

# Forgiveness, Tolerance, and Genetic Enhancement

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## **Abstract**

This article argues that genetic enhancement that aims to remove human weaknesses would possibly ruin many things that have considerable moral value. Certain mental processes, such as (1) the process of forgiving and (2) the process of finding something tolerable consist partly of perceiving the other person as psychologically *weak*, and social institutions of forgiveness and tolerance are not only valuable as such, but also contribute to many valuable things. Therefore, it seems that weaknesses are not that bad. People should try to avoid weaknesses, as they contribute to morally problematic conduct but, on the other hand, the connection between weaknesses and wrongness means that *forgiveness and tolerance* are partly possible just because of weaknesses. The general social and cultural effects of forgiveness and tolerance, in turn, seem morally priceless. Weaknesses do not justify wrong actions, but they tend to explain why people act wrongly, and people are often forgiven or tolerated just because of their weakness. This is one reason why we should be very cautious with genetic enhancement. The aim of the paper is not to show that the gains promised by genetic enhancement would be outweighed by the costs of reducing the degrees of forgiveness and toleration in the human population. Rather, we simply try to indicate what are the possible moral dark sides of such enhancement.

**Keywords** forgiveness, moral value, genetic enhancement, tolerance, weakness

## 1. Introduction

The debate about the desirability and ethical acceptability of human enhancement has gathered a lot of attention among philosophers and bioethicists in recent years. Enhancement-based interventions, especially genetic enhancement, aim to improve humans *beyond* their normal, well-functioning, state. Enhancement is not merely a form of therapy, although these two may overlap. People may want to use medicines that are supposed to influence positively their normally functioning cognitive capacities such as memory, or to improve their physical abilities, although there may be nothing wrong with their present abilities.[see e.g. 1–2] Usually, the enhancement debate does not concern the question what should we do with *weaknesses* – understood as psychological attributes, processes or incidents that usually relate to action and reasoning and are generally considered somehow faulty. To some extent, weaknesses resemble diseases, and a person who opposes human enhancement need not oppose the idea that we should get rid of our characteristic weaknesses. However, the question whether weaknesses are altogether bad – morally or otherwise – is anything but clear.[3] There is much to say in defense of weakness, and this is what we aim to do here.

Obviously, almost all bad things have their positive sides. If your house burns down, then there is space to build a new house and then others have a chance to help you. Bad things not only tend to have some good consequences, but also make many good things possible. But this does not mean that we should actively cause bad things and start to burn down people's houses. The same is true of weaknesses. To argue that, actually, weaknesses have their positive sides is not to argue that we should not try to avoid them, still less that we should try to increase them. However, it is important to see that, at least in some cases, a world without weaknesses would not necessarily be a very pleasant place. To remove all or a considerable part of human weaknesses – were it possible – would gradually ruin many things that have considerable moral value. Possibly, those valuable

things could be created by means other than by letting weaknesses do the job but, arguably, that would be rather difficult. Therefore, authors such as Barbro Fröding, John Harris and Julian Savulescu who all support radical enhancement programs should keep in mind that lifting humankind even to a level where weaknesses no longer exist would have serious moral costs, and that going still further is likely to have even more serious costs.[4–6] It is important to take into account the probable negative effects of (genetic) enhancement, in particular, the negative side-effects which would ensue were such enhancement realized in society on the whole.

In what follows, we will defend the thesis that certain mental processes such as the (1) process of forgiving and the (2) process of finding something tolerable consist partly of perceiving the other person as *weak*, and that social institutions of forgiveness and tolerance are not only valuable as such, but also contribute to many valuable things. This gives us a reason to praise rather than blame many weaknesses. The aim of the paper is not to show that the gains promised by genetic enhancement would be outweighed by the costs of reducing the degrees of forgiveness and toleration in the human population. Rather, we simply try to indicate what are the possible moral dark sides of such enhancement.

