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Passage 1

Source: *Nature Biotechnology*, *The Hastings Center Report*, and *The Conversation*

Advancements in genetic engineering have made it increasingly feasible to enhance human traits—such as intelligence, physical strength, and disease resistance—through germline editing. While therapeutic applications of gene editing, such as correcting genetic disorders, have gained widespread ethical support, the prospect of enhancement raises complex moral, social, and legal questions that remain deeply contested.

One major concern is the potential for exacerbating social inequality. If genetic enhancement becomes available only to those who can afford it, it may create a biologically stratified society where inherited advantages are no longer merely economic or cultural, but embedded in the genome. This could entrench privilege and undermine the principle of equal opportunity, a cornerstone of liberal democratic ethics.

Another issue is the concept of consent. Germline editing affects future generations who cannot consent to the modifications made. Critics argue that this violates the autonomy of individuals yet to be born, imposing irreversible changes based on parental or societal preferences. Supporters counter that parents already make irreversible decisions—such as education, environment, and healthcare—that shape a child's future, and genetic enhancement is merely an extension of this responsibility.

There is also a philosophical debate about the nature of human identity. If traits can be selected or enhanced, does this reduce individuals to products of design rather than expressions of chance and character? Some ethicists warn that this could erode the value of human diversity and foster a culture of perfectionism, where deviation from the norm is pathologized rather than accepted.

Proponents of genetic enhancement argue that it is ethically permissible, even obligatory, to use available technologies to improve human well-being. They emphasize that enhancement could reduce suffering, increase productivity, and extend lifespan. However, they also acknowledge the need for robust regulatory frameworks to prevent abuse and ensure equitable access.

Ultimately, the ethics of genetic enhancement hinge on competing visions of progress: one that embraces technological mastery over biology, and another that cautions against overstepping the bounds of nature and autonomy. The debate is not merely scientific—it is a reflection of how societies define justice, identity, and the limits of human intervention.

1. What conclusion can be drawn from the author's discussion of social inequality and genetic enhancement?

A. Genetic enhancement will eliminate all forms of social disadvantage.
B. Genetic enhancement may institutionalize inequality by embedding privilege in biology.
C. Economic inequality is unrelated to genetic modification.
D. Genetic enhancement will be universally accessible through public healthcare.

2. Which of the following assumptions underlies the argument that germline editing violates autonomy?

A. Future individuals have moral standing despite not yet existing.
B. All genetic modifications are harmful.
C. Parental decisions should be subject to legal review.
D. Genetic traits are entirely determined by environmental factors.

3. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the argument that genetic enhancement erodes human identity?

A. Genetic enhancement is limited to disease prevention.
B. Cultural diversity remains unaffected by biological traits.
C. Individuals with enhanced traits report higher levels of self-acceptance.
D. Most people reject the idea of designing personality traits.

4. What flaw is present in the argument that enhancement is ethically obligatory?

A. It assumes that all enhancements lead to universally positive outcomes.
B. It ignores the risks of technological failure.
C. It conflates therapeutic intervention with elective enhancement.

D. It presumes that ethical consensus already exists.

5. Which of the following best resolves the ethical tension between progress and restraint in genetic enhancement?

A. Implementing global regulations that balance innovation with equity and consent.
B. Prohibiting all forms of genetic modification to preserve natural diversity.
C. Allowing unrestricted access to enhancement technologies.
D. Delegating ethical decisions to scientific institutions alone.

Passage 2

Source: *The Conversation* – Darel Cookson, Nottingham Trent University

Conspiracy theories have long existed on the fringes of public discourse, but their proliferation in the digital age has elevated them to mainstream visibility. From climate change denial to vaccine skepticism, these beliefs often persist despite overwhelming empirical evidence to the contrary. One explanation for their resilience lies in the cognitive style known as intuitive thinking—a mode of reasoning that relies on gut feelings, heuristics, and immediate impressions rather than deliberate analysis.

