

# The Dream of the Perfect Child



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出版者:Indiana Univ Pr

出版时间:2005-6

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780253217608

Every parent wants a healthy, normal child, and scientific and technological advances have now made this increasingly possible to achieve. But, progress comes with a price. Tracing its roots from Enlightenment thought through the biological discoveries of the 19th and 20th centuries, Joan Rothschild shows how the dream of human perfectibility masks a darker motivation to eliminate all that does not meet its increasingly heightened standards. Joan Rothschild points to the thousands of decisions about prenatal testing that are made each day in the doctor's office, the context in which they occur, and how they add up to the discourse of the perfect - and imperfect - child. She argues that the mainstream bioethics community has been ineffective in raising appropriate questions, resulting in support for the status quo. Drawing on counter-voices from medicine and feminist ethics, as well as from pregnant women and people with disabilities, "The Dream of the Perfect Child" reevaluates the uses of genetics and prenatal testing. Ultimately, the goal is to change reproductive medical practice and thereby transform the dream. Joan Rothschild is professor emerita at the

University of Massachusetts, Lowell, and research associate at the Center for Human Environments, The Graduate Center, CUNY. She is author of many publications, including "Machina Ex Dea: Feminist Perspectives on Technology". She lives in New York City.

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