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

Hugh Lacey
Swarthmore College, hlacey1@swarthmore.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-philosophy

Part of the Philosophy Commons

Let us know how access to these works benefits you

Recommended Citation
https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-philosophy/129

This work is brought to you for free and open access by . It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Works. For more information, please contact myworks@swarthmore.edu.
Genetically Modified Foods: Debating Biotechnology by Michael Ruse; David Castle
Review by: Reviewed by Hugh Lacey
The Quarterly Review of Biology, Vol. 78, No. 3 (September 2003), p. 348
Published by: The University of Chicago Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/379994
Accessed: 23/06/2015 11:07

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

The University of Chicago Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Quarterly Review of Biology.

http://www.jstor.org
and that this expanded version of requires stronger
author's own position. Laurie makes a convincing
cerning privacy rights and the advocacy of the
fair presentation of the various competing views con-

reflections (Bioethical Issues in a Biobased Econ-
no mention of the controversy over the Consti-
tutional 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 con-
cerning 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.

Joseph S. Alper, Chemistry, University of Massachu-
setts, Boston, Massachusetts

Genetically Modified Foods: Debating Bio-
technology: Contemporary Issues.
Edited by Michael Ruse and David Castle, Amherst
(New York): Prometheus Books, $20.00 (paper). 355

This volume provides a wide range of opinions con-
cerning 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 pub-
lications: 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; Devel-
oping 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 head-
ings, 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 pre-
cauionary 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 appli-
cation 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 devel-
coping countries. It contains no substantial infor-
mation (e.g., from the complex debate that is tak-
ning 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 supple-
mented to strengthen the section on developing
countries and, more generally, the con point of
view.

Hugh Lacey, Philosophy, Swarthmore College,
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

Prematurity in Scientific Discovery: On Resis-
tance and Neglect. Based on a symposium held at
the University of California, Berkeley, 5–7 December
1997.

Edited by Ernest B. Hook. Berkeley (California): Uni-
versity of California Press. $80.00, xx + 378 p; ill.;

In 1972, the molecular biologist Gunther Stent pub-
lished 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. "Prematu-
rity" 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 problem-
atic interpretations, and most of the contributors
offer historiographically careful accounts of their
subjects.

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