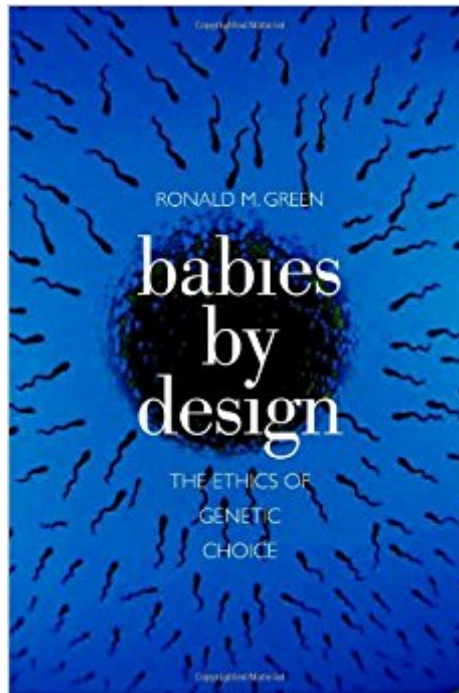




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Babies By Design: The Ethics Of Genetic Choice



Synopsis

We stand on the brink of unprecedented growth in our ability to understand and change the human genome. New reproductive technologies now enable parents to select some genetic traits for their children, and soon it will be possible to begin to shape ourselves as a species. Despite the loud cries of alarm that such a prospect inspires, Ronald Green argues that we will, and we should, undertake the direction of our own evolution. A leader in the bioethics community, Green offers a scientifically and ethically informed view of human genetic self-modification and the possibilities it opens up for a better future. Fears of a terrible Brave New World or a new eugenics movement are overblown, he maintains, and in the more likely future, genetic modifications may improve parents' ability to enhance children's lives and may even promote social justice. The author outlines the new capabilities of genomic science, addresses urgent questions of safety that genetic interventions pose, and explores questions of parenting and justice. He also examines the religious implications of gene modification. Babies by design are assuredly in the future, Green concludes, and by making responsible choices as we enter that future, we can incorporate gene technology in a new age of human adventure.

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Customer Reviews

In his latest, Dartmouth College bioethicist Green (*The Human Embryo Research Debates*) embraces a vision of future parenthood bound to stir controversy, arguing that parents will, and

should, give children the advantage of more "attractive physical features." Starting with the assumption that "we are entering the era of directed human evolution," he suggests that coming methods of in vitro fertilization will allow parents to genetically pre-select babies, not only to eliminate diseases like cystic fibrosis, but to promote what he calls "cosmetico-genomics." Scenario in place, Green explores a number of racially-charged hypotheticals: "Will dark-skinned African American parents choose to have lighter-skinned children?" Will Jewish parents use genetic rhinoplasty to change a "Jewish nose"? Will Asian-Americans "westernize" their children's eyes? Green answers that parents are right to reduce the unfair but very real social burdens facing their offspring, and dismisses objections as "status quo bias." Although he's peppered his argument with disclaimers that his vision would not reopen the door to the eugenics movements (the kind that underpinned Nazi Germany's genocidal master plan), readers may come away unconvinced; either way, this provoking book provides a rare, cogent look at the "plusses" of genetically enhanced offspring. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

“Green has actively engaged the topic of genetic engineering by not only providing the latest science, but by presenting arguments with all their attendant emotional baggage. The combination is a powerful one, but it comes off exceptionally well.” —Eric M. Meslin, Indiana University Center for Bioethics (Eric M. Meslin) “Not only is Green’s scholarship rock-solid, he is also the most balanced and thoughtful of the many analysts in this area — neither an avid supporter who believes in science above all, nor an arch conservative who would take us back to the dark ages.” —Dean H. Hamer, molecular biologist and author of *The Science of Desire*, *Living with Our Genes* and *The God Gene* (Dean H. Hamer) “Green presents ethical positions and arguments in the context of modern thought, and in a language that will be accessible to scholars, scientists and lay-people.” —Lee Silver, Princeton University (Lee Silver) “With his close and sound attention to the relevant science and his attention to the relevant religious, ethical, and policy perspectives and debates, Green has offered a well-integrated set of arguments that can serve to educate and guide students in courses in college and policy makers alike.” —James F. Childress, John Allen Hollingsworth Professor of Ethics, Institute for Practical Ethics and Public Life, University of Virginia (James F. Childress) “This is a brilliant and provocative book by one of the top — and most visionary — bioethicists in the world. It takes us into the era of directed human evolution, which may soon redefine people’s relationships, capabilities, and even our concepts of