## **2. Weaknesses**

By weaknesses we refer to psychological attributes, processes, or incidents that often relate to action and reasoning and are commonly seen as defects. For instance, an average person who deceives herself suffers from a weakness. If a person's action is weak-willed, alternatively, then she is weak in that respect. The same holds of persons who are addicted to something. In many cases, fallacious reasoning reveals a person's weakness. Those who are influenced by certain usual cognitive biases are weak. The notions of (1) self-deception, (2) weakness of the will, (3) addiction,

(4) fallacy, and (5) cognitive bias are, of course, all very complicated, and philosophers disagree how to define them. However, for the present purposes, it suffices to characterize them only briefly.

An example of a self-deceiver is a person who hopes that she is not seriously ill and therefore mistakenly believes that she is not seriously ill, although she has clearly enough evidence to reach the right conclusions. Perhaps she has heard the doctors' diagnoses and so on, but fails to trust them, even though the doctors have been a reliable source of information for her over time. Her mistake is a result of her motivational state. Self-deception is a fault that concerns belief-formation but it is often related to action, as people may act on the basis of their false beliefs that are the results of self-deception. Such actions can be morally problematic.

Weakness of the will is closely related to action. For instance, a person who has decided not to eat chocolate today and still eats it, despite her own decision, probably suffers from the weakness of the will. Weak-willed action seems voluntary in the sense that, apparently at least, there are no "external" forces that compel the person to act against her own judgment. Some philosophers, most notably Plato in dialogues *Protagoras* and *Meno*, have denied the existence of weakness of the will, but generally (and pre-theoretically) speaking there is little doubt that failures of the will are rather common.

Addictive behavior also seems common. Addictions are often connected to strong desires that may seem irresistible for an addict.[cf. 7] Although some people are "willing addicts" who do not plan to change their addictive behavior, it is not clear how easily they *could* change it if they so decided. One may distinguish between substance addictions such as those involving coffee or heroin on the one hand, and behavioral addictions such as those involving gambling or video games. Addictions seem to lead to certain actions, but it would be an exaggeration to claim that addicts cannot act

against their addictive desires. Addictions explain many actions: when a drug addict steals money in order to buy drugs, her addiction explains her motive to steal, although she is not addicted to stealing.

Fallacies are only indirectly related to action but the connection is clear, as we act partly on the basis of our beliefs that can result from a logical fallacy. The list of fallacies is long. The best-known examples include the argument from ignorance, the fallacy of bifurcation, the slippery slope argument, *argumentum ad hominem*, and the equivocation fallacy. Whether committing a fallacy signals a person's weakness or not depends on how obvious it is that the person's reasoning is fallacious. To commit a fallacy which is very difficult to reveal does not provide adequate evidence that there is a special weakness (e.g. statistical reasoning). Here is an example of a fallacy which easily reveals that the person is in the relevant sense weak: "I do not know that God exists; therefore, I know that God does not exist". Surely the person should realize that her ignorance alone cannot solve the problem at issue. Sometimes fallacies tell about weakness, sometimes not.

The same is true of cognitive biases. Only some of these count as weaknesses on our account and, in individual cases, it may be difficult to say whether being influenced by a particular cognitive bias signals a person's weakness or not. Usual cognitive biases include confirmation bias, the fundamental attribution error, and the framing effect. On some occasions being influenced by confirmation bias (i.e. seeking to support merely one's pre-existing beliefs), for instance, seems quite a clear mistake, but on other occasions it is less obvious that a person's inability to avoid confirmation bias reveals her weakness. Suppose that a young man tests his hypothesis that the woman who lives near his place finds him attractive. If he concentrates only on the evidence that supports his hypothesis, he is weak (for his performance is ridiculously poor).

