

Ethics, Crime Prevention and Prenatal Testing for Antisocial Personality Disorder

Thomas Søbirk Petersen

Ph.D, Associate Professor in Practical Philosophy in Department for Philosophy and Science Studies at Roskilde University (CUID)

The aim of this paper is to give a critical discussion of answers to the following question: If it is possible to detect genetic or other biological dispositions for criminal behavior in an early embryo or a fetus, are the parents then ever morally required to select an embryo or a fetus without these dispositions? In section 2, it will be argued, that potential parents who know that their embryo or fetus has a strong genetic disposition for a severe anti-social disorder are morally required to select an embryo or fetus without such dispositions, or, if possible, they should have the embryo or fetus treated for such dispositions. In section 3, a critically discussion of a much debated principle that can be used in favor of the conclusion that parents, all else being equal, are morally required to select an embryo or fetus without these disposition will be undertaken. Namely, the Principle of Procreative Beneficence (PPB) as it, in a recent article, is presented by Julian Savulescu and Guy Kahane's. It will be argued that PBB has some serious flaws which have not been dealt with in the literature. In section 4, four central arguments against selection of embryos or fetuses will be examined. The arguments are either based on (4.1) the claim that selection (or treatment) will *have bad consequences* for people who has the trait that are selected for, or (4.2) that we, as Michael Sandel has argued, cannot appreciate children as *gift* - in the sense that we love them regardless of that child's talents or disabilities – if we select them according to our values, or (4.3) as Jürgen Habermas has argued, that we violate the future child's *autonomy* to design its own life if parents select their embryo or fetuses according to the parents ideas of a good life. Finally (4.4.), the traditional objection that termination and abortion is morally wrong because it involves killing an innocent member of Homo sapiens, will be criticized. In this section it will be shown, that even if these four arguments are plausible objections to standard cases of selection (cases involving detection of severe disabilities/diseases like Downs Syndrome or cystic fibrosis in an embryo or fetus), there would at least be a new reason to consider whether they are also plausible in cases where the disabilities in question (personal anti-social disorders), imply a risk to harm others.

