

What are the new scientific developments in the control of this dangerously prolific reproduction? Already we have more and better contraception than ever before in his-

tory.* The old spanner-in-the-works intervention of conception (diaphragms, condoms, foams, and jellies) was only the beginning. Soon we shall have a complete understanding of the entire reproductive process in all its complexity, including the subtle dynamics of hormones and their full effects on the nervous system. Present oral contraception is at only a primitive (faulty) stage, only one of many types of fertility control now under experiment. Artificial insemination and artificial inovation are already a reality. Choice of sex of the fetus, test-tube fertilization (when capacitation of sperm within the vagina is fully understood) are just around the corner. Several teams of scientists are working on the development of an artificial placenta. Even parthenogenesis—virgin birth—could be developed very soon.

Are people, even scientists themselves, culturally prepared for any of this? Decidedly not. A recent Harris poll, quoted in *Life* magazine, representing a broad sampling of Americans—including, for example, Iowa farmers—found a surprising number willing to consider the new methods. The hitch was that they would consider them only where they reinforced and furthered present values of family life and reproduction, e.g., to help a barren woman have her husband's child. Any question that could be interpreted as a furthering of "sexual revolution" alone was rejected flatly as unnatural. But note that it was not the "test tube" baby itself that was thought unnatural (25 percent agreed off the bat that they themselves would use this method, usually given the preconditions we have described), but the new value system, based on the elimination of male supremacy and the family.

It is clear by now that research in the area of reproduction is itself being impeded by cultural lag and sexual bias. The money allocated for specific kinds of research,

* I must ask the reader to forgive me here—this chapter was written before the "Pill Hearings," indeed, before the mushrooming of the ecology movement itself. Such is the speed of modern communications—a book is outdated before it even makes it into galleys.

the kinds of research done are only incidentally in the interests of women when at all. For example, work on the development of an artificial placenta still has to be excused on the grounds that it might save babies born prematurely. Thus, although it would be far easier technically to transfer a young embryo than an almost fully developed baby, all the money goes into the latter research. Or again, that women are excluded from science is directly responsible for the tabling of research on oral contraceptives for males. (Is it possible that women are thought to make better guinea pigs because they are considered by male scientists to be "inferior"? Or is it only because male scientists worship male fertility?) There are great numbers of such examples.

Fears of new methods of reproduction are so widespread that as of the time of this writing, 1969, the subject, outside of scientific circles, is still taboo. Even many women in the women's liberation movement—perhaps especially in the women's liberation movement—are afraid to express any interest in it for fear of confirming everyone's suspicions that they are "unnatural," spending a great deal of energy denying that they are anti-motherhood, pro-artificial reproduction, and so on. Let me then say it bluntly:

Pregnancy is barbaric. I do not believe, as many women are now saying, that the reason pregnancy is viewed as not beautiful is due strictly to cultural perversion. The child's first response, "What's wrong with that Fat Lady?"; the husband's guilty waning of sexual desire; the woman's tears in front of the mirror at eight months—are all gut reactions, not to be dismissed as cultural habits. Pregnancy is the temporary deformation of the body of the individual for the sake of the species.

Moreover, childbirth *hurts*. And it isn't good for you. Three thousand years ago, women giving birth "naturally" had no need to pretend that pregnancy was a real trip, some mystical orgasm (that far-away look). The Bible said it: pain and travail. The glamor was unnecessary: women had no choice. They didn't dare

squawk. But at least they could scream as loudly as they wanted during their labor pains. And after it was over, even during it, they were admired in a limited way for their bravery; their valor was measured by how many children (sons) they could endure bringing into the world.

Today all this has been confused. The cult of natural childbirth itself tells us how far we've come from true oneness with nature. Natural childbirth is only one more part of the reactionary hippie-Rousseauian Return-to-Nature, and just as self-conscious. Perhaps a mystification of childbirth, true faith, makes it easier for the woman involved. Pseudo-yoga exercises, twenty pregnant women breathing deeply on the floor, may even help some women develop "proper" attitudes (as in "I didn't scream once"). The squirming husband at the bedside, like the empathy pains of certain tribesmen ("Just look what I go through with you, dear"), may make a woman feel less alone during her ordeal. But the fact remains: childbirth is at best necessary and tolerable. It is not fun.

(Like shitting a pumpkin, a friend of mine told me when I inquired about the Great-Experience-You're-Missing. What's-wrong-with-shitting-shitting-can-be-fun says the School of the Great Experience. It hurts, she says. What's-wrong-with-a-little-pain-as-long-as-it-doesn't-kill-you? answers the School. It is boring, she says. Pain-can-be-interesting-as-an-experience says the School. Isn't that a rather high price to pay for interesting experience? she says. But-look-you-get-a-reward, says the School: a-baby-all-your-own-to-fuck-up-as-you-please. Well, that's something, she says. But how do I know it will be male like you?)

Artificial reproduction is not inherently dehumanizing. At very least, development of an option should make possible an honest reexamination of the ancient value of motherhood. At the present time, for a woman to come out openly against motherhood on principle is physically dangerous. She can get away with it only if she adds that she is neurotic, abnormal, childhating and therefore "unfit." ("Perhaps later . . . when I'm better prepared.")

This is hardly a free atmosphere of inquiry. Until the taboo is lifted, until the decision not to have children or not to have them "naturally" is at least as legitimate as traditional childbearing, women are as good as forced into their female roles.

Another scientific development that we find difficult to absorb into our traditional value system is the dawn of cybernation, the takeover of work functions by increasingly complex machines—machines that may soon equal or surpass man in original thinking and problem-solving. While it may be argued, as with artificial reproduction, that such machines are barely past the speculative stage, remember that it was only five to ten years ago that experts in the field were predicting that five or six computers would satisfy permanently the needs of the whole country.

Cybernation, like birth control, can be a double-edged sword. Like artificial reproduction, to envision it in the hands of the present powers is to envision a nightmare. We need not elaborate. Everyone is familiar with Technocracy, 1984: the increased alienation of the masses, the intensified rule of the elite (perhaps cyberneticians), baby factories, increased government efficiency (Big Brother), and so on. In the hands of the present society there is no doubt that the machine could be used—is being used—to intensify the apparatus of repression and to increase established power.

But again, as with the population explosion, and birth control, the distinction between *misuse* of science and the value of science itself is not often kept clear. In this case, though perhaps the response may not be quite so hysterical and evasive, we still often have the same unimaginative concentration on the evils of the machine itself, rather than a recognition of its revolutionary significance. Books and research abound on how to avoid Technocracy, 1984 (e.g., Alan Weston's *Privacy and Freedom*), but there is little thought about how to deal effectively with the qualitative changes in life style that cybernation will bring.

The two issues, population control and cybernation,

produce the same nervous superficial response because in both cases the underlying problem is one for which there is no precedent: qualitative change in humanity's basic relationships to both its production and its reproduction. We will need almost overnight, in order to deal with the profound effects of fertility control and cybernation, a new culture based on a radical redefinition of human relationships and leisure for the masses. To so radically redefine our relationship to production and reproduction requires the destruction at once of the class system as well as the family. We will be beyond arguments about who is "bringing home the bacon"—no one will be bringing it home, because no one will be "working." Job discrimination would no longer have any basis in a society where machines do the work better than human beings of any size or skill could. Machines thus could act as the perfect equalizer, obliterating the class system based on exploitation of labor.