Intuitive thinking is not inherently irrational. It allows individuals to make quick decisions in complex environments and often serves adaptive purposes. However, when applied to evaluating complex socio-political claims, it can lead to oversimplification and susceptibility to emotionally charged narratives. Conspiracy theories frequently exploit this cognitive style by offering coherent, emotionally satisfying explanations for ambiguous or threatening events. They appeal to a sense of control and certainty, even when the underlying claims lack factual support.

Research suggests that individuals who rely more heavily on intuitive thinking are more likely to endorse conspiratorial beliefs. This correlation is not necessarily a function of intelligence or education, but of cognitive disposition. People who prefer intuitive over analytical reasoning may be more receptive to claims that align with their pre-existing beliefs or emotional intuitions, regardless of evidentiary standards.

Moreover, intuitive thinkers may be less inclined to engage in epistemic vigilance—the process of critically evaluating the source, logic, and plausibility of information. This makes them vulnerable to misinformation, especially in environments where content is designed to provoke emotional reactions rather than rational scrutiny. Social media platforms, with their emphasis on speed and engagement, often reinforce these tendencies by rewarding content that is sensational rather than accurate.

Critics argue that the solution lies in promoting analytical thinking through education and media literacy. Others caution that such efforts may be limited by psychological predispositions and cultural contexts. The challenge, therefore, is not merely to debunk false claims, but to understand the cognitive mechanisms that make them appealing in the first place.

1. Which of the following best explains why conspiracy theories are appealing to intuitive thinkers?

A. They are supported by rigorous empirical evidence.

B. They offer emotionally satisfying explanations that bypass analytical scrutiny.

C. They are promoted by educational institutions.

D. They are based on complex statistical models.

2. What assumption underlies the claim that intuitive thinkers are more vulnerable to misinformation?

A. Intuitive thinkers are less educated than analytical thinkers.

B. Misinformation is always emotionally neutral.

C. All intuitive thinkers reject scientific consensus.

D. Intuitive reasoning discourages the critical evaluation of information sources.

3. Which of the following, if true, would most challenge the argument that intuitive thinking leads to conspiracy belief endorsement?

A. Intuitive thinkers often reject emotionally charged narratives when presented with contradictory evidence.

B. Conspiracy theories are more prevalent in societies with low internet access.

C. Analytical thinkers are more likely to believe in supernatural phenomena.

D. Intuitive thinking is unrelated to belief formation.

4. Which of the following best identifies a flaw in the argument that promoting analytical thinking will reduce conspiracy beliefs?

A. It assumes cognitive styles can be easily changed through education.

B. It ignores the role of emotional intelligence in belief formation.

C. It presumes that conspiracy theories are always false.

D. It conflates misinformation with propaganda.

5. Which of the following would best reconcile the persistence of conspiracy beliefs with efforts to promote media literacy?

A. Designing educational programs that integrate emotional awareness with critical reasoning

.B. Banning all conspiracy-related content from social media platforms.

C. Encouraging intuitive reasoning in scientific education.

D. Replacing traditional media with algorithmic content filters.

ANSWER KEY

Passage 1

1. **B**

A. Incorrect - The passage argues the opposite: that genetic enhancement is likely to exacerbate, not eliminate, social disadvantage by creating a new, biological form of stratification.

B. Correct - The passage explicitly raises the concern that if genetic enhancement is only available to the wealthy, it "may create a biologically stratified society where inherited advantages are... embedded in the genome." This directly supports the conclusion that inequality could become institutionalized at a biological level.

C. Incorrect - The author's argument is that economic inequality is directly linked to the issue, as the ability to afford genetic modifications would determine who benefits, thus translating economic advantage into genetic advantage.

D. Incorrect - The passage frames the problem based on the assumption that enhancement will likely be a costly, private good. The idea of universal public access is a potential solution, not a current reality or assumption discussed by the author.

