

# Bioethics Today

*David S. Oderberg*

**T**here can be no doubt that the public face of contemporary philosophy is the professional who goes by the name of “bioethicist.” Since the bioethics industry—which is what it is—sprang up in the 1970s, large numbers of professional philosophers have found it a congenial and remunerative way in which to make a reputation for themselves.

A few general observations can be made about bioethicists. Some of them are well-meaning. For example, they are dedicated to the laudable notion that philosophy should be heard in the public square and have an influence on the making of policy. Or they believe, rightly, that the bioethical problems of our day are of such grave moment that philosophers should try to grapple with them, at least, and provide solutions if possible. It is not only that the welfare of society depends on such solutions, but that if philosophers, who are supposed to be trained in rigorous thinking, do not do the hard conceptual work that needs to be done, the void will be filled by the looser and fuzzier moral thinking of others—especially lawyers, politicians, and economists. Some are simply committed to the idea, again admirable, that bioethics is a serious intellectual discipline that demands equally serious analytical application. Some find bioethics just interesting and worthy of philosophical pursuit in its own right. Again, this is true.

On the other hand, it is all too evident that very many, perhaps the majority, of bioethicists are, to put it frankly, less than competent. I believe that this is a view a good number of philosophers share. The bioethics industry is, unfortunately, populated by many individuals whom one might even call second-rate philosophers. They have found themselves unable to grapple with the more technical or abstract areas of philosophy—or at least to make a name for themselves in such areas—but have found that it is relatively easy to forge a name for oneself in the bioethics business. For one, there is an insatiable demand by the media for comment upon the latest developments in biotechnology, medicine, genetics, and so on, or for comment upon someone else’s comment upon such developments. There are committees to sit on—in universities, hospitals, think tanks, and in government. There are position papers to write, opinions to be sought. And there is always something

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new around the corner, so there is always something to write about or comment on: the latest drug, the newest ethical dilemma, the most recent discovery—or “discovery.” There is, due to the advance of science, a guaranteed, inexhaustible supply of topics. So as a bioethicist on the make, you will find it easy, or at least easier than in the more abstruse areas of philosophy, to latch onto the latest hot issue and find that, lo and behold, no one else has yet had time to reflect and express an opinion. You can then jump in with both feet and start a whole literature on the subject, or a whole new media storm, or find yourself on the lecture circuit or in the radio studio, ready to convey your own “discoveries” to a naturally eager and sensation-hungry public. Or you can find yourself a niche in public policy, proposing legislative reform, working on committees, or whatnot. This is all very appealing to an academic looking to make a reputation for himself.

In fact it is worse than this. For the best way of getting yourself heard as a bioethicist is not merely by saying something new about an old topic, or taking the lead in breaking open a new one, but by saying something radical or shocking. The more you excite the public imagination, the more debate there will be and the more people will want to hear you, simply so they can express their disagreement or at least for the shock value. And the more shocking you are, the better it seems to be for your career. Bioethicists appear to crawl over one another to outrage public sensibility with the creepiest ideas they can come up with. You might recall the furore over Peter Singer’s advocacy of bestiality a few years ago in a review of a book by one Midas Dekkers on the subject.<sup>1</sup> He has also opined that necrophilia is “not wrong inherently.”<sup>2</sup> Recently, Silvia Camporesi and Lisa Bortolotti have argued that reproductive cloning is permissible after all, despite the many doubts raised by other bioethicists.<sup>3</sup> (They are the most recent pro-cloning advocates to cause a stir, but not the only ones.) Then there is Anne Lyerly, a bioethicist with the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, who has attacked doctors who refuse to do abortions, supply emergency “contraceptives” (more precisely, abortifacients), or refer women to doctors who will.<sup>4</sup> John Harris, long known for his bioethical excesses, has recently endorsed the creation of animal-human hybrids.<sup>5</sup> Earlier this year, surgeons in Denver, anxious to harvest more and better-quality organs for transplantation, decided to shorten the time recommended by the Institute of Medicine for the heart to have stopped beating before removal of organs from five minutes to 75 seconds.<sup>6</sup> Bioethicists Robert Truog and Franklin Miller suggested that since surgeons have for many years not really been adhering to any viable criterion of death before extracting a person’s organs, this suggests that neither they nor anyone else involved considers the “dead donor” rule to be anything but an ethical

fig leaf—vague, indefinable, but used as an excuse to assuage one’s conscience before transplantation is performed. Far better, they believe, to leave the issue to the “informed consent” of patients or their surrogates.<sup>7</sup> Whether the “donor” is dead or alive is of no ethical importance.