What characterizes all weaknesses is that while they are very common, people's attitude towards them tend to be negative. This is why they are called weaknesses rather than strengths or just attributes that do not raise evaluative reactions at all. Most of us agree that although weaknesses seem to be part of everyday life, they are anomalies and should not shape our life to the extent they do – if at all. If a person herself understands that she has committed, say, a fallacy, surely she would like to revise her reasoning. Of course, weaknesses are known to have some good consequences too.[for a discussion, see e.g. 8] Self-deception, for instance, is often said to have positive instrumental value in many areas of life, including the economy where overly optimistic choices can have desirable (accidental) effects.[9] Sometimes weaknesses may even have good *moral* effects. In Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), weak-willed Huck frees Jim (who is a slave) because he cares about Jim, although he sincerely thinks that he should not free Jim. However, the desirable consequences of particular instances of weaknesses do not show that, actually, self-deception, weakness of the will, addiction and so on, are not weaknesses. They certainly are, and their consequences are often catastrophic. Gamblers lose their money. Self-deceivers do not seek medical help in time. Reasoning fallacies cause political tragedies.

### **3. Forgiveness and Tolerance**

An important feature of weaknesses is their close connection to immoral actions. Actions that *indicate weakness* can be morally problematic, and quite many actions that are *results of weaknesses* are, morally speaking, blameworthy. The relation between *weakness-related actions* and morally problematic actions can be even stronger. Although there are weakness-related actions that are morally unproblematic, it is unclear whether there are many actions that are morally wrong but are *not* weakness-related. Historically, the idea that *all* wrong actions are caused by weaknesses is not uncommon. Plato's Socrates famously thought that ignorance and stupidity cause all

wrongness. Joseph Butler wrote that the major cause of moral faults is people's tendency to self-deception.[cited by 10, p32-3] Adam Smith (2006) expressed similar ideas in his classic, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, arguing that "this self-deceit, this fatal weakness of mankind, is the source of half the disorders of human life".[11]

The claim that most wrong actions originate from weaknesses is not as implausible as it might seem at first glance. In order to support the claim one need not accept the conceptual thesis that a person just *cannot want to commit an action she considers wrong*, but must be somehow mistaken or irrational, when she chooses wrong action.[cf. 12] It suffices to point out that many wrong actions that are seemingly unrelated to weaknesses may, in fact, be weakness-related. A reckless teenage boy who decides not to go on a date even if he has promised to go may think that, probably, the girl won't care about his decision, as he consider only confirming evidence for his hypothesis that the girl won't care (confirmation bias). A stressed colleague who blames others for everything may think that others really are to blame, as he hopes that others – and not he – cause all the problems in the work place (self-deception). Notice also that the lack of some moral virtues, say, an inability to show gratitude, need not violate any moral obligations, although it may raise some moral concerns.

If it is true (as it appears to be) that many (or most) morally wrong actions are weakness-related, then the fact that weaknesses are so common is a serious problem. However, the connection between weakness and wrongness seems to have some positive sides as well. Consider forgiveness and tolerance toward actions that are commonly seen as being wrong. Arguably, both the process of forgiving and the process of finding something tolerable "consist" partly of perceiving the other person as weak. (It is reasonable to assume that some mental processes occur together with perceiving another person in a certain way.) Given the close connection between weaknesses and

morally wrong actions, many (or most) actions that are seen morally problematic *can* be forgiven or even tolerated – and just because they are weakness-related. Consider two examples.

DAUGHTER. A mother who lives together with her teenage daughter deceives herself that her daughter does not suffer from the serious eating disorder, anorexia, although almost everyone is able to see the worrying situation.[see 13, esp. p99-100] Outsiders intervene in the family's affairs and succeed in getting help for the anorexic child. Fortunately, after a long treatment, the daughter recovers. After a short while, she starts to blame her mother morally and asks why her mother did not try to help her, although her mother must have realized her daughter's bad condition. The mother begs forgiveness and confesses her mistake. She feels remorse, as she knows that there really is no justification for the negligence that was a result of her irrationality. Slowly, the daughter forgives her mother and makes a commitment to work towards a frame of mind in which resentment has gone.[cf. 14] The daughter knows that people tend to deceive themselves and deny things they find painful. She understands that her mother was a self-deceiver, a weak human being. This fact does not justify the mother's behavior, but it explains it and makes forgiveness easier.