2. **A**

A Correct - The argument that germline editing violates autonomy hinges on the idea that it imposes "irreversible changes" on individuals "who cannot consent." For this to be a violation, one must assume that these future, not-yet-existing individuals have a moral status that grants them a right to an unmodified genome or a right to consent.

B Incorrect - The argument about autonomy applies even if the modifications are beneficial (e.g., enhanced intelligence). The ethical objection is to the act of making a non-consensual change, regardless of its outcome.

C Incorrect - The passage does not suggest that all parental decisions should be subject to legal review. It uses other parental decisions (like education) as a counterargument to show that parents already make irreversible, shaping choices for their children.

D. Incorrect - The passage is about modifying genetic traits, which presupposes that genetics play a significant role. The argument about autonomy is about who gets to make those modifications, not about the role of environmental factors.

3. C

A. Incorrect - The passage distinguishes between therapeutic applications (disease prevention) and enhancement. The argument about identity erosion is specifically about enhancement, so limiting technology to therapy would sidestep the argument rather than weaken it.

B. Incorrect - The argument is about individual identity and the value of human biological diversity, not cultural diversity. While related, they are distinct concepts, and evidence about one does not necessarily weaken an argument about the other.

C. Correct - The argument against enhancement is that it could "erode the value of human diversity and foster a culture of perfectionism," reducing individuals to "products of design." If individuals with enhanced traits report higher self-acceptance, it would challenge this claim by suggesting that enhancement can lead to positive self-perception rather than a sense of being an artificial product.

D. Incorrect - The rejection of designing personality traits does not weaken the argument about other traits like intelligence or physical strength. The core ethical concern about reducing individuals to products of design would still apply to these other enhancements.

4. A

A. Correct - The argument that enhancement is "ethically obligatory" to "improve human well-being" contains a significant flaw: it presumes that all enhancements will reliably and universally lead to positive outcomes. This overlooks the potential for unintended negative consequences, unforeseen side effects, or a subjective definition of "improvement."

B. Incorrect - While technological failure is a valid risk, it is a practical concern. The flaw in the ethical argument is its philosophical assumption about the universal good of enhancement, not its technical feasibility.

C. Incorrect - The proponents' argument is specifically about enhancement, not therapy. They are not conflating the two; rather, they are making a distinct ethical case for going beyond therapy to improve the human condition.

D. Incorrect - The argument does not presume that consensus already exists. Rather, it is an attempt to create such a consensus by framing enhancement as a moral obligation, a position taken within an ongoing debate.

5. A

A. Correct - The passage frames the debate as a tension between "technological mastery" and "the bounds of nature and autonomy," and notes the need for "robust regulatory frameworks to prevent abuse and ensure equitable access." Implementing global regulations that balance these competing values is the most direct and comprehensive resolution to the ethical tension described.

B. Incorrect - A complete prohibition represents an extreme resolution that chooses restraint entirely over progress. This fails to resolve the tension and ignores the potential benefits of therapeutic applications, which the passage notes have widespread ethical support.

C. Incorrect - Unrestricted access would fully embrace progress without restraint, ignoring the serious ethical concerns about inequality, consent, and identity that the author details. This would exacerbate the tension, not resolve it.

D. Incorrect - Delegating decisions solely to scientific institutions ignores the profound social, moral, and legal questions at stake. The passage concludes that the debate is not merely scientific and requires societal input on justice and identity.

Passage 2

1. **B**

A. Incorrect - The passage explicitly notes that these beliefs "persist despite overwhelming empirical evidence to the contrary." Their appeal lies in emotional coherence, not factual or empirical support.

B. Correct - The passage states that conspiracy theories "exploit this cognitive style by offering coherent, emotionally satisfying explanations for ambiguous or threatening events." This bypasses the need for the "deliberate analysis" characteristic of analytical thinking, appealing directly to intuition.

