

# Social Justice: Teaching on Ethical Issues in Genetics

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# ***Social Justice: Teaching on Ethical Issues in Genetic Science***

- **Introductions**
- **The Human Genome Project**
- **The ELSI Project**

We will begin with issues raised by  
“emerging genetic technologies.”

# Are we “playing God” or “using the brains God gave us”?

- Should we engage in “designing our children”?
- Is cloning an aberration that should be avoided, or is it a natural part of life on planet earth?
- If we can extend human life through the use of stem cells, should we do so?
- With our expertise in DNA collection and analysis, are there concerns about DNA privacy as well as possible discrimination based on one’s DNA?

# *How far should we go in terms of these technologies?*

- The Catholic Church and Genetics:
  - *Charter for Health Care Workers*: “Not everything that is technologically possible is morally permissible.”
  - What is the general position of the Church on some of these technologies?
  - How does the Church define “The Common Good”? (next slide)

According to the *Catholic Catechism*: “The common good concerns the life of all” (#1906). The common good contains three essential elements:

1. respect for the person as such,
2. the *social well-being & development* of the group itself,
3. *and peace* (stability and security of a just order)”

(#s 1907-1909).

This respectful balance of individual and group needs, while influenced by the Church, is subject to political organization. Recognizing the public-sectarian dynamic, the Catechism makes this recommendation:

“Each human community possesses a common good which permits it be recognized as such; it is in the political community that its most complete realization is found. It is the role of the state to defend and promote the common good of civil society, its citizens, and intermediate bodies” (# 1910).

# The Principle of Justice

## ➤ Justice defined

- Different kinds of justice (e.g., commutative, restorative, distributive)
- Essence of distributive justice

## ➤ Justice and Genetic Technologies

- Assuming that there are no other problematic moral issues concerned, how can we ensure that the benefits of these technologies are available to all?

# Pedagogy

- Wearing the “hats” of our disciplines
- Case study approach
  - [Your Genes, Your Choices: Exploring the Issues Raised by Genetic Research](#)
  - Writing your own...
- “AAUP Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students” (American Association of University Professors: Policy Documents and Reports, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, 261-267).



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