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385 Bellaire Road
Del Mar, California 92014

October 18, 1965

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Stanford School of Medicine
Palo Alto, California 94304

Dear Doctor Lederberg:

You were most gracious to take time to advise me; and your letter of October 13 conforms so closely to the position expressed by such others as Messers. Frederick Osborn and Theodosius Dobzhansky that my remaining reservations can only be pre- sumptuous. Nonetheless, Dutch obstinacy insists upon airing them. (Or are such racially-weighted traits, like Negro athletic ascendancy, mere illusion?)

Granted that irrational boasts of racial superiority brought Eugenics into poor repute and diverted attention from the far broader spectrum of individual vari- ance. Granted, too, that even individual comparisons are distorted by disparate environment. Yet to defer all action therefore, seems like withholding cancer treatment pending a total cure.

Should reproduction be condoned among the insane or genetically defective? Should the advantages so apparent in selectively breeding horses be denied our own posterity? If so, the Houyhnhnms may yet take over.

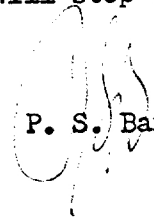
As you point out, only voluntary action is thinkable in a democracy--yet there's a trap in that adjective. A program can be voluntary only insofar as its prac- titioners have been educated, preconditioned, or (as you put it) enlightened. Our Great Society, propagandized from Madison Avenue even more than from Pennsylvania Avenue, proves this. Thus the immediate need of any program for Planned Posterity is more spokesmen like Mr. Rosenfeld, so that democracy may come to welcome ad- vances beyond mere random Family Planning.

Doesn't even "scientific inquiry" need some "preformed judgment" to determine which projects merit the allocation of limited funds, as well as how such projects shall develop and be reported? Would chance suffice? For example, I feel that even our lovely towns of Palo Alto and Del Mar are verging on asphyxiation in can- cerous metropoli. Doesn't that suggest research to determine whether we should try to breed progeny that will be happy through apathy, or such as may seek to control congestion, stenches, power poles, and sonic booms? Presumably, oblivious persons are most comfortable, but are they happiest?

Agreed that we are "woefully unprepared to exercise control of our own nature", but would you toss away the paddle in fright at sight of the rapids? Winners from David to Koufax would chorus "No!!".

Would that I were able to audit "Man as an Organism", for the title alone speaks a great truth commonly denied: that man is no Being, no Godling, but only an ani- mal whose brain evolved and continues evolving. Dare we refuse to oversee the pro- cess? For nowadays neither sun nor moon nor evolution will stop at our command.

Again, many thanks, .


P. S. Barrows

cc Dr. Robert J. Glaser
Mr. Peter E. Pratt