What about defending infanticide? We know that philosophers such as Peter Singer and Michael Tooley have long done so in theory, as it were, but now bioethicists are eager to defend the real-life practice of child murder: Witness Hilde Lindemann and Marian Verkerk, two Dutch bioethicists who, to no one’s surprise, uphold the diabolical Groningen Protocol allowing Dutch doctors to kill handicapped newborn babies.<sup>8</sup> It is, after all, acceptable “in the context of Dutch culture and medicine.” They say the protocol in fact licenses the killing of babies who could survive many years into adulthood without technological support, and while the issues are difficult, it would be “a pity” not to allow doctors to make judgments about which children should live and which should die. Nor, according to some Australian bioethicists, is there a problem “in principle” with allowing organ donation for personal monetary or other gain, such as the review of a condemned prisoner’s death sentence (a life for a kidney, so to speak). Nor are there “obvious” moral objections to extracting organs from executed prisoners, as is done regularly in China: If the practice can be regulated and its excesses curbed, why not use a dead prisoner’s organs?<sup>9</sup> And if self-mutilation is your bag—tongue splitting, branding, flesh stapling—then you should consult bioethicist Thomas Schramme at the University of Swansea, for whom the arguments against are found “wanting.”<sup>10</sup> It makes the bioethicists who, after many years, have succeeded in persuading a parliament—Spain’s, to the surprise of some—to approve rights for chimpanzees positively warm and cuddly by comparison.

In Oxford, we have the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, run by Prof. Julian Savulescu. Now, a quick perusal of the philosophers who have been invited by Savulescu to speak at the centre, or who have published under its auspices, shows that they are not exactly friendly to the defense of innocent human life in all its forms. They might be consequentialists, or autonomy freaks, or just plain skeptical about whether morality is even objective, but you can be sure they are not defenders of the natural law, of humanity, of traditional morals, of human exceptionalism (to use Wesley Smith’s apt phrase); of the family, children, the weak, or the defenceless. One might assume that this is part of the Uehiro brief. Not so fast: the founder of the Uehiro Foundation for Ethics and Education, with the largesse of which the Centre was established and continues to be supported, was Tetsuhiko Uehiro, a survivor of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The Foundation was developed by his son Eiji, and then by his grandson, the current chairman

Tetsuji, into an organization commanding large sums of money and expanding its influence through many universities and other organizations throughout the world. As far as I can tell from the limited information available in English, the Uehiro group, as one might term it, is closely associated with the Jissen Rinri Koseikai, or Practical Morality and Purity of Heart Association, itself combining elements of Buddhism and Shintoism into one of the many postwar Japanese religious movements. The movement emphasizes harmony with nature, passivity, familial obligation (including ancestor worship), responding to the needs of others, preventing feelings of exclusion, accepting life as it is, and gentleness rather than anger or insensitivity.<sup>11</sup>

True, such ideas are rather vague and woolly and one would need to explore the Uehiro group or movement in more depth to find out what exactly they stood for. But I do wonder whether its ethos sits comfortably with that of the practical ethics centre that bears its name. Indeed, in Eiji Uehiro's own book, entitled *Practical Ethics for our Time*,<sup>12</sup> where he sets out the fundamentals of the Jissen Rinri (practical ethics) movement, the author rails repeatedly against technological quick fixes for our man-made, consumerist problems. He lauds traditional family values, deprecates individualism, materialism, acquisitiveness, and praises simplicity and living in accordance with nature. In the English translation the term "natural law" appears several times, and it is fair to say that any Christian or other natural-law theorist reading the book would, as I did, find very little to disagree with. No one putting side by side the published thoughts of Eiji Uehiro with the publications of the centre with his family name, in particular the writings of its director, could fail to note the massive dissonance between them.