FATHER. A father of two young children smokes several packs of cigarettes each day, sometimes around the children. He has smoked since he was a teenager, and while he understands that he is not setting a good example to his children and that he endangers his own health by smoking, he feels that he really cannot stop smoking. He knows this since he has tried to quit. He has some clues that his children sometimes (when in the company of their friends) are ashamed of his habit, although they are quite young. The babysitter who often takes care of his children is not happy about the father's smoking habit, and she has even tried to talk about it with him, although not often. In a sense, she understands the father and tolerates his habit. She knows that the father is addicted, and that the weakness of will prevents him from changing his behavior – when he tries to change it. The



weakness is not considered to justify the father's choice, but it explains it and makes the adoption of a tolerant attitude easier. The father is just a human being.

In both examples, a person is perceived as weak.<sup>1</sup> Such a perception is possible and easy, as people are known to have a tendency to weaknesses; there is nothing particularly unusual in the behavior of the mother or the father. Also, in both examples, a person's weakness plays an explanatory rather than a justificatory role.<sup>2</sup> To forgive a person her weakness-related behavior or to tolerate a person's weakness-related behavior is *not* to assume that actually, the behavior was or is acceptable after all. On the contrary, a precondition of forgiveness and tolerance is that their objects are found somehow faulty.[see e.g. 15–18] Of course, there is a sense of tolerance that is different – people can tolerate different religions or cultures without assuming that they are somehow morally faulty – but this is not the sense of tolerance in which we are interested here. Sometimes persons who beg forgiveness defend their actions by referring to explanations that have nothing to do with weaknesses – they may refer to unexpected accidents and non-culpable ignorance, for instance – but these kinds of explanations tend to be too strong. For if they are correct, they justify the action and, in consequence, there is nothing to forgive anymore. Here we are interested in moral failures that are not so extreme that we have to do something about them.

It may look surprising that forgiveness and tolerance have much in common – after all, they are quite separate things. However, forgiveness can actually be seen as a special form of tolerance.[for forgiveness and human solidarity, see 19] When a daughter forgives her mother she need not think that it was not really the mother's true self (but a self-deceived self) who did not help her and that therefore she should forgive the mother. Instead, the daughter may think that she should stop demanding that the mother changes and accept the mother as she is, namely, as a person who is unable to face painful facts.[see 20, esp. p95] This kind of forgiveness resembles tolerance quite a

bit, and the daughter's forgiveness in this sense is, of course, consistent with the *desire* that the mother will change. Since it really *was* the true self of the mother who did not help her, she can forgive the mother in the first place.

Many actions that are morally wrong and likely "objects" of forgiveness and tolerance are weakness-related. If a cold-blooded murderer kills his business partner without suffering from any sort of weakness – perhaps there are such cases – then there is no need to tolerate his action and it is questionable whether we should even forgive him.[for a discussion, see e.g. 21] Similarly, if a psychopath kills his business partner, he commits a very bad action, but we cannot really blame him, if his action results from his disease rather than some weakness. In such case, again, there is nothing to forgive or tolerate.

It goes without saying that, from a moral point of view, forgiveness and tolerance are invaluable. Philosophers are supposed to be pretty good in testing ideas with thought experiments, but it is very difficult to imagine in detail a world where forgiveness and tolerance would be absent, or almost absent. Surely such world would be an odd and presumably quite an awful place. Potentially, forgiveness and tolerance increase psychological comfort and social cohesion. (A person who often faces situations in which she needs to forgive or tolerate is not morally better than a person who does not face such situations, if they both have a similar disposition to forgive or tolerate.)

