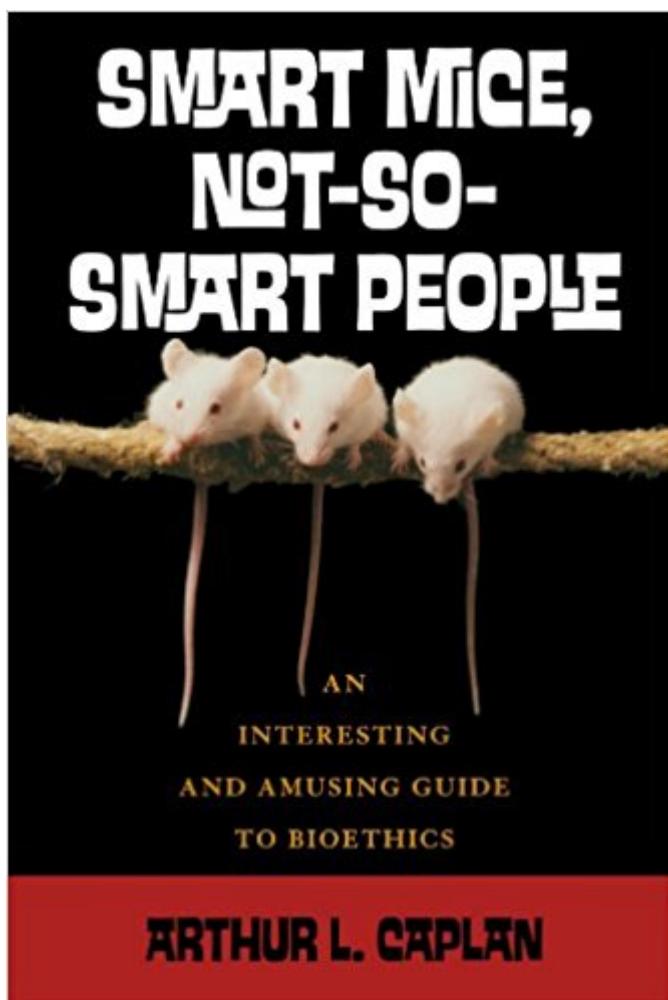


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Smart Mice, Not-So-Smart People: An Interesting And Amusing Guide To Bioethics



Synopsis

Famed bioethicist Arthur Caplan shares his provocative opinions on all things bioethical.

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Customer Reviews

Art Caplan has written a smart, provocative book that examines medical ethics in America and the intrusion of politics on complex, scientific issues. *Smart Mice, Not So Smart People* is an engaging read that tackles controversial subjects ranging from tube feeding to cloning and brings them alive for the layman. (Kathleen Kerr, reporter for Newsday) Bioethics is a field of inquiry only 40 years old. Arthur Caplan has emerged as its superstar and this collection of essays reveals why. Caplan is able to make sense of the latest, perplexing dilemmas created by the rush of advances in medical technology. He offers concise well written direction telling us not what to do but what we must consider in formulating our responses to these great and fascinating issues of our time. (Robert Bazell, Chief Science Correspondent, NBC News) Bioethics and the future arrived hand-in-hand, and we weren't ready. In the last two decades, the new biosciences have roared into gear, leaving a trail of unprecedented ethical and moral dilemmas like tire tracks in the road. Modern society must decide for itself on these issues, but it needs the guidance of a rare kind of person, equally conversant in science and in ethics. Art Caplan is a leader in this field, and he offers a masterful survey of our present and future challenges and dilemmas, clear accounts of the science, and incisive accounts of the risks, benefits, and range of choices in each area. After reading this book, I can think of no more knowledgeable, level-headed, or trustworthy guide than Art Caplan. (John

Timpane, Philadelphia Inquirer) What should we do with the extra embryos when we make test-tube babies? Who has the right to pull the plug on dying patients? Can we clone designer children? Art Caplan, one of the liveliest, most engaging bioethicists in the country, shares his trenchant observations about the many moral dilemmas in our high-technology medical system. Entertaining and serious at the same time, most readers will find this a hard book to put down (Marcia Angell, M.D., Harvard Medical School) Can you recommend a good book on bioethics for a beginner? I am often asked that question and until now I haven't had a very satisfying answer. Fortunately, Art L. Caplan has come along to save the day. His recently published book titled *Smart Mice, Not So Smart People: An Interesting and Amusing Guide to Bioethics* is a great introductory book which covers a stunningly wide range of topics. It is easy to read, doesn't pretend to be 'objective' and helps the reader ponder the key bioethics issues of our time. (Kathryn Hinsch, <http://womensbioethics.blogspot.com/>) Dr. Kaplan, as one of the most-prestigious bioethicists in the world, devotes most of his time to academic research and analysis, but this book is a light-hearted romp through the field, sure to stir everyone's pot. (Journal Of Clinical Research Best Practices)

Arthur L. Caplan is one of the most sought after bioethicists of our time. The recipient of many awards and honors, he was named U.S.A. Today's Person of the Year for 2001, one of the fifty most influential people in American health care by Modern Health Care magazine, and one of the ten most influential people in America in biotechnology by the National Journal. Caplan is a frequent guest and commentator for National Public Radio, Nightline, C.N.N., Fox, C.B.S., the New York Times, Washington Post, Philadelphia Inquirer, and many other media outlets. Caplan has authored or edited twenty-five books and more than 500 articles, and writes a regular bioethics column for M.S.N.B.C.com. He is Emmanuel and Robert Hart Professor of Bioethics, Chair of the Department of Medical Ethics, and Director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania.

