

Sandel's case against perfection

1 Theses

1. There is a distinction between the moral permissibility of manipulating our genes for *treatments* and using it for *enhancements*.
2. This distinction is not adequately described using the language of autonomy, fairness, and individual rights.

2 Arguments for the first thesis

The root argument is that the availability of genetic enhancements will destroy our appreciation for the giftedness of our lives and talents. This would be a bad thing for three reasons.

1. Humility. The existence of things outside of our control makes us humble and restrains our impulse to maintain control.
2. Responsibility. If we were capable of choosing whether to acquire various talents we would become responsible for having them or not. If we aren't capable of making such a choice, we can't bear that responsibility.
3. Solidarity. The best reason why the successful owe aid to the less successful is that success is due to good fortune. To use Dworkin's terms, there is no obligation to correct bad "option luck", though there is one to correct bad "brute luck".

3 Questions

1. Why do these arguments apply more to enhancements than to treatments? Doesn't getting sick make us humble and isn't it an excellent example of brute luck?
2. How might we test these arguments empirically?