

Choosing Children: Genes, Disability, and Design

By Jonathan Glover

Reviewed by Michalis Hadjimarcou, Cyprus

The aim of *Choosing Children* is to investigate how humanity should regulate its fast-increasing ability to genetically design the babies of tomorrow. Should there be an effort to eliminate from future generations any disabilities and disorders that are traditionally considered disadvantageous to human life? And should parents be allowed to choose the genetically determined characteristics and qualities of their children and even to enhance their mental and physical abilities?

These possibilities raise important issues such as the extent of freedom that should be given to parents to determine what their children will be like, while at the same time ensuring the children's right to a good life, which could require protecting them from their parents' foolish or even harmful choices.

In order to address these questions, Jonathan Glover first tackles essential issues such as how we define disability and which disabling conditions are sufficiently disadvantageous to be considered for elimination from future generations. Also, he tries to define what constitutes a 'good life' and explores the concepts of human flourishing and happiness. Eventually, he investigates how the principle of 'what parents owe their children', along with other guiding principles, should be used to direct all

decisions that parents are allowed to make for their children.

As the subject of this mostly philosophical book is contemporary and highly engaging, it is suitable for anyone who is interested, even slightly, in the topic of genetic intervention in humans. On the downside, the long and detailed philosophical and theoretical discussions can be tiring to the casual reader. Also, although the scientific knowledge required to understand the book is minimal, good command of the English language is required to fully appreciate the philosophical discussions.

Although the philosophical details in *Choosing Children* may make it a bit 'heavy' for some high-school students, the issues it raises could make excellent debate or discussion topics in science or even non-science classes. Also, teachers could design small projects around the disorders described in the book, providing students with essential information to help them argue either side of the debate.

No matter what their level of interest or knowledge, there is a good chance that Glover's discussion of these issues will make readers rethink and re-evaluate some of their previously held beliefs. This is, perhaps, one of the most important contributions of *Choosing Children*.

Details

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