



STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305

March 21, 1975

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Genetics
(415) 497-3032

Mr. Robert Waldinger
61 Columbia Street
Brookline, Massachusetts 02146

Dear Bob,

I was very glad to get your paper on Perspectives on Nazi Racism.

I do not know if there are other formalities that need to be fulfilled in order to express my assessment of your work. However, I hope that you can use the attached note to give you the appropriate grade.

Your paper is a curious mixture of passion and analysis, which I think you took pains to describe yourself.

Perhaps my main stylistic suggestion would be to turn it around and offer in the first part of such a production the best that you can do by way of a descriptive and analytical account, and then provide your own personal interpretations in the second part. This is a fairly small point and while I might still have room to offer some criticism along these lines, I think your paper so far outdoes most of the other commentary on that kind of history that it may be something of a landmark!

I am still somewhat amazed about the way in which Haldane, Huxley and Dobzhansky come through to you as you read their written works. Of course I have my own biases, in part because of my personal knowledge of these people and they surely did communicate much more to me through those contacts than may be evident in their writings. That is not a unique problem in this kind of historical interpretation and I would have to go back and read with great care what they actually wrote in order to dissect that from the other sources of my impressions.

You do have quite a thing about "eugenics", and I think you should be careful about using that as a stereotype-in-reverse. I think if you were to read more of Haldane's works, and perhaps also his biography (by Clark), you might be able to get a broader perspective on what was happening. There was certainly no more humanly oriented person with respect to his social objectives than J.B.S. Haldane. He was criticized far more for having been a life-long member of the Communist Party - although he had some trouble stomaching the Lysenkoist episode - than for any identification with racist-eugenics views! Although Huxley and especially Dobzhansky are on the other side of the political spectrum, I think their anxieties about the misuse of genetic terminology for racist purposes somehow has not gotten through in the material that you have read and cited to the extent that I know they

- 2 -

LT. J. P. KENNEDY, JR. LABORATORIES FOR MOLECULAR MEDICINE, DEDICATED TO RESEARCH IN MENTAL RETARDATION

MOLECULAR BIOLOGY

HEREDITY

NEUROBIOLOGY

DEVELOPMENTAL MEDICINE

were deeply committed to.

You seem to be mainly concerned that geneticists had nothing stronger to offer than an "abstraction," or an assertion about agnosticism about racial difference. Unfortunately that is exactly the limit of what scientific information has to offer. Would you wish them to have made contra-factual statements, about which they happen to have more expert knowledge than many people who dabble in this field, to comply with their humanistic biases?

About your analysis as to which groups felt beholden to speak out about Nazi racism, I would not wish to diminish what you said about the threat to the credibility of the scientific fields of anthropology and of genetics respectively. Certainly a scientist who feels that his own scientific arena is being perverted is going to sense, understand and respond to the outrage the sooner. But in addition I think you should not overlook the sense of responsibility that is a slightly different version of that theme. The anthropologist is expected to have a point of view about scientific knowledge of the difference among races; he would not be in the field if he were not interested in such problems; and besides the sense of threat to his field, I think that the members of these groups felt that they had a special right and obligation to speak out on these problems as part of their role in society. The geneticists were less vocal in print precisely for the reason that you indicated; that there was not that much that could be authoritatively stated by a student of Drosophila genetics that would bear on these questions - not only did he feel perhaps slightly less threatened; but he also may have felt that he was slightly less qualified to speak with "the ring of scientific authority" although certainly more so than other scientific fields. I think you should recall that scientists in general were more inclined to stay in their Ivory Tower in those days than is true at the present time - the politicization of scientific activity is in large measure an outcome of the public role of science, and of public support for it, that accompanied the many involvements of science, with government and with politics during and since World War II (the atomic bomb is of course the most outstanding but by no means the only one). I would have been particularly interested to see a more systematic outline of what different textbooks of genetics said in the 20's and 30's, and while this is in your paper it is somewhat scattered and I think there are a number of titles that were left out perhaps because they were not readily available.

I wonder if you did make any kind of systematic table about the manner and extent to which problems of race in man were discussed in various texts of genetics. I was particularly curious about the books by Sinnott and Dunn - a standard genetic textbook that went through many, many editions, eventually to be joined by Dobzhansky in co-authorship - and it might be especially revealing to trace how different editions handle the problem.