Didn't realize that this was just excerpts from all his many writings about different topics related to ethics. I like his work, but was looking for something more substantive.

Do not purchase this book unless you're interested in a historical perspective. It is painfully unfunny and abounds with reference to the Bush administration year, most of which are no longer relevant. I would not have purchased this book had I known about the shallow coverage of the topics, the lame humor, and the dated topical references.

I felt as if I were being told that if I disagreed with the author I was simply uninformed. Even though I agreed with many of his points I was annoyed by his obvious political bias. I am not a Republican but come on, this was an excuse to bash them. There was no serious discussion of any issues, just a smug diatribe. There have to be other works with a more serious discussion of these important issues.

Collection of small but thought provoking essays on the ethics of many issues involving biomedical sciences and society.

This is a collection of interesting essays on various topics relating to biological social issues, especially ethics. They are grouped by topic, and undated, but it becomes obvious that they are written over a spread of time when an essay discussing the first cloning of a cat comes before an essay noting that cats, dogs, and primates have never been cloned. Oops, but none-the-less, his points about cloning are still well-taken. Just as identical twins raised in the same household are two different people, so a clone of Fido, Fluffy, or a deceased relative still wouldn't be the original. Fans of George W. Bush will not be happy, because Caplan clearly has a low opinion of his leadership in this area. He regards some of it as wrong headed, and some of it as mere grandstanding. So-called "embryo adoption" is an example of both. Bush hails the Snowflakes program which seeks to have excess embryos from in vitro fertilization (IVF) implanted to help other childless couples. That program regards all embryos as person, hence the rhetoric of "adoption." Great when it works, but this is not a novel idea, couple undergoing IVF have always had the option of donating them, and the leftover embryos may not have been implanted in the original couple because they were of poor quality. I particularly liked the points that Caplan made in his introduction. He remarks that teaching ethics alone is insufficient: "If parents or society expect perfection from those they teach ethics to, they will be disappointed. If instead they create the basis for remorse, self-correction, and a striving to do better, then they will have done a good job transmitting the tools of ethical conduct and character." Sometimes, after a difficult situation blows up, we can extend some compassion to a person who has done violence, or made a difficult choice when there was no perfect answer, but it freezes my soul that they so often feels not only no remorse, but not even any regret that that someone else got hurt. I also strongly applaud Caplan's indignation at the erratic nature of health care in the United States. While we debate the question of letting seriously ill people die, even if they don't want to live, or if they require very expensive but rather futile care, we let millions of people go without basic health care that would be relatively cheap and effective. Caplan has shown

some sensitivity towards women, taking the part of a woman with serious medical and developmental problems, raped and impregnated in her group home. Caplan chides Jeb Bush for opposing an abortion when she is likely to die in childbirth. But sometimes his sensitivity fails him. I was indignant about his essay "Seasonale: Medicine for the Sake of Convenience?" Seasonale is a medication intended to limit women's menstrual periods to four time a year. Caplan acknowledges that many women would be very happy with this, but he is skeptical. Perhaps realizing that he is on shaky ground, he throws in the issue of elective c-sections, a completely different and irrelevant subject. When speaking of brain engineering, Caplan disposes of the argument that it is unnatural: "The main flaw with this argument is that it is made by folks who wear eyeglasses, use insulin, have artificial hips or heart valves, benefit from transplants, ride on planes, dye their hair, talk on phones, sit under electric lights, and swallow vitamins." Caplan also has no problem with genetically modified organisms or cosmetic surgery. When talking about women limiting their menstrual periods, however, he says: "Is there anything about the human body that medicine should not try to alter? When it comes to women's bodies, the answer is apparently no. Medicine is more than willing to fool with Mother Nature." He even has the gall to ask: "[...S]hould it be part of medicine's job [...] to get rid of a messy and sometimes painful monthly experience?" Those two only begin the list of issues with menstruation. Since when is pain not a legitimate concern of medicine? Apparently when only women are suffering. Speaking of messy experiences, does Caplan also disapprove of treating bladder incontinence, or is that legitimate since men also have problems? Are the various and sundry complications and inconveniences of menstruation really so much less important than forehead wrinkles, which Caplan has no problem with using Botox or cosmetic surgery to treat? Well of course, after all, he might get wrinkles. As someone who has experienced both menstruation and wrinkles, I think his priorities are backwards. In sum, mostly interesting essays: I'd be happy to read more by Caplan.

Art Caplan provides a practical, easily grasped guide to today's controversial high tech medical issues at a time when scientific discovery is outpacing existing policy and yesterday's paradigms. His provocative and amusing essays range from cloning to engineering ourselves. His essay on brain enhancement brings it home when he frames the morality in the context of sending his son, Zach, to private school concluding that people want to optimize their brains. Caplan is a visionary leader in the field of bioethics. This new academic discipline is as critical to biotechnology as is groundbreaking scientific research. If Americans are going to benefit from scientific breakthroughs of the new millennium such as the mapping of the human genome, gene therapy and stem cell

research, we must have excellent communications between the scientific community and society. Smart Mice, Not So Smart People provides that critical communications bridge. Caplan has a unique ability to communicate to the academic community, the biotech industry, the decision-makers in Washington, the media, and the general public. Without the understanding and participation of each cluster of this mosaic, we will not be able to transform scientific advances to medical treatments in a timely manner. Nor will the necessary funding for cutting edge research be forthcoming if the societal issues are not integrated into the equation.

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