#### **4. An Objection and the Reply**

Although we have argued that weaknesses are valuable, as they are preconditions for forgiveness and tolerance, others might object. It may be true that weaknesses are rather closely connected to morally problematic actions, and that therefore, weaknesses form a basis for forgiveness and

tolerance that both are reactions to wrong actions. No doubt, forgiveness and tolerance are morally valuable things. Suppose, however, that all weaknesses would suddenly disappear as a result of some successful genetic enhancement program. That would mean that many, most or almost all wrong actions would also disappear, and in such an imaginary world there would not be any *need* for forgiveness and tolerance. They are valuable dispositions just because, in some circumstances, they are appropriate responses to wrongness. They have no other value. Therefore, one should not praise weaknesses on the grounds that they often lead to wrong actions that in turn make forgiveness and tolerance possible. Instead, one should agree with Julian Savulescu who writes that “once technology affords us with the power to enhance our and our children’s lives, to fail to do so will be to be responsible for the consequences” (esp. p38), and with Jonathan Glover who says that “our descendants may be glad” (p180-1) if we decided to remove our intellectual limits.[22–23]

This objection is based on the assumption of a counter-factual, weakness-free, world. What would be true in such a world need not be true in the actual world. There are several ways to reply to the objection but here we will concentrate on only one issue, namely, on the claim that the value of forgiveness and tolerance is restricted to their value as virtuous or morally appropriate responses to wrong actions. As far as we can see, the claim is false. Both forgiveness and tolerance have a moral value that extends beyond their role as correct responses to wrongness.

Let us consider forgiveness first. It is commonly known that forgiveness is closely connected to reconciliation. If a person forgives the offender, it does not mean that she wants to cooperate with him in the future, but forgiveness certainly makes potential cooperation easier. Forgiveness may deepen inter-personal relationships considerably. The daughter who forgives her mother for not intervening in the daughter’s eating disorder may learn to know her mother better than she would have if she had not forgiven the mother. Forgiveness signals good will and trust in moral growth.

Forgiveness is also related to *mercy* that, according to Shakespeare, blesses both “him that gives and him that takes”.<sup>[24]</sup> Forgiveness may be part of the process of punishing, although a person who is punished need not be forgiven. Forgiveness does not imply mercy. Political and collective forgiveness are extremely important things in many countries that suffer from painful history of discrimination and violence.<sup>[cf. 25]</sup> In such circumstances forgiveness makes way to a brighter future. The list of the desirable and morally valuable side-effects of actual acts of forgiveness seems endless. Although we can imagine artificial means to create these effects, their realization would be very difficult or, in some cases, completely impossible.

Let us consider tolerance next. At least from a liberal point of view, to tolerate actions one considers problematic is morally valuable as such, but surely the value of tolerating minor moral failures is also based on its effects and consequences that are often unintended by those who tolerate. A person who tolerates shows example to others. When a babysitter tolerates the father who, in her view, smokes far too much and harms his children, she sets a good example to the children. The actual acts of tolerance (rather than disposition to tolerate) towards actions that are considered wrong contribute to cultural conventions and social institutions that avoid unnecessary moralism. The father who is tolerated may enjoy a sense of freedom, when he is tolerated rather than condemned. Other forms of “toleration” and tolerable attitudes benefit from the social institution of tolerating actions that seem problematic. Liberal societies are largely based on such ideals of tolerance.<sup>3</sup> Toleration is crucial to peaceful coexistence and social cohesion. It is the cement of trust. Many people view toleration as the ground of liberty of conscience and freedom of religion.<sup>[see e.g. 26]</sup> Toleration has an important relation to the right to privacy, as many people are willing to secure privacy on the basis of their willingness to tolerate actions that may happen under the cover of privacy.<sup>[cf. 27, esp. p451]</sup> It is unnecessary to try to list all the positive effects of the acts of tolerance toward wrongness – there are so many. Perhaps these effects could be constructed

artificially, without first tolerating actions that one considers morally problematic, but it would be a demanding project, to say the least.

