

22 April 1970

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Dear Bernie

I have just read your paper "Threat and Promise in Genetic Engineering" and I feel I must write and tell you how good I think it is. I have thought a little about these problems, but I have never sorted things out as clearly as you have done. I particularly like your point (end of page 1, start of page 2) whether we should deliberately intervene. I also thought your remarks on polygenes were very much to the point and certainly lead one in the direction of eugenics. By a coincidence I have just started to read Karl Pearson's life of Francis Galton but I have not yet got as far as eugenic ideas. I am also very much in sympathy with your remarks (pages 5 and 6) on psychogenetics. But, in fact, I have found myself in agreement with almost everything you have said. The above points I have simply singled out for special mention.

I have a few small comments to make. Your comments at the top of page 14 reveal what I have always known, that you are a much more enthusiastic father than I am! Although I agree to some extent about what you say in a father's pride in his own offspring, I would point out to you that adoption is quite a common practice and the effects of this on the father can be studied experimentally without too much difficulty. Your remarks just before this about the problem of securing agreement on the traits to be selected, I don't think is really a difficult one. The target to aim for, as you imply, is high achievement, although many different types. What is to be avoided is one narrow criterion for selection.

The only positive ideas I have had on these problems myself are the following: Firstly, I think people who have twins, and especially identical twins, should be strongly encouraged, possibly by a financial

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inducement, to let one of them be adopted. Proper records of both children should be kept. The information which could be accumulated in this way would be invaluable. The cost would not be very great and I think people could easily be persuaded that what they were doing was for the greater good of society. In fact, I can imagine an advertising campaign to this end along the lines of 'donate a twin'. My other suggestion is in an attempt to solve the problem of irresponsible people and especially those who are poorly endowed genetically having large numbers of unnecessary children. Because of their irresponsibility, it seems to me that for them, sterilization is the only answer and I would do this by bribery. It would probably pay society to offer such individuals something like £1,000 down and a pension of £5 a week over the age of 60. As you probably know, the bribe in India is a transistor radio and apparently there are plenty of takers.

Finally, let me say that although I agree with you that these are basically long term problems, I also agree that they will be upon us sooner than we realize and as soon as intelligent discussion is started on them the better.

With all good wishes
Yours sincerely

F. H. C. Crick