

1974-02-03a [EQUALITY] Hereditary right vs Eyequetocracy

Connected with the other writing of this day on my topic in Int'l Congresses up to now, there occurred the following thought. The justification of hereditary right can be restricted to control of children before the majority and thus preserve the family while eliminating all the outmoded forms of inherited privilege. If my reasoning is correct of polarizing societal concerns which justify inheritance in one way or another vs the independence of the individual at majority, and declare that for the former there are now no reasons to tolerate transmission of great wealth, there is left only the premature individual to have the advantage of family privilege. This would seem to be only moral--the family can give the child its character, interests, education, etc. But the current debate over I.Q. introduces a new element, for it implies that one could take away all the other advantages which family gives and simply leave the (supposed) advantage of high I.Q. that upper class parents give their children at birth, and the same differentiation in society would occur that already exists.

I can treat this kind of Jansen-Hernstein argument two ways. One would be to embrace it, and to say that if this is true then there is no reason whatever to allow the hereditary transmission of great wealth; the greatest thing that the parents can give the child was achieved by coitus. The other would be to deny it and argue that the final superior achievement of the children of the rich or privileged is as much due to their sense of security and confidence of ultimate success in the world as to their supposedly greater ability. The difference between I.Q.s is not that great that leaders and followers are clearly marked. The average I.Q. child of the very rich will surely be more likely to have a significant position in society than the higher I.Q. child of disadvantaged parents. The very notion that a freely competitive situation of children will make the naturally better endowed ones always end up on top, if the difference in their I.Q.s and the next person's is only quite slight by an absolute standard, is quite foolish. At least there will be enough flexibility that some kind of mix will occur. If Herrnstein is correct, the caste situation should already have occurred; and if he is correct, there is nothing that can be done to prevent it outside of some legalized eugenic-program of randomizing mating.

In any event, one might see the eyequetocracy as a way of defending hereditary right on a last-ditch basis. Of the two ways just mentioned of treating it, I would like to use the former, but fear to do so because of the implied racism. On the other hand, the very existence of argument can help me. of not for very noble reasons, in the sense that those who oppose Herrnstein *et al.* on the basic genetic equality of all peoples will be hard pressed to defend social inequalities based upon wealth. Whichever side I take, and with whomever I contest the issue, I have a way of turning the argument to my benefit.