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Review Of "Genetically Modified Foods: Debating Biotechnology" Edited By M. Ruse And D. Castle

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Genetically Modified Foods: Debating Biotechnology. *Contemporary Issues*. Edited by Michael Ruse and David Castle.

Genetically Modified Foods: Debating Biotechnology by Michael Ruse; David Castle

Review by: Reviewed by Hugh Lacey

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genetic-environmental interactions, genetic medical information is not easily distinguished from nongenetic information. Consequently, arguments about the need for privacy apply to all medical information.

The author, a senior lecturer in Law at the University of Edinburgh, emphasizes the legal aspects of privacy issues. He devotes much of his attention to the basis for privacy rights in the law, especially in the U.K. As an American reader, the discussion of American law seems skimpy. For example, there is no mention of the controversy over the Constitutional basis of privacy rights raised by *Roe v. Wade*. This is, however, a minor quibble.

Genetic Privacy strikes the right balance between a fair presentation of the various competing views concerning privacy rights and the advocacy of the author's own position. Laurie makes a convincing case that the concept of privacy should be expanded and that this expanded version of requires stronger legal protection.

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GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS: DEBATING BIOTECHNOLOGY. *Contemporary Issues*.

Edited by Michael Ruse and David Castle. Amherst (New York): Prometheus Books. \$20.00 (paper). 355 p; ill.; no index. ISBN: 1-57392-996-4. 2002.

This volume provides a wide range of opinions concerning the value and alleged risks of genetically modified (GM) foods. It contains ten parts, each with an introduction and three or four articles drawn from well-known scientific and popular publications: Biotechnology Case Study: Golden Rice; Ethics in Agriculture; Religion; Labeling; Law; Food Safety and Substantial Equivalence; Risk Assessment and Public Perception; Precautionary Principle and Genetically Modified Foods; Developing Countries; and Assessing Environmental Impacts. A useful glossary and bibliography are appended, and there is a prologue containing the famous dismissal of GM foods by Prince Charles and an open letter by Richard Dawkins, in which he scolds the Prince. Most of the issues raised in the debates about GM foods—especially as they have been conducted in the advanced industrial countries—fall under one or other of the ten headings, and each section contains both *pro* and *con* opinions. In my opinion, the *con* position is not represented at its strongest in the sections on golden rice, substantial equivalence, and the precautionary principle.

For me, the highlights of the volume include Paul Thompson's generally *pro* but richly nuanced reflections (Bioethical Issues in a Biobased Econ-

omy), Jack Wilson's historical account of the application of intellectual property rights to living beings (Intellectual Property Rights in Genetically Modified Agriculture: The Shock of the Not-So-New), and Norman Ellstrand's cautious negative assessment (When Transgenes Wander, Should We Worry?). The weakest section is the one on developing countries. It contains no substantial information (e.g., from the complex debate that is taking place in Latin America, including from those whose *con* opinion about GM foods rests on the claim that other forms of agriculture—especially agroecology—are more promising for meeting the needs of poor farmers). The volume could be used fruitfully as a textbook so long as it was supplemented to strengthen the section on developing countries and, more generally, the *con* point of view.

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PREMATURITY IN SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY: ON RESISTANCE AND NEGLECT. *Based on a symposium held at the University of California, Berkeley, 5–7 December 1997*.

Edited by Ernest B Hook. Berkeley (California): University of California Press. \$80.00. xx + 378 p; ill.; index. ISBN: 0-520-23106-6. 2002.

In 1972, the molecular biologist Gunther Stent published his ideas on Prematurity and Uniqueness in *Scientific Discovery* (*Scientific American* 227(6):84–93). Twenty-five years later, a symposium on Stent's thesis—a scientific claim, theory, or discovery is "premature" if its implications cannot simply and logically be connected to canonical knowledge—was held at Berkeley. This volume presents the expanded and revised results of that conference: 25 papers by 22 contributors, arranged in seven parts.

Part One presents Hook's introduction and an edited version of Stent's original paper. "Prematurity" can imply for some the fallacy of "presentism," in which earlier scientific work is evaluated not in its own contextual terms, but with reference to what came afterward. Thus, evolutionary ideas before the *Origin of Species* were once labeled "pre-Darwinian," and biologists such as Lamarck called "precursors" or "forerunners," as if their research programs were "anticipations" or failed versions of Darwin's. The editor is well aware of such problematic interpretations, and most of the contributors offer historiographically careful accounts of their subjects.

Hook argues that the frequently delayed recognition and integration of new ideas and proposals into accepted knowledge is of more than academic