Irrespective of such disharmony, however, consider what the Uehiro Centre's director stands for. One does not need to read too many of Savulescu's 217 articles—of which precious few outside of his book-review articles and teaching materials get beyond five or six pages—to learn that he advocates the following, among other things: abortion at all stages; abortion following sex selection; embryonic-stem-cell research and other experimentation on embryos; the creation of human-animal hybrids; designer babies and so-called savior siblings; therapeutic and reproductive cloning;<sup>13</sup> the use of drugs in sport; the sale of organs; eugenics; and pretty much any form of genetic engineering that meets either an autonomy criterion or a utilitarian criterion. Wait a minute, I forgot that he also thinks it may be permissible or even *desirable* for a person to have her perfectly normal limb amputated if it would improve her "global well-being."<sup>14</sup> That is to say, not only might it be a "good thing" for the person suffering from "apotemnophilia"—as the medicalized term quaintly calls the desire for

amputation—to have her arm or leg cut off, but it might be a duty on the part of a compassionate surgeon to accede to the request.<sup>15</sup>

Needless to say, Savulescu is not the only bioethicist jumping on the new amputation bandwagon, as he cites an article by two others arguing for a seemingly less extreme version of the same idea, that cutting off a healthy limb might be morally allowed.<sup>16</sup> On this latter article, Wesley Smith commented: “That this kind of article is published in a respectable philosophical journal tells us how very radical and pathologically nonjudgmental the bioethics movement is becoming. And lest you believe that such advocacy could never reach the clinical setting: Think again. Such surgeries have already been performed in the United Kingdom with no adverse professional consequence to the amputating physicians.”<sup>17</sup> Speaking more generally about the views of Savulescu, Michael Cook recently said: “After several years of reviewing the theories of Savulescu and his colleagues, I’m fed up. It’s time to abolish bioethics and bioethicists. What we need is plain vanilla ethics.”<sup>18</sup>

**I**f you are not yet convinced that both Smith and Cook are right on the mark, what about the cutting-edge idea that a deaf couple should be allowed deliberately to produce a deaf child? An American lesbian couple did so a few years ago, seeing deafness not as a disability but as defining their “cultural identity.”<sup>19</sup> Commenting on the case, here is what Savulescu has to say:<sup>20</sup> “In the case of Duchesneau and McCullough [the couple concerned], *there is no ethical issue* [my emphasis]—the couple have the right to procreate with [sic] whomever they want.” He goes on: “The deaf child is harmed by being selected to exist only if his or her life is so bad it is not worth living. Deafness is not that bad. Because reproductive choices to have a disabled child do not harm the child, couples who select disabled rather than non-disabled offspring should be allowed to make those choices, even though they may be having a child with worse life prospects.” Employing the usual dinner-party logic-chopping—the secular equivalent of arguing (according to historical myth) over how many angels can dance on the head of a pin—Savulescu tells us that the deaf baby would not be worse off than it otherwise would have been, since had the couple chosen a normal baby it would have been a different child altogether. That’s his answer to the vague and fuzzy question “Have they harmed the child?”—a question that covers a multitude of philosophical sins. That the couple have brought into existence, through their own free choice, a damaged person has no place in Savulescu’s perverse reckoning.<sup>21</sup>

Are these sorts of bioethical views, spouted from the generously funded Uehiro Centre, in conformity with what one can gather from the tenets of the Uehiro movement itself? What happened to living in accordance with nature,

passivity, non-violence, gentleness, love of family, kindness, respect, an orientation toward others? Does anyone really think that Duchesneau and McCullough had their child's interests as their first priority?

There is much more that could be said about this discord between the Uehiro Centre and the Uehiro ethic, but I must leave it to one side. Nor do I want to explore the ethical arguments of the bioethicists. I have done so at length elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> The kinds of reasoning that lie behind the sorts of view I have been outlining are at once shallow, threadbare, fuzzy, fatally ambiguous, and just plain perverse. The thinking is truly unworthy of professional philosophers. If one can abstract from the subject matter, then an inspection of the pure reasoning itself reveals a lack of care and attention, of the sort that should make a good undergraduate blush. Reconnecting the reasoning with the subject matter uncovers, on top of this pretence of logical rigor, an unqualified lack of those precious philosophical commodities of wisdom, prudence, insight, and compassion. Commenting on the deaf-lesbian case, Savulescu pontificates as follows: "I believe that, like deafness, intellectual disability is bad. But my value judgment should not be imposed on couples who must bear and rear the child. . . . Reproduction should be about having children who have the best prospects. But to discover what are the best prospects, we must give individual couples the freedom to act on their own value judgment of what constitutes a life of prospect."<sup>23</sup>

