



ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

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Case Twilight of the Golds

In a 1993 play, *The Twilight of the Golds*, by Jonathan Tolins, Rob and Suzanne Stein debate whether Suzanne should have an abortion after being told by a doctor that the male fetus she is carrying has a gene that probably will lead to homosexuality. The wife's gay brother David tries to talk her out of it, discovering in the process that his parents might have aborted him had they been provided with similar information. The play is not based on actual diagnostic capability or current genetic science but the direction of development in both areas indicates that we may soon be faced with just such a choice in the not-too-distant future. Given the development in genetic engineering, it seems within the realm of possibility that we may some day be able not only to detect homosexuality in utero, but also to intervene genetically and change the fetus' sexual orientation.

This case can be considered from the perspectives of individual ethics, institutional ethics and societal ethics. Please answer the following questions in these areas using this scale:

- 1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 not sure 4 disagree 5 strongly disagree

Individual Ethics

1. Homosexuality should be seen as genetic error and corrected if possible.
 1 2 3 4 5
2. Homosexuality is primarily a question of lifestyle and free choice.
 1 2 3 4 5
3. Homosexuality is a given of nature, just like heterosexuality.
 1 2 3 4 5
4. Homosexual orientation is neutral, but homosexual activity is wrong.
 1 2 3 4 5
5. It will be advisable to change a homosexual fetus' sexual orientation through genetic intervention when that is possible.
 1 2 3 4 5

Institutional Ethics

1. The American Psychiatric Association made a mistake in declaring homosexuality as normal human orientation.
 1 2 3 4 5
2. Religion, not psychology, should judge the nature of homosexuality.
 1 2 3 4 5
3. Schools should help children overcome the homophobia of our culture.
 1 2 3 4 5
4. The media should do more to clarify the difference between homophobia and legitimate negative judgments about homosexuality.
 1 2 3 4 5
5. Health professionals should work to slow down genetic progress so that our ethical categories come closer to matching our capacity to manipulate life.
 1 2 3 4 5

Societal Ethics

1. We should develop national guidelines concerning prenatal diagnosis of homosexuality before the possibility is upon us.
 1 2 3 4 5
2. Society would lose great human resources if we deliberately reduced the number of homosexual persons being born.
 1 2 3 4 5
3. More public resources should be dedicated to researching homosexuality.
 1 2 3 4 5
4. More public resources should be dedicated to clarifying homosexuality in our culture.
 1 2 3 4 5
5. The Human Genome Project invests only a fraction of its funds in social/legal/ethical research. This creates a serious imbalance between technical can-do and ethical know-how.
 1 2 3 4 5

An essential first step in dealing with ethical issues is to determine on which level we are working. Then we can decide *who* and *what ethical tools* are needed to address adequately the question on that level. The people and tools suited to one level are not always appropriate for other levels.



**OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT.**