freedom and justice. — Robert Lanza, Vice President of Research and Scientific Development at Advanced Cell Technology (Robert Lanza) — “In this clear-eyed and generally optimistic book, both promise and risk are ably weighed and balanced. The science is clearly explained, and there are signposts to help guide us through the moral maze. — Economist (Economist) “By providing examples, contextualizing issues within the framework of stories in popular fiction, and presenting a balanced view of the topics, the author allows the reader to fully explore the issues embedded in the scientific transformation created by the genomic revolution.” — Nancy A. Ridenour, Science Books & Films (Nancy A. Ridenour Science Books & Films 2008-04-01) — “Green has written for a broad readership of nonspecialists. . . . accessible and engaging—qualities that are rare in the bioethics literature. — Commonweal (Commonweal 2010-04-09)

This book does an amazing job of both explains how doctors and scientist preform and the ethical point behind genetic choice. I like how the author never directly states his view but instead shows all ethically view points. Some of the book gets a little boring because of the medical terms and processes that are hard to understand if you aren't in that field. Though the author does a good job of 'dumbing' it down for the read to understand that bases of what they need to know. I like how the author gives examples of real life people who have gone through this process and examples of futuristic nonfiction books that have possible things that could eventually happen. Overall, this book is very helpful when researching the topic of genetic modifications and it's ethics. ALVH @LHS

This is a very enjoyable book about the ethics of genetic engineering, a topic that may ensure that the dinner conversation go right past midnight. Ronald Green raises more questions than answers, but he makes it clear where he stands. He is all for the advancement of genetic research that may potentially be used to correct genetic defects and shortcomings. In most of the subjects discussed, he presents all the major views - whether for or against. In the chapter 'Will we create "Genobility"' he discussed John Rawls' 'Theory of Justice' with some absorbing views about it's outdatedness. Lawyers and philosophers will certainly find this chapter fascinating. 'Playing God' draws upon the questions of the religious aversion of man playing the role of his maker. Is the human eye proof of an intelligent or unintelligent design? That is one of the questions discussed here. What fascinated me most about this book is its references to famous books and films of fiction that has genetic manipulation as a central theme - 'Never Let Me Go', Ishiguro; 'Beggars in Spain', Leisha Camden; 'Dawn', Olivia Butler; 'Gattaca'; 'Island' (latter two are films). The reader must not expect

discussions of deep and dense theories of ethics here. That did not seem to be the purpose of the book. It is a book that is wide-ranging in its coverage of genetic activities in the presentday, and by means of examples, indicate the advantages of going with scientific progress. How far should one go, is the ultimate question the reader has to decide for himself. This book will help.

I had the pleasure to attend Professor Green's lecture in Long Island. I read this book as a preparation, First I was a bit ambivalent since he was described as from the department of religious study in Dartmouth. However after reading the book I found him a real scholar and the book was written with substantial depth as well as expansive breadth. He did not shy away from potential controversies, and presented well researched and well thought out arguments. I highly recommend this book.

Less detailed than I thought it would be. This book is okay for general information on the subject.

Babies By Design is one of the few books I've encountered that's not overtly biased either in favor of, or against, human genetic enhancement. Professor Green offers a nuanced analysis of these pressing ethical issues, written in a conversational style that draws upon real-world and fictional material and doesn't require a PhD in biochemistry to decipher. If human genetic enhancement is a subject of interest to you, this one is well worth your time.

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