I would ask any serious philosopher, pro-life or not, or indeed anyone serious about rigor in thought combined with wisdom and insight: Is this sort of reasoning good enough? I mean, good enough outside the pub or the restaurant? (I am being unfair to pubs at least, where you will find a greater dose of common sense than in many a bioethics seminar.) Is it really good enough for a professional philosopher, let alone one funded to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars? Just to give you one example of the kind of first-year fallacy with which Savulescu's writings are replete, in his deaf-lesbians article he invokes the spectre of Nazism to nudge us in the direction of his train of thought. "The Nazi eugenic programme," he reminds us, "imposed a blueprint of perfection on couples seeking to have children by forcing sterilisation of the 'unfit,' thereby removing their reproductive freedom." Ergo, neither the state nor any other body or person should impose its reproductive views onto anyone else. Here's the fallacy (a straight non sequitur): The Nazis did not act immorally because they failed to *produce* disability; they acted immorally because they failed to *accept* it. So the Nazi debating tactic is a total red herring.

What is Savulescu's latest trip? It is, well, something that looks suspiciously like the Nazi "blueprint of perfection" he laments in his deaf-lesbians article.

He wants to genetically engineer people to be *moral*. Now before you blink twice, first try to take in the reasoning. There is empirical evidence that genetic engineering, as well as drug-based interventions, can improve cognitive capacity—memory, reaction time, concentration span, and so on. It is good to improve cognitive capacity. But with the prospect that science will be able to do so to an unprecedented extent as new discoveries are made comes the enormous risk that a minority of evil people will use their enhanced cognitive skills to acquire weapons of mass destruction and threaten to wipe out mankind. The answer? Engineer morally better people, so that their morality keeps pace with their prodigiously improving intellectual ability.<sup>24</sup>

I cannot plumb the depths of stupidity of such thinking here. Suffice it to say that Savulescu bases his idea on some scraps of highly dubious empirical evidence about the use of drugs to reduce certain kinds of bad behavior as well as on the general thought that eugenics is fine if it improves global utility. To be fair, neither he nor his co-author, Ingmar Persson, thinks that “moral enhancement” is a practical possibility in any but the distant future, and they conclude—somewhat modestly, given the context—that cognitive enhancement is not desirable unless moral enhancement is practically possible, adding that research into the former must be accompanied by research into the latter. Nevertheless, the breathtaking superficiality of such ideas, lacking any deep analysis of human nature, the essence of morality, moral psychology, the practice of virtue, or of the question of freedom and determinism, can only leave one speechless. It is a typical example of the runaway thinking that plagues contemporary bioethics, making people of good will wonder whether this lucrative but ragged sub-genre of professional philosophy even has a right to exist—at least in its present form.

In my view, one of the reasons bioethics has established itself as a semi-autonomous discipline with its own brand of experts and credentials is that there is a huge disconnect between how the public sees bioethics and what bioethics really is. The public—within which I include politicians, lawyers, economists, and policymakers—understandably looks to bioethics for a unified social voice, a kind of voice of conscience, that will speak to them about the problems of the day, of which one is barely broached before a new one raises its head. People are worried about biotechnology, hence all the talk of the “yuck factor,” “Frankenfoods,” “designer babies,” “playing God,” and the like. They look to the experts and “professionals” for answers, and in itself there is nothing wrong with this: Societies have practiced an ethical division of labour from the beginning. So I would not locate the main source of the problem in a wrongful outsourcing of ethical expertise.

