

CORRESPONDENCE

GENETIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN HUMAN ABILITY

To the Editor, The Eugenics Review

Sir,—Professor Thoday is concerned in his letter in the September number of THE EUGENICS REVIEW (59, 216) to insist on genotype-environment interaction in the explanation of any phenotypic variable of incomplete heritability. He is right and I have argued and illustrated this case in my Galton Lecture which appeared in the same issue. But I also say that many of the unsolved problems lie completely within the social and moral arts and sciences. This is also true and consistent with the first assertion. My son's IQ is the outcome of genotype-environment interaction. But I am not concerned about this when I think how best to help him master the new mathematics or decide whether it is right for him to go to a state or a private school.

When we recognise the autonomy as well as the interdependence of the biological and social studies we shall put our highly desirable co-operation on a firm footing.

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THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

To the Editor, The Eugenics Review

Sir,—I came across the following observation by Dr. William Hunter—brother of the more famous John Hunter—in his *Medical Observations and Inquiries*, Vol. 6, p. 291 “Three Cases of Malformation of the Heart” dated 1783. (Posthumous).

I shall venture a conjecture upon the scheme which the Author of our nature has laid down for perpetuating animals. Many animals, from the imperfections of their fabric, are necessarily to perish before the common natural period. This is compensated by a great superfluity of number, and the most perfect and sound animal upon the whole will have the best chance of living to procreate others of its kind. In other words, the best breed will prevail, the sound constitution will have the preference in procreation, and the defective, weak or diseased line will be wearing out.

If this doctrine were as well known with regard to the human species as it is in the breeding of horses, personal qualities would be more generally attended to in match-making than they generally are. We everyday see preference given to rank or birth or weight of possessions, at the expense of entailing diseases of body and mind upon a race doomed to early extinction.

Perhaps these speculations might interest readers of THE EUGENICS REVIEW, anticipating as they do the theories of Malthus, Darwin and Galton.

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EUGENICS

To the Editor, The Eugenics Review

Sir,—

Man is gifted with pity and other kindly feelings; he has also the power of preventing many kinds of suffering. I conceive it to fall well within his province to

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replace Natural Selection by other processes that are more merciful and not less effective. This is precisely the aim of eugenics.

It seems to me a great pity that in the current volume of THE EUGENICS REVIEW these words of Galton have been omitted. They are remarkably apt at the present time and particularly relevant to the problem of unemployment.

Advances in technology and automation will increasingly render unskilled labour redundant. Fewer but more highly skilled personnel will soon become the general pattern throughout industry. Natural Selection, unmitigated by "pity and other kindly feelings", would eliminate the unwanted through starvation. If I rightly understand Galton's words our aim should be *not* to frustrate this evolutionary and beneficial process of elimination, but to bring it about by more humane methods. There would seem to be at least two ways of doing so: (1) to keep unskilled and therefore relatively inefficient labour in employment by greatly reducing hours of work; (2) to eliminate the unwanted labour gradually by means of birth control.

There can be little doubt which method would be conducive to a happier state. The former would necessitate the maintenance of an unnecessarily large population consisting to a considerable extent of people who consumed more than they produced—a state of things which would inevitably lead to a lower standard of living. The latter would give us a much smaller population, able to produce enough food to feed itself and able, by its expertise, to obtain from overseas, in exchange for the high grade manufactures and valuable services it could offer at competitive prices, all the requisites for a very high standard of living.

Which method (if either) will a Parliamentary Democracy choose?

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