

February 16, 1965

Dr. R. L. Teplitz
Cytogenetics Division
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City of Hope Medical Center
Duarte, California

Dear Dr. Teplitz:

I fully concur with the concerns you expressed in your letter, and especially about opening up the problems of biological manipulation to a public forum. While I fully intend to accept what I see as my own personal responsibilities in the academic sphere, I am much more dubious about being able to carry much persuasion or interest to the general public. However, I have had some brief correspondence with Arne Tiselius about a magazine that might approximate the needs you indicated and I expect to hear some more from him about that. I heard some rumors that some of the staff of Science magazine were contemplating setting up another journal oriented more sharply to science and social questions, and there might be some advantage in pushing this approach rather than trying to obtain a special outlet for solely biological questions. As to your main point, however, I have concluded that I could best operate myself in a somewhat rarefied academic atmosphere and hope that the burden of a more popular exposition might be shared with those who had appropriate talent for it. It really does take an Aldous Huxley or a Vercors to carry across the message.

I foresee one special difficulty, namely achieving an adequate comprehension of the significance of mechanistic biology. It is especially disturbing to me that this idea is not simply rejected by many lay people, but that it is relatively unfamiliar to them. Not having thought about it, their almost instantaneous reaction to discussions of eugenics is often one of revulsion or accusations of demonism. One then has to go to a fairly fundamental, and therefore rather difficult, statement of ethical and religious principles to get beyond this barrier, and this is no negligible task.

Starting a new journal sounds like a rather ambitious and demanding project, although I would be glad to encourage anyone who felt he had the energy to put through. I have been considering writing a series of essays, both as possible serial contributions to the New Scientist (them mainly because they asked me), and perhaps for ultimate collection and publication as a book. However, while I've had some of these roughed out, I do not seem easily to find the time to

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polish them in the way they deserve to be before exposing them in this form. I would be interested in any specific comments that you might have on the enclosures and whether there are some more useful outlets that may occur to you that might be available for essentially the same kinds of statement.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg,
Professor of Genetics

JL:as

Enclosures

- # 102 - Biol Future of Man
- # 106 - Mol Biol, Eugenics & Euphenics - Nature
- # 116 - "Think" article
- # 110 - Crisis in evolution - New Scientist