Rather, the problem of an out-of-control bioethical profession pretending

to speak with a unified voice is that it is just that—a pretense. The supposed unified voice and expertise of bioethicists is a sham, pure and simple. This is not primarily because many of them disagree with the extremism of someone such as Savulescu. Such disagreement—and it does exist—hardly militates against the idea that bioethicists could still speak with unity. Licensed mavericks and radicals, tolerated dissent, respectful disagreement, and the like, are not anathema to a unified voice but can lend that voice greater plausibility. Rather, the situation seems to me to be something like the following. First, the current of major and fundamental dissent in bioethics is to be found among pro-life thinkers. These thinkers defend the inviolability of innocent human life; they support traditional families and human rights; and they call for curbs on rampant biotechnology. They attack untrammelled scientific developments, the commodification of humanity in all its forms, and anything that lessens the dignity and exceptionality of the human being. For they see the human being as a creature with a soul, a conscience, and a free will obedient to the dictates of an objective moral system that transcends personal preference and unrestrained autonomy.

Such thinkers have to be marginalized and demonized, and so they have been. This significant minority has been corralled into a corner, tarred with the brush of religious fundamentalism, and brought out into the light of day only for the occasional beating by the majority. They can have their little conferences and workshops, make their feeble protests, but then they are ritualistically stripped bare, flayed for the amusement of the multitude, and sent back into their corner. They are a kind of semi-licensed dissent.

Second, once this nuisance is got out of the way, the majority of bioethicists can safely make their pronouncements, tending invariably in the direction of more liberty for science and greater freedom for groups and individuals, whether it be in the name of “autonomy,” or “utility,” or “personal preference,” or what not, to do whatever biotech tells them is possible. The only unifying factor I can detect is scientism—secular humanism’s bastard religion that deifies science, proclaiming unconditional faith in the ability of science to lead us to a better future for all (who remain alive, that is). But wait a minute: What is the ethical basis of this faith? Is it autonomy? preference? costs and benefits? pluralism? Why *should* biotechnology be permitted to run rampant? Why, if the technology is there, *must* we be allowed to utilize it? True, the majority of bioethicists tend in the same direction, reach the same conclusions; but as anyone with a couple of years of philosophy under his belt knows, just because a conclusion can be reached by a number of different arguments, it does not follow that the conclusion is true. Bioethicists have the knack of reaching similar conclusions about designer babies, stem-cell research,



partial-birth abortion, or whatever is the topic of the month, but they do so from radically different premises. Even within one person's writings—such as Savulescu's—one will find on this page an emphasis on personal values, on another page a stress on global utility, on yet another a defence of autonomy. Uncannily, the conclusion is nearly always the same—yes to this or that experiment on a human being, yes to the organ trade, yes to eugenics, yes to killing those who are a “burden on society,” and so on ad nauseam. But the unifying factor is no more than scientism—science in the service of utopia.

Third, once bioethicists are agreed on their main conclusions and recommendations, who cares how they got there? If anyone bothers to wade through the risible thought processes set out in their position papers, one finds all sorts of philosophical motivations at work. Yet isn't this a sign of healthy disagreement? Surely this makes the position of bioethics even stronger, for its practitioners can say: “Look, we have our differences of ideology and assumption, we adhere to different theories, but basically we come to the same liberal conclusions, so that makes our voice all the stronger in its unity.” And to the average member of the public, who knows nothing of the distinction between scientific reasoning and philosophical reasoning, this seems just right: Every different argument leading to the same conclusion is like a different scientific experiment producing the same result. So much the stronger is the result.

**Y**et nothing could be farther from the truth. For every bioethical argument for a given conclusion might be—and often is—no more than a piece of sophistry, some pseudo-intellectual babble thrown up as dust to confuse the public into thinking there is substance to the hot air. And to give an even greater appearance of scientific solidity to their proposals, bioethics must—and this is my fourth point—have its daring thinkers, its radicals, the ones who “push the envelope.” They say the unsayable, propose the unthinkable, throw up trial balloons they know others will prick in a fit of denunciation. But that is all to the good, isn't it? Bioethics then, like science, will have its daring adventurers lurching into the unknown, expanding our bioethical knowledge no matter how nutty they may seem at first glance. So they are not merely tolerated; they are positively necessary to giving the bioethics profession part of the framework it needs to be able to stand on its own feet as a body of experts able to convey their knowledge and insight to a rightly bewildered and fearful public. Such “ethical pioneers” give the profession a kind of respectability that enables it to speak to legislators who would not know how to begin to frame laws regulating biotechnology if they were not able to gather the fruit of information and counsel provided to them on a

plate by those who know about these things.

