

[22 August, 1919]

My dear Fisher.

I am reading your manuscript, & write as I read. After reading the first chapter I feel that you may make an exceedingly useful and interesting book. I think I did tell you of Brentano's paper Vol X (I rather think) of the *Economic Journal*, quoted in Pigou's *Wealth and Welfare*. I believe that the Registrar General's office is now at work on the statistics of this question, from the last census, and getting confirmatory results.

Chapt. II does not please me so much; but this may merely be that we don't see quite eye to eye. But I do feel also it wants more orderliness. It is worth taking great pains with your first book-, even though a book is an awful grind. I generally write a thing out, make a careful precis or analysis of what I have written so as to get the whole argument clear, and then write it all again. Husley says he, often I think he

Said, wrote a thing out six times before he was satisfied.

Chap. II gives me a feeling - if I may speak frankly - that you are making a case to fit your preconceived conclusions. Limitation ought to, on your hypothesis, increase not only the objections to limitation but also sexual desire, and carelessness about the future, including the future welfare of progeny. Natural Selection ought to have lessened such forethought, and to have made us more reckless in certain matters than primitive man. You must not take your facts only when they fit your theories and neglect theoretical conclusions when facts are not available. Civilization has increased our power of looking to the future, and added to the desire to limit offspring. In this respect, though it has not altered the instinct, it may have weakened the effect of the reproductive instinct, (p 27). The qualities of the ~~poor~~^{rich} are those which are being stamped by limitation; can we show that this result is really visible?

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Before commenting further, I want to say that I have been very busy lately, as the summer school, though I did little, prevented me from resting. I think I am now rather muddle headed, and that may be the true explanation of some of my criticisms.

Your argument makes out that the moral instinct comes from evolution. Here one comes across a terrible philosophical stumbling block, on which I have written but not yet published. My conclusion is that there is an irreconcilable contradiction in the mind, necessitating the adoption of contradictory attitudes. Looking in my own mind, I must deny morality being the outcome or sanctioned by evolution; or it would not justify kindness to animals, & would back up German methods. Looking at others from outside I say their moral sense is the result of evolution. This is the hopeless contradiction in brief.

I do not think you make enough of the existing environmental causes of limitation, such as those I sketched in my statistical paper. It is for this reason I should like you to read Brentano if you have not done so.

I am amused to find a racial value in nepotism!

Love of wealth will be increased in the upper classes by limitation, and this quality will add to the effect due to the love of wealth common to all. You would not get rid of, but only lessen, the evils ~~due to~~ ~~limitation~~ due to the differential birth rate by moral condemnation of limitation. On the other hand limitation amongst the poor & unfit will check the upward movement and the increase of the inferior types, and would be highly beneficial. That religious sanction which sanctions such a means of doing good may, and I think would be most efficient. I

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think we must trust in the end
to 'religion', in the widest sense, to
combat this evil. And this makes it
more imperative to be sure that our
religion sanctions the best means to
attain the ends. I shall be interested
to see your conclusions.

I like Chap. III, but confess to
being a little puzzled about the alien
rulers. This may be only my stupidity.

These notes are hastily written,
and will be mainly useful, I hope, to
show how much I want you to
make a thorough good job of this
work.

Yours sincerely

Leonard Darwin