

*Lecture Description*

GENETIC ENGINEERING AND THE CHRONIC MISREPRESENTATION OF FACTS

*The Biggest but Most Overlooked Issue in Bioethics*

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Although bioethicists have addressed a wide range of issues posed by recombinant DNA technology and its unprecedented power to alter genomes, they have overlooked the most crucial one: that the venture to employ this genetic engineering technology in food production has been chronically dependent on misrepresentation. Basic facts of biology (and about the technology itself) have been untruthfully portrayed; false claims have been issued by scientists, scientific institutions, and government agencies; unsettling evidence has been suppressed or significantly distorted; and scientists who performed the research that produced the evidence have been unjustly attacked, defamed, and demoted.

Even eminent institutions such as the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the UK's Royal Society have promoted GE foods through deceptive means. For instance, reports issued by the NAS have not only misrepresented the level of risk by misstating key facts, but have twisted the very meaning of the term, contrary to its technical definition. And the Royal Society has not merely engaged in the persistent contortion of truth, but has unjustly attacked well-conducted research that detected significant harm — while besmirching the reputation of the scientists who conducted it.

As my book, *Altered Genes, Twisted Truth*, solidly documents, the various delinquencies and deceptions that have been perpetrated on behalf of GE foods constitute, in aggregate, the biggest fraud in the history of science. And they have seriously damaged its integrity, because besides having spread massive misinformation, they have substantially impaired the scientific process. Any study detecting problems with GE food is routinely (and ardently) attacked regardless of its soundness, and any concern that's voiced is roundly rebuked no matter how well-founded, which has created a chilling effect that discourages independent investigation and critical thinking — and stifles the open discourse on which science relies.

Thus, the GE food venture is ethically unsustainable because it has become chronically dependent on twisting the truth and could not survive an open airing of the facts. It's imperative that all scientists who are genuinely dedicated to science stand up for it by standing against the misinformation campaign and working to restore the flow of honest communication.