As parents, or at least good parents, we want our children to succeed in life. We buy them Baby Einstein tapes to make them smarter. We send them to the top schools so they have the best education. We find them the best doctors so that they can be as healthy as possible. For those who can afford it that is where it stops. However, the times are changing, and we are approaching a time where parents don’t have to hope that their children will be well off in life, but can actually force their children to be the cream of the crop. The key to this is reprognetics, a process in which a child can be injected with gene altering chemicals that can change how the child will grow up—whether it have to do with its immunity, appearance, or intelligence. For many parents, the thought of a “better” child is intriguing. The question is, even though the thought is intriguing, are the means and the outcome worth it? If in fact parents do choose what kind of a person their kids will be through the process of reprognetics, will that take away the child’s rights and in the end take away what makes them human? In the essay “Designer Genes” written by Bill Mckibben, and “Reprognetis: A Glimpse of Things to Come” by Lee M. Silver, we are presented with a world in which parents are able to pick how their children will come out through gene manipulation. The outcome, as they show us, is down right frightening, as it seems the good that can come from such a thing is outnumbered by the bad.

Every parent tries to steer their children in a certain direction. “We do our best and often our worst,” Mckibben begins to explain in “Designer Genes”, “to steer them
[the children] in particular directions.” It is our nature, as parents to want the best for our children, so the thought of a parent injecting chemicals into their children to make sure they’re the best isn’t so far fetched. But is it right? According to “Designer Genes” it isn’t, in fact it takes away the child’s right to be their own person. Sure, every parent tries to make their child like themselves, but the child always has the right (and often does) to choose their own path despite their parent’s efforts to make them go one way. Mckibben uses an example of his daughter Sophie, who he has been molding since birth to be a lover of nature, by sending her to nature camp and taking her on hikes. Though he admits and accepts that she “will decide [if] she wants to live her life in the concrete heart of Manhattan.” Suppose Mckibben found a gene that induces a trait that would make his daughter Sophie like nature rather than big cities. Would that be fair to Sophie? Wouldn’t that take away Sophie’s natural right to be her own person? Here is the even bigger question: if Sophie doesn’t have a choice, doesn’t that mean she isn’t a person at all?

The difference between man and machine is that man has free will, and a machine is the will of man. If a child is genetically altered to be the will of the parent then they are a machine. The machine child will not be able to rebel against the will of the parents, it would be impossible. The child will be the will of the parent and nothing more, and the parent may only be satisfied with the child if it performs the way they want it to- the same way we expect a machine to perform well. But, what if the child doesn’t perform well, what if it’s defective? Mckibben ask the parents of this scary future will they still “accept him unconditionally? If your Jetta got thirty miles on the gallon instead of the forty it was designed to get, you’d take it back.” That is what we are facing, a world where children will be nothing more than machines, where everyone will want the one
that perform the best and those who don’t perform well, as Mckibben explains, will be obsolete. Just recently Sony came out with the Playstation 3, so what happens to the Playstation 2? The answer is it becomes a thing of the past; we throw our PS2’s away and move on to the PS3. Of course we can’t throw away our children, but we can make other children who will be more advanced than the child before him. What that means is that the PS2 kid will have to live life as an obsolete in the shadow of his PS3 successor, that is until the PS4’s come out and so forth. In a sense, as Mckibben explains, “the child is a product.” We live in a world where technology is constantly advancing, we buy the Ipod 30 GB and next thing you know the 80 GB is out. I have no doubt that if we allow reprogenetics to happen the same thing will happen to the children. In the process we will be hurting many kids who will constantly become yesterday’s news as the new and improved kid comes out.

Though it’s sad to think of children as products, reprogenetics has its pluses. Silver writes in his essay about a future where children are genetically altered so that they are immune to the deadly AIDS virus. Imagine a world where the many children in Africa can live without the AIDS virus plaguing them and their families? Sadly as Silver explains, these children wouldn’t see the fruit of the wealth, as only the rich would be able to afford it. Silver believes, as well as Mckibben, that in the world of reprogenetics “the marketplace will reign supreme.” Silver believes that “it’s inherently unfair to have access to such technologies that can provide advantages while others, less well off, are forced to depend on chance alone.” Imagine the even bigger gap that would be created between the rich and the poor if the rich were given shots at birth to make the inherently smarter than the poor. As a poor child all you have is your education, your brain, to
catapult into the world of the rich. A poor man's greatest weapon is his brain. If the rich are given the power to gain brain power by a simple shot, then the poor would be bringing a knife to a gun fight.

Silver says that the outcome of reprogenetics can go either way, but there is a chance that it can be “horrific”. He also explains that there is no telling whether the outcome will be positive, what if there is a mistake and the child is born deformed? I suppose the parent will take him or her back for a new one. The thought sends chills down my spine. Even in Silver’s at times bias approach towards the idea of genetically altering genes, it still seems more scary than intriguing. Silver shows us a world where this can save children from breast cancer and other diseases, but what’s stopping overbearing parents from taking advantage of this? One case comes to mind, explained in “Designer Genes”, where a company designed a medicine that would help dwarf children grow taller. When parents found out about the drug, they used it for their children who weren’t even dwarfs, just to “give them the edge” over the rest. It almost sounds as if the children are cars. I fear that one day I’ll be watching a show called “Pimp My Kid”, instead “Pimp My Ride”, where the chubby and short kids get sent away, and come back tall and muscular drones. Imagine that.

I try not to imagine such things, because honestly it scares me. But I fear that the times are quickly approaching and I won’t have to imagine. It will be here right in front of my face. Silver often compares a world of reprogenetics to the novel *A Brave New World*. I remember reading this book in high school and that it scared the heck out of me-to think of a world where people aren’t even people, but products of science. Silver also makes a valid point though, that unlike *Brave New World*, it won’t be the government
that controls the product people, but it will be the market place and the parents. I agree, if
the market can sell Botox (which Mckibben explains as a toxin that paralyzes the face
muscles) to people who want to look younger, then I have no doubt they are shameless
enough to sell chemicals that can alter the birth of a child- stripping away the very
essence that makes them human. I also have no doubt, as Botox is very popular, that
parents will buy the product to out do their neighbors or the child before them. Though, I
urge these parents not to feed in to the thought of a better child, with the hope that this
world will continue to be populated by free willed beautiful humans. If we cherish our
world we will not allow this to happen, as Silver explains a simple government ban could
stop all of this from happening. So please, let us not make our children with chemicals
and science like machinery, and make them the old fashion way. With love.