

Spring 2006

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## Recommended Citation

Magin, Jennifer, "Designer Babies and the “Cabbage Patch” Mentality" (2006). *CedarEthics Online*. 21.  
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Designer Babies and the “Cabbage Patch” Mentality  
Jennifer Magin

Cabbage Patch Kids were among my favorite toys when I was a child. One of the reasons I loved them so much was that I was able to choose the one I wanted. Every Cabbage Patch Kid was different, and each one came with its own name, physical characteristics, and birth certificate. As a little girl I loved going through the toy aisle and looking at all of my choices. Did I want brown hair and blue eyes? Did I want freckles on its face? Would I prefer a boy or a girl? All these questions raced through my mind as I eagerly reached for the perfect one to take home with me.

There is nothing wrong with buying a Cabbage Patch Kid, and there is certainly nothing wrong with looking them all over and picking out the one you want. However, there *is* something morally wrong with choosing when it comes to human life and the possibilities of creating the perfect child. Though dolls are different than babies, I would suggest that the principles are the same.

Because of the recent rise in genetic enhancement, I believe our society is not far from using a “Cabbage Patch mentality” on human life. By this I mean that the idea of choosing what your child will look like or how smart he will be sounds very appealing to most people. After all, who would not want to have a “perfect child?” But though the idea of the perfect child sounds appealing, it is morally appalling. In this paper I will take the position that genetic enhancement for the purpose of designing an ideal child is morally wrong. It is wrong based on principles of the sanctity of human life and distributive justice, and it is also moving our society down the path of another eugenics movement.

“Each human being, male and female, is uniquely created, known, and valued by God. All human life exists primarily for God’s pleasure and purposes, not ours” (Bohlin, 2001). Each one of us is created in God’s image, as it says in Genesis 1:27. This means that every human being has inherent value (Sullivan, 2006). “Man’s dignity transcends his biological condition” (Coors, 2006). By deciding what your baby will look like or how smart she will be you are in a sense cheapening her human life by making it a product of what you believe

is ideal. The baby is loved and wanted based upon what she will be like, and what she can do for her parents, instead of because she was created in the image of God.

Another problem with choosing the characteristics of your child is that if only certain characteristics are desired, what happens to children born without them? If the trend develops that blonde hair and blue eyes are what “perfect,” then those who have brown hair or green eyes will be considered “undesirable” or not as good as the others. It will not be long before the “undesirables” are asked not to reproduce so that their genes and traits do not continue. This not only cheapens the value of human life, but it also heads down the path of positive eugenics. And positive eugenics, though initially meant to help improve mankind, only ends up becoming negative eugenics in the end.

Genetic enhancement morally wrong for a second reason: it goes against the principle of distributive justice (Coors, 2006). Even if it were moral to design your own child, not everyone would be able to afford this kind of technology. Only the rich would have the power to create such “perfect” children. This would make the poor or the working class inferior to them simply because they can not afford the same luxuries.

This could also lead to a superior class of people (Coors, 2006). This might exclude those coming from low income families, single parent homes, and those who lack appropriate education. “Social justice would mandate improving the well-being of those who are on the margins of society rather than further marginalizing the poor by enhancing a few far above the norm” (Coors, 2006). Allowing the wealthy the opportunity to select desired characteristics for their children is not only socially unjust but it is also another step down the road to eugenics. It would not take long for the desired traits to dominate society and try and conquer those that are less desirable.

God has created each person exactly how He wants them to be. No one should ever have to feel inferior to another simply because of the way he looks, or because of how smart she is. There is no need to try and design the perfect child because God is the perfect designer. Each child He creates is a masterpiece made in His image.

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