So bioethics has, in short, given itself the trappings of an expert discipline whose deliverances are heeded by the public and the policymakers. The “laymen” are either too fearful or too ignorant—through no fault of their own—to fight back, relying instead on the usual tabloid expressions of gut revulsion in the hope that rampant biotechnology and its propagandists will pay a whit of attention. Which, of course, they do not.

What, then, is to be done? Intellectual debate is all well and good. The journal controversies should continue. So should the petitions and letters to editors. But in my view, the time for workshopping and conferencing alone is over. And I am not thinking instead of marches to parliament or protest days—as useful as they may be—but of more direct action. So first, a specific suggestion. The Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics is in need of one of two things: radical reform or closure. Radical reform would require a complete reorientation of its approach to bioethics. It should cease being a mouthpiece for biotechnology and should abandon scientism as its fundamental ideology or dogma. It should bring *all* sides within its borders, including the significant minority of bioethicists who are opposed to the general trend of bioethics and many of its specific ideas. This group includes not only pro-life thinkers of a religious persuasion, but secular pro-life bioethicists; feminist bioethicists; thinkers whose main concern is animal research, or the environment, or sustainability; and all thinkers both academic and popular who for one reason or another are concerned about developments in biotechnology.

Even more specifically, the chairman of the Uehiro Foundation must be made aware of the fact that, to all appearances, the tenets of the Uehiro ethic are completely at odds with the work of the Uehiro Centre. I may be wrong about this. Perhaps Mr. Uehiro knows exactly what the Centre does and stands for, and perhaps he approves. If this were the case—and I hope it is not—then there would be a serious problem of hypocrisy at the heart of the Foundation. Its core ethic would have to be exposed as a fraud. I prefer to think that the Foundation simply does not realize what is being promoted in its name. When it is made to realize this, the immediate question would arise of whether, in all good conscience, it could continue either to sponsor the Centre or to fund it: The millions of dollars already handed over would have been taken under false pretenses and there would be a case for their return. Future funding would have to come to a halt.

On a more general level, all people of good will must unite to expose the bioethics industry for the pretense that it is. People must never cease to demonstrate, both in academic publications and in the media, the shallow and fallacious thinking that permeates so much of what bioethicists write

and say. They must insist over and over again that bioethics does *not* speak with a unified voice; that there are fundamental disagreements both at the level of conclusions reached and at the level of reasoning for those conclusions. The public should be made to understand that they have every *right* to be fearful, and never dismissed as unthinking seductees of the “yuck factor,” unable to articulate an intelligent response to the threats they justifiably see in biotechnology.

Technology is in itself morally neutral. Biotech is no exception. It can be used for good or for evil. If it is to be used for good, it must come under far heavier regulation than it does at present. At the moment, especially in the United Kingdom, biotechnology is out of control. Its boosters and spin doctors march through the media and the journals virtually unscathed. To do something concrete about this requires creative action, imaginative thinking, and direct engagement. Perhaps it is too late to turn back the tide. But it is never too late to try.<sup>25</sup>

