

'The Genetic Elevation Project'

Dear Human,

I am writing to you, to warn you, to plead with you, to do anything I can to implore you to read this letter. Read this letter. And act upon the information you receive. This letter has passed through centuries and continents to appear before you now. Do not just ignore it. This is not another piece of fiction or entertainment for you to absorb with an absent mind. Everything that you know will soon be nothing. In the next decade, there will be masses of changes to your society and the science that surrounds you.

Where shall I begin? I cannot recall the origin of this downhill spiral that the human species cast upon themselves. Back then, everything seemed to happen so slowly, so gradually, nobody could have guessed or realised what was happening. Now, when I think back, everything seems to have come crashing and burning down within a blink of an eye.

The initial stages, from what I recall, consisted of genetically modifying children in order to remove genes, abnormalities or mutated chromosomes which would give rise to severe illnesses such as cancer, dementia, depression and diabetes. Illnesses which were detrimental to their health and well-being. This would be done very simply when the child was still an embryo. A few screenings, an extraction or alternation of a small amount of proteins. Easy. The procedure helped millions of families. Illnesses that used to bring so much pain and suffering to human lives were close to eradication. Many people benefitted and adored the simple procedure which offered such health benefits to their children.

There was some opposition to such practises, however the government, the politicians, and the establishment all created laws in order to prevent designer babies and children. They vowed that science would only be used to help eradicate detrimental illnesses, not for cosmetic enhancement. All their promises and words of certainty began to disintegrate. They said such genetic modification would be carefully controlled and monitored. Needless to say this was not the case. The deregulation commenced. Deregulate. Deregulate. Deregulate. Everything began to unravel. What was once owned and run by the trusted state started to collapse.

Greedy private corporations saw the opportunity that was available, the lucrative market that such scientific advances offered. When I remember back, they seemed like vultures, praying upon anything they could. Within the very early stages of health genetic modification, these companies began law suits for patents concerning genetic enhancement and modification. Law suits waged with billions of pounds behind them. These were high-stakes. I am still undecided as to whether they were able to speculate over the way in which the science and society "progressed", or whether they caused such "progression".

In all honesty, this market was bigger and offered more than any scientific breakthrough previously; it offered more profit than all pharmaceutical drugs combined. Now almost all illnesses, including the common cold, could be eradicated. Furthermore, the leading corporation, COMPLETE, was able to gain copyright over 'The Genetic Elevation Project'.

'The Genetic Elevation Project' allowed parents to have complete control over selecting the alleles determining their child's appearance, intelligence and personality traits. *We promise to provide you with the perfect and utopian child that you always wanted*, they advertised. *It is your moral duty to create a child with the best possible life. Surely if you loved your child, you would pay as much as you can to secure the best possible start for it? This is the only way our species can progress. Our society needed this! Society and human evolution had stagnated. Now we have 'The Genetic Elevation Project'!* These opinions and voices flooded through society. Such opinions started through mass advertising and media outlets controlled by the corporations who owned the project. The government began to propagate the opinion too. Soon it was forgotten that they had been completely opposed to such an idea. The government knows how quickly the public forget. They said it was a 'selection pressure', and only those who got this procedure would thrive in nature. What they meant was this was another commodification of human life under capitalism, another market pressure, and only those who got this procedure would thrive and progress in society.

Of course there was global outrage. Riots. Protests. Strikes. Most people did not agree with the idea of *genetic elevation*. They liked *genetic health modification*. But this, this was too far. This wasn't natural. The corporations and the government were too powerful. This would be catastrophic. Their concerns were right. But there was nothing that could be done at this point. Too many people had already joined and used 'The Genetic Enhancement Project' in order to help provide their children with the best possible head-start. Of course the procedure was very pricey. Very very pricey. At first, only the upper-middle class and upper-class citizens were able to invest in their child's future in this way.

