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Lesson Plan - Designer Babies

Goal: Discuss the moral pros and cons of a eugenicist society and the implications of widespread or normalized gene editing.

Introduction: Briefly explain the concept of designer babies or eugenics, pointing out overlap with some older lesson plans (personal identity, ethical dilemmas). Introduce warmup activity.

Warmup Activity:
- Pass out paper labeled with different genotypic and phenotypic traits, making some more arbitrary than others: eye color, hair color, sex, height, IQ, neurotypicalness (a healthy brain, no predisposition toward mental disorders), melanin, skin texture, teeth sensitivity
- Students rank the traits from the most to least acceptable to change on a societal level: Which changes would they most support outlawing, and which would be most permissible?
- Students rank the traits from the most to least acceptable to change on an individual level, if they were having their own baby.

Discussion:
- Discuss the activity:
    ○ Why did they choose to rank each item the way they did?
    ○ Why did their rankings change between the societal and individual levels?
    ○ Did every student agree with the rankings, and if not, why?

- General discussion:
    ○ Is it ethical to edit genes? If so, to what extent? (medical/health issues vs personality and appearance)
    ○ How would you feel if you found out you were a designer baby?
        ■ What if everyone else was and you were not?
    ○ Should the government create legal parameters around gene editing (outlawing some but allowing others)? How would they determine which ones to accept?
    ○ Do you think that price should play a role in this process? At first, it would likely be an expensive procedure, but maybe become more accessible over time. Will its price heighten inequality between groups?
    ○ Do you see designer babies to help lessen inequality, and raise more conversations about our social norms?
    ○ Is it possible for diversity to be maintained in a world with designer babies? In some ways, it would give us more potential for diversity: we could likely make

people with purple eyes, or beyond genius IQs, but also perhaps reinforce and worsen cultural beauty standards?
- ■ Does diversity matter at that point?
- ○ If we feel it is fine to lose some physical diversity from gene editing, do we think that hierarchies, or differences in attractiveness, intelligence, and physicality are beneficial to society? This could be a slight analogy with economic structures.
- ○ What about the societal benefits we could gain from making a population more intelligent? We would be more likely to cure cancer and solve other scientific problems. Does this outweigh the potential ethical dilemmas of the editing in the first place?

Feedback about Pre-College Philosophy
Ask the students how they felt about this course:
- What were their favorite and least favorite lessons
- What would they change and the setup
- Would they continue to come in the future
- What would they have done differently
- What other topics would they like to see