

Lecture to be held at the Faculty of Philosophy

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Regulating Genetic Engineering Guided by Human Dignity, Not Genetic Essentialism

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*Abstract:* How might a liberal democratic community best regulate human genetic engineering? Relevant debates widely deploy the usually undefined term, *human dignity*. Its indeterminacy in meaning and use makes it useless as a guiding principle. (1) I reject the human genome as somehow invested with a moral status, a position I call *genetic essentialism*. (2) I argue against defining human rights in terms of genetic essentialism and, (3) as an alternative, propose dignity as the decisional autonomy of future persons, held in trust by the current generation. (4) I show why a future person could be expected to have an interest in decisional autonomy and (5) how popular deliberation, combined with expert medical and bioethical opinion, could generate principled agreement on how the decisional autonomy of future persons might be configured at the point of genetic engineering.