I have made some notes about particular pages of your manuscript, so I may be jumping back and forth now.

on Rose Frankau

Your remark on page 24 about Haldane dodging "rotten eggs" is about the most inappropriate thing that I can imagine in the light of his actual history! I do commend you to his biography, and perhaps also the partial autobiography written by his first wife, Rose Haldane, called "The Truth Will Out". If you will see the way in which he was involved in the Spanish Civil War, I think you might have second thoughts about contributing "dodging rotten eggs" to this particular person! I think the regret that you quoted was a perfectly honest and factual one, that he wished it were possible for science to be even more directly applicable to the amelioration of human problems. You might wish to keep in mind that the Soviet communist ideology on this particular question went through quite a number of vacillations and that there was a considerable interval during the 20's when the Marxists had rather tangible hopes about being able to apply eugenic approaches as part of the socialist system. The best source for this is Medvedev's book "The Rise and Fall of T.D. Lysenko" published a few years ago by Doubleday. *at*

I am not sure what criterium you are using in asking for "compelling scientific reasons for continuing the XYY study" - I would certainly want to dissociate that issue from the one of whether or not it is being conducted in an ethical manner sensitive to the rights and interests of the subjects. I guess it depends on whether you believe there is a scientific (and by that I mean ultimately a human) purpose in achieving a deeper understanding of the actual relationships between genotype and behavior. The fact is the XYY syndrome - as feeble a case as that is - is almost the only one where one can identify a clearcut genetic basis to behavioral difference in man. From my view I should think it would be very important to want to know a great deal more about that, not because I fantasy using genetic remedies for such situations, but rather that if we can understand better the ultimate underlying roots of differential behavioral development, we may have ways of minimizing serious problems that arise in many other non-genetic contexts. All other studies on behavioral genetics in man - until someone can identify some specific single gene segregations - must rely upon the feeblest of methodologies: things like twin studies, family correlations and so on which are absolutely inadequate to the task. Would you think it important to study, from a scientific standpoint, the developmental consequences of the XO karyotype? If we were to adhere to the principle that the study of human behavior is itself a "no no," I am afraid we will be left with nothing better than the unsupportable speculations of the Freudian analysts and their ilk in trying to find solutions to some of our major health problems. I do think geneticists have not very well gotten across - or perhaps many of them do not very well understand - the difference between the analysis of a genetic syndrome, and the forecasting of the specific therapeutic measures that would be involved in treatment and in prevention. If one were to discuss the study of the genetics of diabetes, it might illuminate the problem in a less inflammatory context.

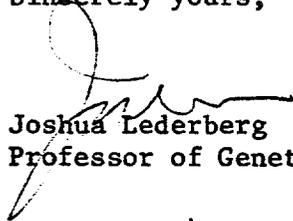
I am interested in the course that you are involved in and if you develop any written materials in that connection I would be very grateful to you indeed for them. I am sure that you are aware of the very deep cleavage that started quite early during the development of the discipline of genetics in the United States between the eugenicists (and others who were rash enough to think that genetics could be applied to human problems) and the experimentalists who fled from that arena. Paradoxically it was the more socially minded members of the discipline - just exactly people like H.J. Muller - who struggled to find ways in which genetics could be of some useful benefit in human affairs

and unfortunately did not have any better scientific base to come up with, ~~better~~ than eugenics by "rational germinal choice" (which as futile as it may be at least lacks the more vicious elements of involuntary sterilization and that bag.)

I do not think there is much history on American protest about Soviet oppression of Jews: it is rather more a matter of current events. But I do commend it to you as an example where you might find it very difficult to document the feelings of a great many people who have not come out in any organized statements on this question. ~~In fact,~~ I think there has been some National Academy of Sciences involvement in it, but in fact I think that may be the other way. If I am not mistaken, the President of the Academy, Phil Handler, made some very strong personal statements on this matter and that he has been criticized for unduly involving the Academy without having completely consulted its membership! One of the issues here is not merely the racist angle, but the extent to which we should encourage scientific involvement in things like international congresses in the Soviet Union, which imply a freedom of travel, thought, and communication, when the Soviet government is actively persecuting many of its own scientists and will not permit them to attend these congresses in their own country.

Let me repeat again that I have gone on in some length about your writing and this is a token of esteem not of criticism.

Sincerely yours,



Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr