

# **Enhancing Evolution: The Ethical Case for Making Better People**

A book review by Pam Crotty, MSc. CCRP

Author: John Harris

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*Enhancing Evolution: The Ethical Case for Making Better People* portrays the ethically controversial topic of biotechnological interventions to augment human characteristics in a positive light, and argues that it would be in society's best interest that these enhancements are welcomed. The author argues that human enhancement, whether it is something widely accepted like eyeglasses, or more controversial like enhancements aimed at increasing our mental and physical powers, are overall a good thing for us now, and for our future.

John Harris defends human enhancement and argues that not only are enhancements permissible, but that in some cases there is a positive moral duty to enhance. He describes theorists such as Sandel, Kass and Habermas' viewpoints and their disagreement with human enhancement, then goes on to argue eloquently against their views. Harris also uses an interesting style where he argues the positives of various human enhancements, poses differing and opposite viewpoints, and then ties this together by comparing the extreme situation, such as steroids for better performing athletic abilities, to a more accepted situation like eyeglasses for better reading performance. "The boundaries between treatment and enhancement, between therapy and enhancement, are not precise and often nonexistent, nor are these categories mutually exclusive..." I really enjoyed this style of presenting an ethical issue, as it is hard to argue against an 'ethically grey' topic that could be comparable to one that is mundane.

The book started out as an interesting read as he was describing the direction of his writings. Somewhere towards the middle, things changed and Harris' writing became more like a legal document where he would 'dance' around a topic, going back and forth without actually making a point. He would then use various other ethicists and scientists viewpoints to try and make his point. I found this a little confusing.

Realistically, this is a topic that is not black and white; many grey areas reside. There is a lot of confusion as to what is ethical, as well as moral and legal when it comes to human enhancements individually and for the greater good of society. John Harris set out to argue that human enhancements, whether it is corrective like eyeglasses, or extreme like embryo selection, should be accepted as a means to produce a better society. Despite some issues with the flow of the writings, he was successful in arguing for human enhancements.