

rights. In the worst case, they could undermine our experience of being part of a single human community with a common human future.

Once we begin genetically modifying our children, where do we stop? If it's acceptable to modify one gene, why not two, or twenty or two hundred? At what point do children become artifacts designed to someone's specifications rather than members of a family to be nurtured?

Given what we know about human nature, the development and commercial marketing of human genetic modification would likely spark a techno-eugenic rat-race. Even parents opposed to manipulating their children's genes would feel compelled to participate in this race, lest their offspring be left behind.

Green proposes that eugenic technologies could be used to reduce “the class divide.” But nowhere in his essay does he suggest how such a proposal might ever be made practicable in the real world. 5

The danger of genetic misuse is equally threatening at the international level. What happens when some rogue country announces an ambitious program to “improve the genetic stock” of its citizens? In a world still barely able to contain the forces of nationalism, ethnocentrism, and militarism, the last thing we need to worry about is a high-tech eugenic arms race.

In his essay, Green doesn't distinguish clearly between different uses of genetic technology — and the distinctions are critical. It's one thing to enable a couple to avoid passing on a devastating genetic condition, such as Tay-Sachs.¹ But it's a different thing altogether to create children with a host of “enhanced” athletic, cosmetic, and cognitive traits that could be passed to their own children, who in turn could further genetically modify their children, who in turn ... you get the picture. It's this second use of gene technology (the technical term is “heritable genetic enhancement”) that Green most fervently wants us to embrace.

In this position, Green is well outside the growing national and international consensus on the proper use of human genetic science and technology. To his credit, he acknowledges that 80 percent of the medical school students he surveyed said they were against such forms of human genetic engineering, and that public opinion polls show equally dramatic opposition. He could have noted, as well, that nearly forty countries — including Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, Japan, and South Africa — have adopted socially responsible policies regulating the new human genetic technologies. They allow genetic research (including stem cell