Genetically Engineered Babies Ethics Inequality and Regulation

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Genetic Engineering and Social Inequality

Inequalities seem inherent to human society, and they exist in every field. Some people benefit from the inequalities, but others suffer, and the designed babies contribute to one aspect of those social, economic, physical, emotional, and genetic inequalities that are inherent in human society. The genetically engineered babies, the babies whose genetic makeup is designed by their parents with the assistance of scientists to meet the needs and requirements of the parents, have raised the same debates about inequalities in a different context.

Ethical Concerns About Designed Babies

People debate the harms that these genetically engineered babies cause to society and the benefits they have for society (Lanphier, Urnov, Haecker, Werner, & Smolenski, 2015). The harms include creating saviour babies, discarding undesired embryos, designing babies with disabilities, Eugenics, and contributing to inequalities in society. In contrast, the benefits include eliminating genetic disorders, desired and improved traits, and saving lives. The paper argues although genetically designed babies are useful, they must not be implemented until there are proper checks and balances to ensure the safety of the designed babies before and after birth, and the policies must respond to the current objections of the people.

Existing Inequality and Technological Responsibility

Most of the opponent's arguments against genetically designed babies would not stand their ground because they talk about inequalities and abortions, which are problematic but are not caused by them. For example, inequalities have always existed in human society, and it is not something genetically designed babies have created. However, the notion has added a new aspect to the inequalities, but it also has the notion of removing some of the social inequalities by abolishing the disabilities in people. Moreover, the wealthy always had the advantage in all kinds of things, be it

education, healthcare, or social hierarchy, and with the introduction of designer babies. The rich people have an advantage over the field as well. Therefore, the inequalities in society are problematic and cannot be abolished by opposing genetically engineered babies (Lanphier et al., 2015; “Pros and Cons of Designer Babies,” 2018). Consequently, it will exist regardless of how human society develops. In addition, another criticism of genetically engineered babies is that people might abort the child after getting the stem cells. For instance, the example from Ukraine and the physician’s involvement in aborting the baby even after seven months is inhuman. However, if physicians manipulate their patients to abort the fetus to get organs and stem cells, the opposition of designed babies is less likely to end the practice. Conversely, if the mothers use their babies’ stem cells and organs, there must be policies to ensure that the mother does not deliberately abort the child after getting the stem cells or organs (“Pros and Cons of Designer Babies,” 2018). Regardless of the design, babies’ mothers can also do it to their normal children, which is why a strong policy for abortions must be implemented, but it might add to the debates regarding the mother’s reproductive rights.

Embryo Selection and Moral Status

Furthermore, the opponents highlight the issue of discarding unwanted embryos. The parents form embryos until they get their desired results, which causes the destruction of all other embryos as unwanted (Lanphier et al., 2015). It is a serious issue, but that is what the design does. For instance, if a person does not want cancer cells in their children, the person has to discard all the embryos containing cancerous cells. It does not have any other solution. Additionally, the eugenic argument is valid for the reasons of preference for certain skin colour or eye colour; it is mainly based on the assumption that people would prefer white skin over others. Some people might prefer black or brown to others, as some people have preferred deafness over the ability to hear. Although this whole argument does not nullify the inequality this approach might create, it only argues that with technology, the type of inequalities change, but inequalities, in general, persist in society.

Potential Benefits of Genetic Design

The proponents argue that genetically engineered babies are beneficial as they reduce disabilities and help the parents decide on appropriate intellectual or physical abilities for their children. It is embedded in society that parents want the best for their children based on their conceptions of best and ethics (Collins, 2018). Although it seems problematic, children learn from their family and environment, and endowing the children with the best genes helps them to improve their chances to cope with the environment and learn at a faster pace, which is not wrong. It helps to cure debilitating diseases and improve the abilities of the person and other relatives who might not survive without their help and existence (Lanphier et al., 2015). Therefore, there is nothing wrong with designing the babies but giving them the freedom to use their abilities when they are grownups.

Regulation and Responsible Use of Technology

Hence, the idea and technology of designed babies must not be rejected but tailored to optimize the benefits for human beings. The technology must be engineered in a way to avoid misuse by ensuring checks and balances and having strict policies for genetically engineered babies. The policy must be made to ensure that the babies are not used and disposed of at the parents' discretion. They must have the right to fully enjoy their human rights and live life normally. The designed babies must be treated as the end in themselves, even though they were created to help a dying person. Therefore, the government, healthcare agencies, and scientific institutes focus on making policies that eliminate the major concerns of the people instead of deeming the whole technology unethical or useless.

References

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