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May 16, 1972

Professor Joshua Lederberg
Stanford University
Department of Biology
Stanford, California 94305

Dear Professor Lederberg:


We are planning a special issue of Social Research on the "Idea of Human Nature and the Natural." This is a subject which we feel is both of continuing historical interest, and of great particular importance at this moment. Our culture seems to be characterized by a tremendous yearning for the "natural", a category often counterposed to the allegedly destructive and life-denying qualities of civilization.

What we have in mind is an issue which will include a series of essays dealing with various aspects of this subject. It is our intention to include essays concerned with the following abbreviated list of topics: a) the idea of natural law: its role in jurisprudence and the relationship between what is either tacitly or explicitly forbidden by a society and what is considered to be a natural law; b) the idea of the primitive; c) the relationship between animal and human nature; e) the belief in the infinite malleability of human nature implicit in theories of totalitarianism, i.e., the implicit belief in the infinite controllability of human behavior (B. F. Skinner might be discussed in this context); f) an historical account of the concept of human nature; g) what we have and can learn about human nature from various disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences.

I would like to invite you to contribute an essay to this special issue and hope you might be willing to consider writing a paper which deals with the geneticist's view of human nature. I have in mind a paper which addresses itself to what genetics can tell us about the social aspects of human behavior and which might, if you saw fit, touch upon the issue of genetic racial differences. It would be a great privilege to be able to include such an essay in this special issue.

We are planning the issue for the Spring, 1973 and therefore you would have a considerable time in which to write, as our deadline for copy is December 1st, 1972. I very much hope that you will respond positively to this invitation, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully yours,


Arien Mack, Ph.D.
Editor

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