C. Incorrect - The passage positions conspiracy theories as existing on the "fringes of public discourse" and in opposition to mainstream knowledge. There is no suggestion that they are promoted by educational institutions.

D Incorrect - Conspiracy theories are described as offering "oversimplification" for complex events. Complex statistical models are the domain of analytical thinking, which is the opposite of the intuitive reasoning style they appeal to.

2. **D**

A. Incorrect - The passage explicitly states that the correlation between intuitive thinking and conspiracy belief is "not necessarily a function of intelligence or education, but of cognitive disposition." The argument is about how people think, not how educated they are.

B. Incorrect - The passage argues that misinformation and conspiracy theories are often "emotionally charged" and "sensational." Their emotional appeal is a key reason they are compelling to intuitive thinkers.

C Incorrect - The passage does not make such a sweeping claim. It suggests a higher likelihood or predisposition, not a universal rejection of scientific consensus by all intuitive thinkers.

D. Correct - The passage claims that intuitive thinkers may be "less inclined to engage in epistemic vigilance—the process of critically evaluating the source, logic, and plausibility of information." For this to make them more vulnerable, one must assume that their intuitive reasoning style discourages or bypasses this critical evaluation process.

3. A

A. Correct - The passage's central argument is that intuitive thinkers are susceptible to emotionally charged narratives regardless of evidence. If it were true that they often reject such narratives when presented with contradictory evidence, it would directly challenge the proposed link between intuitive thinking and persistent conspiracy belief.

B. Incorrect - The passage links the proliferation of conspiracy theories to the "digital age" and "social media platforms." Evidence of their prevalence in societies with low internet access would be unexpected but would not challenge the core psychological mechanism of intuitive thinking itself.

C Incorrect - The beliefs of analytical thinkers in other domains (like supernatural phenomena) are irrelevant to the argument about why intuitive thinkers endorse conspiracy theories. This information is outside the scope of the author's claim.

D. Incorrect - This would contradict the entire premise of the passage. The author's argument is fundamentally about how the cognitive style of intuitive thinking is directly linked to the formation and endorsement of certain beliefs.

4. A

A. Correct - The proposal to promote analytical thinking assumes that this "cognitive disposition" is malleable and can be effectively changed through interventions like education. The passage hints at a flaw in this by noting that "such efforts may be limited by psychological predispositions," suggesting cognitive styles may be more ingrained and resistant to change than the solution assumes.

B. Incorrect - The argument to promote analytical thinking does not ignore emotional intelligence; rather, it prioritizes a different cognitive skill. The flaw is in its potential ineffectiveness, not in its ignorance of other factors.

C. Incorrect - The argument that promoting analytical thinking will reduce conspiracy beliefs does not depend on whether all such theories are false. It is a procedural argument about promoting a style of thinking that is better equipped to evaluate evidence for any claim.

D Incorrect - The passage uses misinformation as a broader category that includes conspiracy theories. The argument does not conflate it with propaganda; it focuses on the cognitive susceptibility of the audience, which applies to both.

5. A

A. Correct - The passage identifies a tension between emotional, intuitive reasoning and rational, analytical thinking. A program that integrates emotional awareness (addressing the intuitive side) with critical reasoning (promoting the analytical side) would be a direct attempt to reconcile these elements, aligning with the challenge of understanding the cognitive appeal of misinformation.

B. Incorrect - Banning content is a form of censorship that does not address the underlying cognitive mechanisms that make people susceptible to such beliefs in the first place. The author's focus is on cognition, not content moderation.

C Incorrect - The passage identifies intuitive reasoning as a vulnerability when evaluating complex socio-political claims. Encouraging this style in scientific education, which requires rigorous analytical thought, would be counterproductive to the goal of promoting truth-seeking.

D. Incorrect - Algorithmic content filters are an external, technological solution. While potentially helpful, they do not reconcile the internal cognitive tension within individuals, nor do they empower them with the skills promoted by media literacy.