

*The Case Against Perfection vs Better Than Human*  
Michael J. Sandel vs Alan Buchanan

Sandel:

Parents should not cast selves as designers

It's an attempt to master the mystery of birth, a Promethean assault on the given

Medicine is guided by idea of restoring/preserving natural human functions

Exception: memory enhancement for Alheimers would constitute remedy

Obligation to heal a sick child is not an obligation to enhance a healthy one

Hyper-parenting is already a problem

Children are already given drugs (Ritalin) to be molded to fit in

Designer eggs more likely to be sought by privileged

Genetically programmed children are not sole authors of their own life history

(Habermas)—therefore violates liberal principles of autonomy and equality

Undermines child's freedom to choose own life plan

To think of ourselves as free we must be able to ascribe our origins to a beginning which eludes human disposal (Habermas)

Human beings are born not made: this is a condition of their capacity to initiate action (82)

Enhancement = answering competitive society's demand to improve performance a

Emphasis on mastery and domination misses sense of life as gift

Even if available to all, genetic engineering poses a threat to human dignity and freedom—has eugenic taint because it expresses stance of mastery and domination.

Buchanan:

An enhancement is an intervention—memory, attention, reasoning

An enhancement aims to augment/improve normal functioning—beyond therapy

We already have a morally arbitrary allocation of genes

We already live in a world where some are enhanced and some aren't (poverty, nutrition, disease, education etc)

Literacy is an enhancement—it changes the brain; Computers are enhancements

Let's avoid *biomedical enhancement exceptionalism*=because it involves pills or fiddling with embryos it's off the moral scale

Human progress is in great part the story of enhancement (first agrarian revolution=social organization, division of labor)

Criticizing something by saying it's unnatural is cheating—not much to be said for a conception of human nature that assumes permanence

If distribution is an issue, we can monitor domination/exclusion

Those opposed have pessimistic view of our character; consider how enhancements might make us more virtuous!

"If you think we should avoid enhancements because our present character is so flawed we are bound to misuse them, you are assuming our character is fixed. It may not be" (190).