

REBUTTAL TO PROFESSOR LEWONTIN

by Dwight J. Ingle

A professor has been described as a person who thinks otherwise. Professor Lewontin and I profess different views on several important social problems but share a deep concern for peace and social welfare.

Professor Lewontin says that I commit the *fallacy of biological determinism*. His apparent meaning differs from the usual connotation of these words, and I say that his choice of them represents the *fallacy of amphiboly*. He implies that I believe genetic differences cannot be modified. I suggest that he reread the opening statement of my paper: "It is my opinion that both genetic and environmental factors cause some of our great social problems that relate to health and competence. I believe that the prevention of these problems will require biological as well as environmental interventions."

I do believe that heredity lays down certain capacities for development—the neurological basis of intelligence is an example—which environment can modify but cannot nullify. I do not know of any contrary evidence that will withstand critical inspection. If Professor Lewontin believes that an individual who inherits genes for low intelligence can be made average or above average by any set of environmental factors, we should focus our debate on evidence for and against such claims.

Professor Lewontin does not examine relevant evidence in his criticism of my views. He tries to prove his point by discussing biological differences between men and women and thereby commits the fallacy of trying to prove causal connections by analogical reasoning. Analogies are helpful in illustrating meanings but have no value in proving a proposition. I agree with much that he says about the capacity of men and women to play the same social role or to reverse their customary roles. Men and women do not differ in average intelligence or in average qualifications for parenthood, which is the subject of this debate.

Professor Lewontin says that I committed the *fallacy of inflexible assortment*. It is true that correlation of values—in this case education and income—does not prove a cause-and-effect relationship. Neither can the absence of causal connection be assumed. I do not accept his argument that there is no causal connection: it is a shallow, reductive

argument which identifies amount of income with distribution of income. I shall not take time for analysis of its faults because my paper was not concerned with the relationship between education and income. I did not give either education or income as a parameter of good parenthood; hence he begs the question.

My opponent in this debate attributes the problems of social dependency to the economic system under which we live. Is he not a protagonist of an inflexible economic determinism when he excludes biological and cultural inheritance as having necessary effects upon the extent of social dependency? It seems to me that his reasoning illustrates the *fallacy of consistency indifference*.

He commits the *fallacy of sophistical refutation* by attributing to me the aim to turn the world over to fat cats, to abolish the lower social classes, and to abolish the peck order. I have not made the generalization that "people get, by and large, what they deserve." I do want to reduce the number of children conceived who are forever enslaved by genetic and cultural handicaps.

Professor Lewontin commits the *fallacy of ostensive definition* by identifying social welfare with being jobless. Millions of dependents are not counted among the jobless because they neither apply for jobs nor for unemployment compensation.

My basic recommendation is that, since man must limit his numbers, efforts to control births should be focused on those who for cultural, genetic, or medical reasons are unable to endow children with a reasonable chance to achieve health, happiness, self-sufficiency, and good citizenship. I am concerned about the reduction of disease, misery, dependency, and crime. I believe that individuals differ in qualifications for parenthood because of genetic differences in the bases of drives, health, and competence and because of cultural enslavement. I agree with Professor Lewontin that all humans should have equal rights and opportunities, but I do not believe that those who are enslaved by heredity and culture have the right to pass these handicaps on to children.

I interpret Professor Lewontin's remarks to mean that retardates, the mentally dull, the mentally ill, all who carry dominant genes which cause disease, habitual criminals, people who batter babies, those who abandon or neglect children, etc., are all qualified for parenthood and that a radical reorientation of social and political structure will create environmental influences which will fully correct or make tolerable all genetic and cultural handicaps.

I remain convinced that we need both environmental and biological measures to prevent and correct our biosocial problems.