Tooley, Michael "Abortion and Infanticide", from *Philosophy and Public Affairs*
Marquis, Donald "Why Abortion is Immoral" from *Journal of Philosophy*
Thomson, Judith, "A Defense of Abortion" from *Philosophy and Public Affairs*
Steinbock, Bonnie "PGD and Embryo Selection"
Sumner, LW, "A Third Way" from *Abortion and Moral Theory*
Parens and Asch, "Disability rights critique of prenatal genetic testing: Reflections and Recommendations", from *Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews*

Assignments, Grading, and Expectations

The nature of this material lends itself to class discussion, but class discussion will be most fruitful if you come to class prepared. To that end, I will expect you to have done the assigned reading for each class. I will give short assignments on a regular basis, aimed at helping you identify main arguments in the reading or aimed at generating thoughtful class discussion. In addition, your final grade will be based on your work on two longer papers of approximately 8-10 pages in length.

Short Assignments and Class Participation:	30%
First Paper	35%
Second Paper	35%

Academic Honor

I encourage students to discuss problems and papers together, and to talk with me. However, all written work should be YOUR OWN, and ideas that are not yours should be properly attributed.

See <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/regulations/undergrad/acad-honor.html> for more on the Dartmouth Honor Code.

Student Needs

Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

Student Accessibility Services (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~accessibility/facstaff/>)