

Ask Aristotle ... on Current Events!

Q: "What are the ethics of genetic engineering and what are the advantages and disadvantages of genetic engineering?"

A: To understand the ethics of any field of endeavor, one must first understand the role of ethics per se. Ethics is a science devoted to defining a moral code. A moral code is a set of values which define Man's choices and actions. But what is the standard for determining such a code? In Galt's speech in Atlas Shrugged, Ayn Rand writes "Man must choose his actions, values and goals by the standard of that which is proper to man-in order to achieve, maintain, fulfill and enjoy that ultimate value, that end it itself, which is his own life."

Once one accepts that Man's life is the standard of all values, then one can easily understand that any actions or choices that work toward that end are necessarily moral. This being said, when one considers the life enhancing and life sustaining results of genetic engineering, one can only conclude that it is one of the most moral undertakings ever devised.

What are the advantages? There are many. Increased food production, better quality food, life saving medicines, increased standard of living, longer life expectancies, and much more. While this list is not exhaustive, it certainly shows how wonderful and beneficial this science is to Man's life.

As for the disadvantages, I know of none. There are only the scare tactics of the Man hating anti-technology zealots, environmentalists and the like. Their claims are completely unfounded and nothing more than arbitrary assertions with no basis in reality. So much so, that I will not even give them credit by listing them here. If there is a particular claim of theirs that you would like rebutted, feel free to ask a follow up question and I will reply.

**Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle**

Q: "Who invented the seedless orange?"

A: The seedless orange is a product of genetic engineering. It is one of the many marvels of this wonderful science and one of my favorite examples of an instance where it has improved our lives in a frivolous and obviously harmless manner. The next time you hear someone tell Frankenstein horror stories about genetic engineering, ask them if the seedless orange is actually something that they are scared of. As to which individual scientist

deserves credit for this invention, I do not know. And that is too bad, because I would like to offer him my most sincere thanks.

**Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle**

Q: "What's up with this energy crisis?"

A: It is a result of two irrational but related philosophies: statism and environmentalism. The statista want to control energy production, and the environmentalists want to destroy it.

**Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle**

Q: "Aristotle, what do you think about genetically altered foods?"

A: I think some taste better than others. [drum fill]

Seriously, I am very much an advocate of this technology. Only good things can and have come from it. When one looks at the health benefits, the increased food production, the increased variety of products, etc., it amazes me that anyone could speak out against it. All of the claims by the opponents are nothing but fallacies by the way. Those who are against it are anti-technology zealots who do not hold Man's life as the standard of value. How can anyone possibly have anything against seedless oranges?!?!

**Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle**

Q: As an Objectivist, how to cast my vote on Nov. 7th [2000]?

Let me remind [you of who I am], because this is my next question after more than a year. At that time as a Catholic I asked the question about being a Christian and Objectivist at the same time. I came to this wonderful land eight years ago from Poland and right now I am doing my neurosurgical residency in Kansas City. I follow your advice and have studied Objectivism more deeply, and..., here we are. There is another Objectivist walking on this planet.

I am fascinated by the greatness of Ayn Rand, simplicity and honesty of her philosophy, and its applicability to the life on earth. Applicability, unfortunately rarely seen at the present time. As a new American citizen I am going to vote for the President of the United States for the first time in

my life. And let me explain why I am asking this very personal question. There are only two realistic choices. Voting for our Vice, would be a... vice. Therefore I reject it instantaneously. On the other hand Republicans (conservatives) have been very strongly criticized by Ayn Rand and prominent figures in objectivist current. And very likely for a good reason. But, somebody has to be a president. That is why I am asking for your advice.

And once again, thank you so much for this web site and everything connecting to Objectivism. So much refreshing in this flood of socialism, liberalism, altruism, volunteerism, political correctivism. Keep up a great work. Keep in touch. I hope, that one day I can meet you guys and talk about life on earth.

*Thank you!
Mark*

A: It is very good to hear from you again, and even better to know that you have taken the time to study Ayn Rand's ideas further and adopt them as your own. You have shown a great deal of intellectual courage and honesty which is very rare these days. Having another Objectivist walking on this planet is certainly a success story that I am glad to be a part of.

Your question concerning who to vote for is a good one, and your analysis of the issue is very astute. As Robert Tracinski explains in a recent issue of The Intellectual Activist ("Forget the Presidency, Save the Congress," Oct. 2000, Vol. 14 No. 10), one of the most significant differences between George Bush and Al Gore is that "George W. Bush's manner is essentially benevolent. He seems to pursue the presidency more as a lark than as a serious quest for power over others," while Al Gore on the other hand "does pursue the presidency as a serious quest for power. And unlike Bush, his is serious about intellectual matters--which means that he is a crusader for altruism and anti-industrialism."

Furthermore, Al Gore has a very cynical view of human nature. He is the type of person that believes people are basically corrupt and require government control. What does this imply about him? Either this view is the result of introspection, implying that he himself has a corrupt nature, or that he holds himself above the common cretins that deserved to be conquered. Either way, the result is that he will be power hungry for absolute control over every aspect of our lives.

George Bush, on the other hand, is by no means perfect either. For a Republican he is extremely compromising concerning many aspects of the liberal agenda. He is also against a woman's right to choose what to do with her own body and, if elected he will have control over nominating justices to the Supreme Court regarding this issue. However, compared to Gore, Bush is by far the better choice.

If you have not already done so, I highly recommend that you subscribe to The Intellectual Activist. You can go to their website from our links page. Robert Tracinski has written some excellent articles regarding this subject in recent issues. It is an excellent Objectivist publication.

I hope this clarifies things a bit for you. I wish you all the best on your neurosurgical residency. It sounds like a very difficult yet rewarding task to accomplish. We in the EGO group would like to thank you for your warm compliments and hope that one day we can meet you as well. So, if you're ever in our neighborhood, feel free to drop by!

**Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle**

Q: "How has the Dearborn anti-servitude campaign gone?"

A: "It went better than we hoped. Robert, Amy, Scott, and Eric all did a wonderful job presenting their speeches to an unreceptive school board. In spite of the fact that the board was antagonistic towards them, they successfully managed to keep the mandatory service program from succeeding by appealing to the parents who were slightly more rational than the school board. On the down side, the board is trying to implement a voluntary version of the program which is almost as bad because the message they will present is that rewards come from sacrificing to others. Well, at least theirs was not the only voice heard thanks to The EGO Group!"

**Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle**

Q: "I found [a] letter on your website written by Eric J. Lakits about the 1998 cancer drug lottery. It is concerning the cover story in the USA Today called "Life and Death Lottery." How can I find out more information about this lottery? I've tried doing searches and looked on the USA Today website, but I've come up with nothing. Any suggestions?"

A: The article appeared in the March 18, 1998 issue of USA Today. It was a Wednesday. If you cannot locate it in your local library archives, let Eric know and he can fax a copy of the article to you. He keeps that sort of stuff around for some reason.

**Your Friend in Reason,
Aristotle**