#### NOTES

1. P. Singer, “Heavy Petting,” review of Midas Dekkers, *Dearest Pet: On Bestiality*, *nerve.com*, 3 Jan. 2001.
2. As reported in an interview with Marvin Olasky for *World Magazine*, 27 Nov. 2004 (article entitled “Blue-State Philosopher”); see brief summary by Christopher Shea in “The Ethicist,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, 26 Jan. 2005, at <http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/about/20050126.htm> [accessed 21 Oct. 2008].
3. S. Camporesi and L. Bortolotti, “Reproductive cloning in humans and therapeutic cloning in primates: is the ethical debate catching up with the recent scientific advances?” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 34 (Sept. 2008): e15.
4. See her testimony before the President’s Council on Bioethics, 11 Sept. 2008, at <http://www.bioethics.gov/transcripts/sept08/session3.html> [accessed 21 Oct. 2008].
5. See the report on 14 Feb. 2007 of the plenary meeting of the UK’s Human Genetics Commission, at the Commission’s website [http://www.hgc.gov.uk/Client/news\\_item.asp?NewsId=67](http://www.hgc.gov.uk/Client/news_item.asp?NewsId=67) [accessed 21 Oct. 2008].
6. Marl M. Boucek, Christine Mashburn, et al., “Pediatric Heart Transplantation after Declaration of Cardiocirculatory Death,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 359 (14 Aug. 2008): 709-14.
7. R.D. Truog and F.D. Miller, “The Dead Donor Rule and Organ Transplantation,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 359 (14 Aug. 2008): 674-5.
8. H. Lindemann and M. Verkerk, “Ending the Life of a Newborn: The Groningen Protocol,” *Hastings Center Report* 38 (2008): 42-51.
9. G.P. Westall, P. Komesaroff, et al., “Ethics of organ donation and transplantation involving prisoners: the debate extends beyond our borders,” *Internal Medicine Journal* 38 (2008): 56-9.
10. T. Schramme, “Should We Prevent Non-Therapeutic Mutilation and Extreme Body Modification?” *Bioethics* 22 (2008): 8-15.
11. See Stuart D. B. Picken, *Essentials of Shinto: An Analytical Guide to Principal Teachings* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1994): 287ff.
12. E. Uehiro, *Practical Ethics for Our Time*, trans. C. Becker (Boston: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1998).
13. In his Sydney Ideas lecture broadcast in Australia on 19 August 2007, Savulescu said that he has no ethical objections to reproductive cloning, but that when interviewed about it he says that he is opposed in order to “calm the public” and so that “the science can get done.” (Presumably his stated opposition stems from current practical concerns, but he is happy to leave the listener thinking it is an opposition based on principle.) For an audio of the lecture, including Q&A, go to “Stronger, Smarter, Nicer Humans” at <http://www.practicaethics.ox.ac.uk/audio.htm>.

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14. J. Savulescu, "Autonomy, the Good Life, and Controversial Choices," in R. Rhodes, L. P. Francis, and A. Silvers (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Medical Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007): 17-37 at pp.24, 28.
15. The desire for amputation of a healthy limb is usually classified as a psychosexual disease involving erotic fascination with being an amputee, but there is dispute over whether it may be an aspect of a more general "body dysmorphic disorder."
16. T. Bayne and N. Levy, "Amputees by Choice: Body Integrity Identity Disorder and the Ethics of Amputation," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 22 (2005): 75-86.
17. W. J. Smith, "Should Doctors Amputate Healthy Limbs?" *The Center for Bioethics and Culture Network*, [http://www.cbc-network.org/research\\_display.php?id=246](http://www.cbc-network.org/research_display.php?id=246) [accessed 22 Oct. 2008].
18. M. Cook, "Time to throw in the towel," *Mercatornet*, 8 Sept. 2008, [http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/time\\_to\\_throw\\_in\\_the\\_towel/](http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/time_to_throw_in_the_towel/) [accessed 22 Oct. 2008].
19. "Couple 'choose' to have deaf baby," BBC News, 8 April 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/1916462.stm> [accessed 22 Oct. 2008]. (I am not sure why "choose" is in scare quotes in the headline.)
20. J. Savulescu, "Deaf lesbians, 'designer disability,' and the future of medicine," *British Medical Journal* 325 (5 Oct. 2002): 771-773, available at <http://tinyurl.com/6b8uck> [accessed 22 Oct. 2008].
21. Yet when discussing apotemnophilia in his Sydney Ideas lecture, Savulescu said he was opposed to a hypothetical genetic intervention that enabled an apotemnophilic to pass the lack of a limb onto his offspring. Quite why, for Savulescu, deafness may be passed on but limblessness not, is a question for those with greater insight into the minds of others than myself.
22. D. S. Oderberg, *Moral Theory: A Non-Consequentialist Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) and *Applied Ethics: A Non-Consequentialist Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), and related publications available at my website [www.reading.ac.uk/dsoderberg](http://www.reading.ac.uk/dsoderberg).
23. Savulescu, "Deaf lesbians."
24. I. Persson and J. Savulescu, "The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 25 (2008): 162-77.
25. This is the lightly edited text of an address to students at the University of Oxford on 27 October 2008. I am grateful to David Howell, Christian Sahner, and their associates for the kind invitation.



“‘My Summer Vacation,’ or, ‘The Family Curse Continues.’”