

The Challenge which Developments in Genetics and Artificial Reproductive Techniques Present to Intergenerational Solidarity

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Abstract:

New developments in genetics threaten, in different ways, the goal of intergenerational solidarity. With artificial reproductive techniques, the transmission of human life has shifted from the mutual donation of man and woman to the field of desire and production. Concomitantly, advances in genetics afford the possibility of selecting the desired traits of children. This can be accomplished by the selection of gametes (for example the choice of a sperm donor with desirable genetic traits), the selection of embryos early in pregnancy (preimplantation diagnosis followed by the elimination of embryos with unwanted characteristics) or the selection of embryos later through eugenic abortion. The problem of who should pay for “bad genes” raises additional questions and generates new pressure to eliminate people who present genetic disadvantages. These developments render intergenerational relations ambivalent. The exercise of this genetic mastery gives the adult generation a new power over the offspring and subjects them to a new form of genetic dependency. The power to shape the genetics of the next generation raises many new issues for the juridical sciences. This article aims to analyze the ways in which this challenge to intergenerational solidarity occurs, and the implications of the value of intergenerational solidarity.

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