

The Genome Project and Pandora's Box The Light and Dark of Genetic Research

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Abstract

In my opinion, the genome project for studying human genes is very similar to the opening of Pandora's box that released the sum of humanity's vices and virtues into the world. It is characterised both by positive light and at the same time dark shadow and moreover contains an element of nameless hope. What will be the result of the genome project? Will it be hope or anxiety? Those scientists who have been participating in the project already recognize these two faces.

In this article, while summarizing all the main problems involved in recent results of genetic science, I would first like to look into the topics that have social-ethical meanings. Then, as recent public interest and professional discussion have made implicit, I'll address questions of genetic determinism or reductive essentialism and focus on the complexity of the genes as an open system together with various other environmental factors.

Furthermore values such as the sanctity of life and human dignity that have been the main supporting pillars in the ethical discussion about the negative aspects of genetic research, are not very clear ideas themselves in meaning and they will need to be relatively balanced with other values too. Then I'll focus on the very present desperate problem, which is that because of the gap in development between the genetic diagnosis and the genetic treatment, we can not help requesting **the right not to know** as well as **the right to know** about our own genetic information.