In their bubble, it became a pressure, or an expectation to join the Project. It was the parents' *moral obligation* to provide their child with all the equipment at their disposal to secure the best possible quality of life. What responsible parents wouldn't do everything in their power to ensure their child's ultimate and optimum happiness and potential? The Project began to be hailed as the saviour for the human species. Most undesirables were eradicated, average beings were now seen as invalids, perfection was the new average. Diversity was a notion of the past. A new threshold had been set. A threshold of perfection, but normalized perfection. The blood-line was perfect; humans began to create a 'perfect' (but forever minimizing) gene pool. The 'super-child', would become the 'super-human' or 'super-man', who would supposedly lead us into becoming the 'super species'.

The Project became more and more widespread, as the demand rose, the price also steadily increased. The procedure became exceptionally expensive due to not only the success it promised, but the return that was promised. It was not only an act of care and love for their child, but an investment in the future and success of their offspring. COMPLETE could charge extortionate prices as so many people in society followed their peers and chose *genetic elevation* for their children. It became a similar notion to a mortgage, people from all classes were encouraged (pressured) into taking out substantial loans to secure a safe future for their children.

Many loving parents began to work late hours and weekends in order to pay for what they were made to believe was the best life and start for their children. Nurture became something of the past, parents no longer had the time to connect with their children, and

believed that their 'super-children' were destined for greatness due to solely their genetics. The human soul was ignored. All traits and personalities were supposedly determined purely by genetics and science. As opposed to genes becoming humans, humans became genes.

Whilst this situation was problematic at the very least, it got progressively worse and worse. The corporations gained significant wealth from the Project, additionally they provided an efficient and dedicated work-force for all establishments and businesses. Capitalism and science still strove for more. More advances. More efficiency. More modernity. The Project decided that 'super-children' no longer needed coloured vision. Why would one need coloured vision when diversity had been eradicated? The spectrum of colours basically had become a variety of greys all blurring into a haze of not completely identical, but similar bodies. Wasted proteins, they said. *Proteins are valuable and shouldn't be wasted on unnecessary features*, they said.

COMPLETE also decided that 'super children' should be given telepathic skills with one another. All 'super children' were genetically programmed to share thoughts between each other telepathically. Such programming was the most efficient idea, this aspect of enhancement was in the terms and conditions of the procedure. It had been worded in an enigmatic manner, *communication skills will be enhanced and children will be able to connect with one another in the most effective and personal way*. It did not specify that the ability to listen and speak would then be completely removed from the 'super-children'. Once again, *wasted proteins*. Why would future generations need to speak or listen when they could instantaneously understand their fellow 'super species'.

Parents were at first outraged by this. They were unable to communicate with their children. The system, however, soon persuaded them that this was best. They delivered some speech about *the evolution of the human species and the way in which they would all interact in the future. No genes should be wasted, and if an aspect of life could be made more efficient and enhanced, then humans were obliged to do it! We wouldn't want the human species to die out, would we? We must thrive! Thrive together; a united community! Isn't that what all you caring, devoted parents signed up for? You wanted this for your children!*

Whilst COMPLETE preached about the benefits of telepathy rather than speech, listening, expression and empathy, they failed to mention the main reason for their new enhancement. This brain modification provided them with the ability to fully control who the 'super children' were able to contact and connect with. They were only able to connect and mix with other 'super children'. This ensured that they were not at risk of mixing with the undesirables. Furthermore, who would be able to know or expose what information they were able to receive? Was the telepathy true, uninterrupted, unfiltered? Nobody other than COMPLETE fully understood or knew the full extent of the procedure. True communication had been halted. Nobody was fully aware of COMPLETE's agenda. Some were sceptical. Conspiracies began to sprout out in society. It was too late. COMPLETE had full control over the subjects they had been granted full permission over to modify and enhance.

I beg you, Human, please try to change the future. I write this to you as it is the only thing I can think of which may be able to prevent the formation of the society I currently inhabit.

Genetics: Science and Society

Student Devised Assessment: A scientific utopia, A societal dystopia

Please Human.