



## Parenthood: Right or Privilege?

Garrett Hardin

*Science*, New Series, Vol. 169, No. 3944 (Jul. 31, 1970), 427.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0036-8075%2819700731%293%3A169%3A3944%3C427%3APROP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-1>

*Science* is currently published by American Association for the Advancement of Science.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/aaas.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

For more information on JSTOR contact [jstor-info@umich.edu](mailto:jstor-info@umich.edu).

©2003 JSTOR

## AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

*Science* serves its readers as a forum for the presentation and discussion of important issues related to the advancement of science, including the presentation of minority or conflicting points of view, rather than by publishing only material on which a consensus has been reached. Accordingly, all articles published in *Science*—including editorials, news and comment, and book reviews—are signed and reflect the individual views of the authors and not official points of view adopted by the AAAS or the institutions with which the authors are affiliated.

### Editorial Board

1970

GUSTAF O. ARRHENIUS	RICHARD C. LEWONTIN
FRED R. EGGAN	ALFRED O. C. NIER
HARRY F. HARLOW	FRANK W. PUTNAM
MILTON HARRIS	

1971

THOMAS EISNER	NEAL MILLER
AMITAI ETZIONI	BRUCE MURRAY
EMIL HAURY	JOHN R. PIERCE
DANIEL KOSHLAND, JR.	

### Editorial Staff

#### Editor

PHILIP H. ABELSON

*Business Manager:* HANS NUSSBAUM

*Managing Editor:* ROBERT V. ORMES

*Assistant Editors:* ELLEN E. MURPHY, JOHN E. RINGLE

*Assistants to the Editor:* NANCY TEIMOURIAN, PAULA LECKY

*News Editor:* JOHN WALSH

*Foreign Editor:* DANIEL S. GREENBERG\*

*News and Comment:* LUTHER J. CARTER, PHILIP M. BOFFEY, NANCY GRUCHOW, SCHERRAINE MACK, SAMUEL Z. GOLDBABER, THOMAS P. SOUTHWICK

*Research Topics:* ROBERT W. HOLCOMB

*Book Reviews:* SYLVIA EBERHART, KATHERINE LIVINGTON, ANN BARKDOLL

*Cover Editor:* GRAYCE FINGER

*Editorial Assistants:* JOANNE BELK, ISABELLA BOULDIN, ELEANORE BUTZ, NANCY HAMILTON, CORINE HARRIS, OLIVER HEATWOLE, ANNE HOLDSWORTH, MARSHALL KATHAN, MARGARET LLOYD, VIRGINIA NUSSLE, PATRICIA ROWE, LEAH RYAN, LOIS SCHMITT, BARBARA SHEFFER, RICHARD SOMMER, YA LI SWIGART, ALICE THEILE, MARIE WEBNER

*Membership Recruitment:* PATRICIA CAESAR; *Subscriptions:* BETT SEEMUND; *Addressing:* THOMAS BAZAN

\* *European Office:* 22 Mulberry Walk, London, S.W.3, England (Telephone: 352-9749)

### Advertising Staff

#### Director

EARL J. SCHERAGO

#### Production Manager

KAY GOLDSTEIN

*Advertising Sales Manager:* RICHARD L. CHARLES

Sales: NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036: Robert S. Bugbee, 11 W. 42 St. (212-PE-6-1858); SCOTCH PLAINS, N.J. 07076: C. Richard Callis, 12 Unami Lane (201-889-4873); MEDFIELD, MASS. 02052: Richard M. Ezequelle, 4 Rolling Lane (617-444-1439); CHICAGO, ILL. 60611: Herbert L. Burkland, Room 2107, 919 N. Michigan Ave. (312-DE-7-4973); BEVERLY HILLS, CALIF. 90211: Winn Nance, 111 N. La Cienega Blvd. (213-657-2772)

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE: 1515 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Phone: 202-387-7171. Cable: Advancesci, Washington. Copies of "Instructions for Contributors" can be obtained from the editorial office. See also page xviA, *Science*, 27 March 1970. ADVERTISING CORRESPONDENCE: Room 1740, 11 W. 42 St., New York, N.Y. 10036. Phone: 212-PE-6-1858.

## Parenthood: Right or Privilege?

Birth control is not population control. Individual goals, not community needs, motivate individual actions. In every nation women want more children than the community needs.

How can we reduce reproduction? Persuasion must be tried first. Tomorrow's mothers must be educated to seek careers other than multiple motherhood. Community nurseries are needed to free women for careers outside the home. Mild coercion may soon be accepted—for example, tax rewards for reproductive nonproliferation.

But in the long run a purely voluntary system selects for its own failure: noncooperators outbreed cooperators. So what restraints shall we employ? A policeman under every bed? Jail sentences? Compulsory abortion? Infanticide? . . . Memories of Nazi Germany rise and obscure our vision.

We need not titillate our minds with such horrors, for we already have at hand an acceptable technology: sterilization. The taboo on this subject is fast dissolving, thanks to Arthur Godfrey and Paul Ehrlich, who have confessed their sterilizations in public. Fear (mostly unjustified) about the safety of the "pill" has motivated multitudes to follow in their footsteps.

It should be easy to limit a woman's reproduction by sterilizing her at the birth of her  $n$ th child. Is this a shocking idea? If so, try this "thought-experiment": let  $n = 20$ . Since this is not shocking, let  $n$  diminish until population control is achievable. The Women's Liberation Movement may not like it, but control must be exerted through females. Divorce and remarriage play havoc with assigning responsibility to couples or to men. Biology makes women responsible.

Many who want no third child would fight resolutely for the freedom to have that which they do not want. But what is freedom? Hegel said that "Freedom is the recognition of necessity." People need to recognize that population control is needed to protect the quality of life for our children.

The "right" to breed implies *ownership* of children. This concept is no longer tenable. Society pays an ever larger share of the cost of raising and educating children. The idea of ownership is surely affected by the thrust of the saying that "He who pays the piper calls the tune." On a biological level the idea of ownership of children has not been defensible for almost a century, not since August Weismann drew his celebrated diagram of the relationship of germ plasm to somatoplasm.

Biologically, all that I give "my" child is a set of chromosomes. Are they *my* chromosomes? Hardly. Sequestered in the germinal area long before *my* birth, "my" gonadal chromosomes have lived a life of their own, beyond my control. Mutation has altered them. In reproduction, "my" germ plasm is assembled in a new combination and mixed with another assortment with a similar history. "My" child's germ plasm is not *mine*; it is really only part of the community's store. I was merely the temporary custodian of part of it.

If parenthood is a right, population control is impossible. If parenthood is only a privilege, and if parents see themselves as trustees of the germ plasm and guardians of the rights of future generations, then there is hope for mankind.

—GARRETT HARDIN, *University of California, Santa Barbara*