In the modern age, most cultures do not live day to day trying to survive. With assistance programs, modern infrastructure, food services and charitable organizations, survival is almost a given. Instead, the objective of many cultures is to strive forward, make technological advancements, help one another and seek happiness. Under this relatively recent mission of humanity - a sucess-of-the-civil rather than survival-of-the-fittest model - opportunity has exploded in countless areas and limitations to action have disappeared. What was once magic is now mainstream, and the technological adoption rate is only getting faster(1). What is new this year is old next year, and the applications of these opportunities will only get more integrated into our lives and bodies. Germ-line engineering is simply another technological opportunity. It can be argued that it aligns with our societies’ model of progress – in other words it improves the lives of its consumers – and Savulescu’s argument of enhancing human wellbeing conforms to the fundamental human nature to experiment, expand knowledge and reach new limits.

Savulescu’s argument is that if we are morally obligated to treat and prevent disease, we are also morally obligated to enhance, so long as it improves well-being. With an immense amount of powerful technology at our fingertips, we are faced with two simple options, intervene or do not intervene. Intervention includes not only treating and preventing disease, but supraprevention of disease as well as protection and enhancement of well being. Forgoing intervention implies remaining in our current state, where disease is treated intead of prevented, and health issues are fixed rather than avoided. Just as we use interventions for our cognitive, transportational and strength challenges; using stimulants, steroids and machines for short-term optimized-performance, Savulescu argues that the fundamentals of intervening in those challenges work the same way as intervening in our health challegnes. They add value to the individual, they assist with meeting the desired needs, and they allow the individual to take control of their circumstances with more power than just mindset and motivation. Germ-line engineering empowers real change, positive change, long-term change.

Sandel criticizes this view by arguing that the value and appreciation of life comes from the mystery that it holds. He also emphasizes that by having the ability to choose the enhancements, the pressure parents will exert on their children to perform will be immense–consdiering they received the enhancements before they were able to decide for themselves. In Sandel’s position, germ-line engineering will be the “ultimate expression of our resolve”(Sandel 22). He compares the apid value the technology could bring as “intoxicating”(Sandel 22), implying that the value would be short lived and quickly turn sour. His deep analysis into how current surface-level genetic-tampering provide a basis for the challenges that lie ahead. These challenges are minute and controllable now, but the most significant concern presented is that our greed for more progress will take us too far, eventually enhancing outsevles until we are “better than well”(Sandel 1). This, Sandel foresees, will lead to a slippery slope of self defeating progress, where the bottom performers continuously enhance themselves such that the norm begins to drift upwards, causing an endless cycle of enhancements that will eventually burn us out and make life dull and our accomplishments meaningless.

The most immediate ethical issue at hand is access. If only the rich can use it, then it could become a tool that would cause intense segregation and could overthrow the balance of civilization. However, as with any highly demanded tool, as more people use it, it will become more accessible. Consider televisions, once a luxury item, which used to cost up to $10,000(3) are now more widespread than newspaper. It is estimated that in the US, there is an average of 2.5 televisions per household(4). Knowing this, it is clear that what it may cost now to perform a germ-line engineering operation will be much different than what it will cost in the future, most certainly cheaper. As costs decrease, the technology will be more equitable and widespread, reducing the burden on families and individuals who want the best opportunities for themselves. The line between those who can afford it and those who cannot afford it will narrow as more advanced, efficient and cost effective technology evolve. Similar to cell phones, it will not be a question whether an individual can afford it or not, it will be a question of whether they choose to get it and how much utility they want out of it.

It will be argued that enhancements will introduce an ‘equality gap’ between those who choose to enhance and those who choose not to, regardless of cost. The performances of enhanced people will be stronger, better, faster and longer, while the non-enhanced will be, well, regular. This gap will continue to widen as Sandel’s prediction of the slipper slope of self defeating progress plays out, and eventually the normal, unenhanced individuals will be too slow to keep up. However, this gap already exists in areas such as sports, higher education, and even the workplace. These gaps present opportunities for both sides of the spectrum, and for everyone in between as well. Currently, there are countless programs and services in place to take advantage of these gaps in the market, such as the Paralympics, scholarships/grants, and even businesses that specifically serve customers who prever ‘natural’ solutions over those that are ‘enhanced’. In our diverse, complex, democratic society, it is impossible to conclude that the enhancements will be of detriment to those who choose not to receive them. There will simply be different opportunities for them. Opportunities that will be open for only the non-enhanced.

The value of life differs for all, but for many, it is most clear at the intersection of challenge and opportunity. Many of us are motivated by what we dont know, it is in our instincts to explore, learn and understand what makes everything work around us. The mystery is what keeps life interesting and exciting. However, the value of mystery does not disappear when discovery occurs. Similar to how when any problem is solved, the solution itself carries unique problems of its own, there will always be more mystery and challenge on the other side of a discovery. Sandel argues that germ-line engineering will take the mystery out of life, but that argument is flawed, since there is a plethora of new challenges yet to be encountered in life once a previous one is solved. Furthermore, just as tthe ocean and unconquered lands were mysterious in the mideaval times, the eventual knowledge of these long pondered unknown realities is what empowers humanity to chase different, more complex challenges. If we still hadn’t learned about the oceans properties, would we have ever build cruise ships and yachts? Without the progression of knowledge, we stay stuck in the same place. It is only though change that we are able to continue adding value to our lives, our wellbeing and our future.

Enhancing ourselves using germ-line engineering will introduce unique problems which we will eventually be obligated to solve. Replacing the horse – that left feces all over the roads – with the automobile – which is slowly poisoning our air – is showing us that we need a better solution. The value of embracing change is that the potential to face future challenges outweigh the burden of continuing to face current ones. Applying an ethical perspective to germ-line engineering makes it clear that there are many questions to consider when determining *what* to enhance and *how* to enhance it, but the *why* behind enhancing oneself is clear: to learn, to push the boundaries, to discover and to strive to be better. If these reasons were not important, than nothing about life would be important. As Savulescu says, “to be human is to be better”(Savulescu 39). We have to choose how we want to be better, and germ-line engineering is a logical next place to try.

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