This *CQ* department is dedicated to bringing noted bioethicsts together in order to debate some of the most perplexing contemporary bioethics issues. You are encouraged to contact "The Great Debates" department editor, D. Micah Hester (hesterdm@uams.ed), UAMS/Humanities, 4301 W. Markham St. #646, Little Rock, AR 72205, with any suggestions for debate topics and interlocutors you would like to see published herein.

Human Rights and Genetic Technologies

D. MICAH HESTER and ALISSA SWOTA

What follows is the most recent installment of the "Great Debates" for *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*. This debate developed from ethical issues concerning human rights and genetic technologies discussed by Boston University's George Annas[1] that stimulated a response by Elizabeth Fenton at Harvard and John Arras at Virginia. It is that response that begins our debate herein.

From his original piece, Fenton and Arras find that Annas's account "inflates" the ability of human rights to address healthcare problems. In particular, they are concerned that Annas's take on genetic technology is misconstrued. They see Annas as having grounded his claims on the primacy of "human dignity" and a "common human nature" that is threatened by implementing genetic technologies that would change the genome (which smacks of reductionism—humanity = specific biological [read: "genetic"] traits). Annas, then, argues against such technologies, as they would lead not to *human* enhancement but to some "posthuman" species—a species that would lead to an inequality between humans and posthumans. Instead, Fenton and Arras argue that Annas's position fails in three ways: (1) Annas's reduction of human nature to biological traits is dubious, (2) Annas's grounding of human nature in "dignity" is given without an account of what dignity means or amounts to, and (3) Annas's concern about the inequality between humans and posthumans is based on a problematic emphasis on the biological differences between the two, and yet humans themselves already demonstrate a significant variety of biologies.

In his mind, however, Annas is unconvinced by Fenton and Arras and provocatively begins his response: "Elizabeth Fenton and John Arras, like the Borg, resist the idea that humans are uniquely special as well as the utility of the human rights framework for global bioethics. I believe their resistance to human rights is futile." Annas argues that Fenton and Arras have "strawmanned" his argument, and that his is a concern for "species endangering" practices. Further, his human rights claims are in line with a great deal of international public policy.

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The debate concludes with a final rejoinder from Fenton and Arras claiming that, as they put it, Annas simply "has misunderstood and misrepresented our positions on several key points." Speaking as editors, such provocative phrases from both sides make for "Great Debate" fodder, indeed. We can only hope that, as readers, you concur.

This introduction does little to explain the arguments produced herein, and, undoubtedly, the end of this debate has not settled the problems addressed. We hope that in reading the full text of the exchanges, what is provided is useful insight and needed stimulation for future arguments concerning the relationship between bioethical issues and human rights concerns.

As was noted with the inaugural "Great Debate," this *CQ* department is dedicated to bringing "noted bioethicists [together in order to] debate ... some of the most perplexing contemporary bioethics issues." In that light, we hope you find the following a fruitful debate between respected colleagues who wish, like all of us, to reach better conceptual clarity for the sake of our moral attitudes and behaviors.

We (the editors) apologize for and it should be noted that in their Rejoinder to Annas, Fenton & Arras refer to material that was in the galley proofs of Annas's debate paper. In proofing, Annas chose to change some of his material, which directly impacted the Rejoinder. Unfortunately, those changes came too late for Fenton & Arras to make substantive changes. The impacted quotations are noted in Fenton & Arras's text.

Note

1. Annas GJ. *American Bioethics: Crossing Human Rights and Health Law Boundaries.* New York: Oxford University Press; 2005.

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Bioethics and Human Rights: Curb Your Enthusiasm

ELIZABETH FENTON and JOHN D. ARRAS

Globalism, Bioethics, and Human Rights

The call has been made for global bioethics. In an age of pandemics, international drug trials, and genetic technology, health has gone global, and bioethics must follow suit. George Annas is one among a number of thinkers to recommend that bioethics expand beyond its traditional domain of patient–physician interactions to encompass a broader range of health-related matters. Medicine, Annas argues, must "develop a global language and a global strategy that can help to improve the health of all of the world's citizens."[1] Individual countries cannot address global health issues, and culturally specific principles are inadequate for addressing global bioethics concerns. We will need a language

This paper represents the first installment of our larger project on bioethics and human rights. The second part, on human rights and access to health-related goods, is available as Arras JD, Fenton EM. Bioethics and human rights: Access to health-related goods. *Hastings Center Report* 2009;39:27–38.

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