## 5. Vulnerability

Before concluding, we would like to discuss briefly Marina Berzins McCoy's (2013) recent book, *Wounded Heroes*, as the argument presented in the book resembles our argument in some respects.[28] However, we will show that McCoy's argument is different and clearly more radical than our claim here.

Let us first introduce McCoy's theses (see preface, pp. viii-ix). McCoy does not write about weaknesses. Instead, she is interested in human "vulnerability". However, as Sean McConnell has correctly pointed out, McCoy uses the notion of vulnerability freely, and vulnerability takes a wide variety of guises.[29, p37] It is clear that one of the meanings of "vulnerability" comes very close to the notion of weakness, as it is understood in this paper.<sup>4</sup> (Examples include weakness of will, self-deception, and so on.)

McCoy argues that Greek tragedy and philosophy "have important insights to offer about the nature of human vulnerability and how human beings might better come to terms with their own vulnerability".[28] According to McCoy, many Greek authors address the question of the political and moral value of vulnerability.[28, pviii] For instance, (1) Homer takes on the dark side of war and shown connections between human suffering and human glory; (2) Sophocles creates a tension between order and control, and the "reality of convoluted and unexpected human experience"; (3) philosophers aim to offer moral and political solutions to suffering, and they also "set out the limits of such solutions and even extol the virtues of acknowledging and accommodating human limit".

McCoy's aim in her book is not to develop anything like a story of Greek culture.[28, pviii] Rather, her main purpose is to “analyse and interpret several important Greek works of epic, tragedy, and philosophy in order better to develop a philosophical understanding of vulnerability and its role in the life of the larger community”. The examples she has chosen are supposed to be ones in which the imagery of wounding is striking, or in which the “question of vulnerability's relationship to ethical-political life is confronted directly”.

McCoy points out that a good deal of philosophical literature focuses on the virtues and human excellence.[28, pix] In her view, this attention to the virtues makes good sense, for “philosophers and even epic writers and tragedians seek to articulate the ways in which human beings can successfully pursue lives of happiness and ethical living”. Furthermore, McCoy argues, attention to the virtues that allow the best aspects of human beings to emerge focuses on human strengths and political resourcefulness. However, in her view, “the reality of human life often bumps up against the idealism of philosophy”. She argues:

The meaning of acute human suffering is difficult to discern. Moreover, in the course of everyday encounters with others, the question as to the proper responsiveness to others' vulnerability arises. I offer this work on vulnerability not as an objection to the necessity of cultivating individual and political excellence, but rather as complementary. To be aware of and responsive to the vulnerabilities of oneself and others is just as important as our care for human excellence and strength. Indeed, the success of the political community already depends upon its own recognition and appropriation of vulnerability in its midst. The appropriate response to vulnerability is thus a key part of virtue.[28, pix]

The radical nature of McCoy's argument becomes apparent when she goes on to say that awareness of one's own and others' capacity to be wounded are a central part of virtue for successful communities.[28, pix] According to McCoy, not only individuals, but also political communities, "must come to terms with and respond appropriately to the vulnerability that exists within". In her view, "vulnerability strengthens interpersonal bonds within a community, and is closely intertwined with a number of different facets of ethical life". McCoy's conclusion is categorical. She suggests that vulnerability is not something to be avoided and that "vulnerability is a necessary component of living a rich and authentic human life in community".[28, pix]

The difference between our thesis and McCoy's view should be clear enough. Obviously, our thesis is clearly less radical than the argument presented by McCoy.[28, pix] Our claim is *not* that we should not try to avoid "vulnerabilities", that is, weaknesses, and we are not saying that weaknesses are *necessary*. Perhaps the desirable effects of forgiveness and tolerance could be created in some artificial ways in the future.

