

JUL 8 1972

ROBERT SARGENT SHRIVER, JR.

June 30, 1972

Dr. Joshua Lederberg  
Stanford University  
Palo Alto, California

Dear Josh:

I have been in Europe for a couple of weeks and haven't really had an adequate chance to thank you for writing me about the Zahn article on abortion. Thank you for doing so.

I didn't realize there was any "Olympian silence about the negligent loss of fertilized eggs." I suppose most obstetricians and others who work on the biology of human creation are anxious to eliminate the conditions which produce spontaneous abortion, and I guess, further, that until we know more about the causes of such abortions, nature is filling the gap by helping mankind to avoid births when such births are so physically repellent to the mother than spontaneous abortion occurs. In addition, I guess the whole economy of birth remains a giant "puzzlement" to mankind, not just to the King of Siam, for the extraordinary "waste" of human sperm, as well as eggs is one of the profligacies of nature that is hard for ordinary people to comprehend.

What does this all boil down to? It certainly means there is an awful lot more we don't know, compared to what we do know. It explains why we were interested in starting an Institute of Bioethics. The ethicists certainly need to know more about biology. Maybe biologists need to know more about ethics.

Please circle on your calendar the dates of October 13, 14 and 15. That weekend is tentatively set aside as the weekend when we will celebrate the first anniversary of the formation of the Kennedy Institute of Human Reproduction and Bioethics at Georgetown. There is a good chance that Sir Peter Medowar, Jacques Monod, Immanuel Jakobovits (Chief Rabbi of England), and Jean Cardinal Danielou, one of the most perceptive Catholic philosophers in Europe, will all be coming for that weekend, not just to be present, but to talk on "ethics and biology." We are hoping that all the members of our Board of Advisers will be present, plus the 140-odd scientists and philosophers who signed the Timberlawn Statement, copy enclosed, and

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other leaders of scientific, religious and political thought.

Thanks again for writing me. I really enjoy my contacts with you. Whatever happened to your newspaper column? I used to like to read it very much.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely,

  
Sargent Shriver