In short, our argument says that (a) some forms of genetic enhancement aim at removing weakness; (b) but forgiveness and tolerance rely on a perception of weakness; (c) forgiveness and tolerance are not only valuable in themselves but contribute to other socially valuable things; (d) therefore, we should be cautious about enhancements that propose to remove weakness. McCoy writes about *necessity* and about what people should or should not avoid. Our argument does not concern such issues.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

We have argued that weaknesses are not that bad. People should try to avoid weaknesses, as they contribute to morally problematic conduct but, on the other hand, the connection between weaknesses and wrongness means that *forgiveness and tolerance* are partly possible just because of weaknesses. The general social and cultural effects of forgiveness and tolerance, in turn, seem morally priceless. Weaknesses do not justify wrong actions, but they tend to explain why people act wrongly. Therefore, when a person forgives or tolerates people who act or have acted wrongly, it is often because she realizes their weakness. This is why we should be very cautious with enhancement – despite its possible positive sides – and enhancement programs in general.[30] Although the defenders of enhancement programs may be right in their optimistic ideas about the promises of enhancement, this optimism should be balanced with more holistic approach to effects of such enhancement, if realized in a large scale.<sup>5</sup>

John Harris hopes “that no sane, let alone moral, being would think it worth preserving disability and disease on the off chance that some good might come of it at some unspecified and unpredictable point in the future”.[31, p182] Perhaps this is a reasonable hope, but weaknesses are not diseases. They are valuable *right now*, not only in the future, and moral beings have good reasons to think it worth preserving weaknesses, although those reasons may not be overriding reasons that should guide action.

People have always struggled to overcome their weaknesses. Some people have managed to change themselves a lot, and many of us have succeeded in some respects, say, in fighting against particular addictions. However, in general, the weaknesses seem to be a large part of what it means to be human. There are many who think that we simply cannot change ourselves to the extent that we



would not face those weaknesses, in one form or another, given that we do not want to change our humanity altogether.

It is not a surprise that humans have always tried to develop means that are supposed to prevent the negative impacts of our characteristic features – features that are so difficult to remove. In Greek mythology, Odysseus knew that it was hard to resist the Sirens' lovely voices, and therefore he ordered his men to stuff their ears with wax and tie him to the mast, so that he could save his ship. The legendary king did not even plan to change himself and make himself strong enough to be able to resist the Sirens' call. Perhaps this is what people should do in general. Rather than trying to change themselves completely they should live in ways that make accidents and disasters less likely.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> It would be easy to come up with examples that concern moral emotions such as remorse and mercy rather than mental processes related to forgiveness and tolerance.[cf. 32] Aristotle studies

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“on what grounds, against what persons, and in what states of mind we feel” certain emotions and have certain attitudes.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes persons who beg forgiveness defend their actions by referring to explanations that have nothing to do with weaknesses – they may refer to unexpected accidents and non-culpable ignorance for instance – but these kinds of explanations tend to be too strong. For if they are correct, they justify the action and, in consequence, there is nothing to forgive anymore.

<sup>3</sup> Arguably, there can be a “right to do wrong”. Voting a Nazi party may be morally wrong, but a person may still have a right to vote a Nazi party, that is, other persons may not have a right to prevent such morally suspect voting behavior. They should tolerate it.[see e.g. 33]

<sup>4</sup> In his valuable review, McConnell argues as follows: “The nature of vulnerability perhaps comes out best when contrasted with invulnerability. For McCoy’s real beef seems to be with Martha Nussbaum and others who have stressed the place of self-sufficiency and strength of character – the virtuous man’s invulnerability to vice and the vicissitudes of fortune – in the philosophical works of Plato and Aristotle, and indeed in ancient Greek ethical thought more generally. This book is a move in the other direction, and in particular it helpfully emphasises the role of political community (rather than inner moral strength) as a means to deal with some of the implications of our vulnerability”. [29, p37] McConnell’s description shows that McCoy’s thesis resembles our thesis (but is not equivalent with our thesis).

<sup>5</sup> Nick Bostrom and Rebecca Roache has argued that in the “light of [our] considerations, we conclude that there are no compelling reasons to resist the use of genetic intervention to select the best children”. [3] Although this view need not directly concern enhancement, it belongs to the category of claims that we find not balanced enough.

