

An Intangible Eden

By Brian Jordan.

We all have our ideals. We wish for ourselves to be more intelligent, more athletic, more beautiful. We wish for a better world, a place free of disease. A society beyond depression. We hear of bullying, we hear of mental illness. So many seemingly inalterable complications. We convince ourselves that it's the way our world was created. We tell ourselves this for the same reason that we attribute our failures to the planets; how else can we cope? Only, we do not have to. We've improved so many lives, done everything in our power to protect the ones we love. Parents have turned to genetic selection through IVF for all of the above reasons, and yet we, as a society, lash out against them. I cannot understand those who would deny parents the opportunity to save their children from the horrors we have endured. Those without empathy for what so many of us have suffered through. What does that say about us?

At the age of fourteen, I was hospitalised. My parents could only watch as my white blood cells failed before them. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep. I told my parents that I wanted to die. I writhed in agony as dirtied knives wrenched violently within me, the taste of sterilisation everywhere. My mother sat there by my bed, and told me she felt helpless. She couldn't do anything for her son. I recovered. So many other children don't. Some insist that genetic selection is amoral. How is a parent, a mother, a father, doing anything to save their child, amoral? How can parents supposedly not love IVF born children, sons, daughters, when they spend thousands, in the hopes of saving their child from a defective gene? No one should ever have to watch their child die before them.

To those of you who have children; have you ever watched your son, your daughter, come home from school, eyes stained red? Ever asked them what's wrong, only to have them push you away and isolate themselves? Having a bullied child is sickening. They tell you it's because of their hooked nose, their oily skin, and you realise that it is you, through your genetic traits, that have given them this. You can only watch as they become self-loathing, feeling as if they are worth nothing. They develop eating disorders. They turn to cosmetic surgery. Depression is a crippling thing. Through genetic selection, parents have the opportunity to ensure their children do not have these perceived faults. Critics accuse parents of vanity, but what parent can be considered this, for wanting their child to be free from this pain? To not have to suffer through what they did? These parents simply want to make this difficult choice, so that their children never have to.

We all remember those times when we felt like we were worthless. When we couldn't understand complicated arithmetic, when we would spend hours studying for something that others could pass effortlessly. You always wished you had an eidetic memory, abstract reasoning. You fear for having children, because you know that when they struggle, you'll blame yourself. You cannot understand why life is so unfair, why your children have to suffer through this. You can help your child have a better life, an easier one. From self-hatred over Leaving Certificate, achieving previously unfathomable results, all from an additional few IQ points, because you want for your child what you never had. Your child could be a doctor, a lawyer, they could discover and invent things. Education has always been unequal. Giving your child this gift can make the world a better place. For your child. For everyone. When has loving your child become something to be ashamed of? Vogue's most recent survey, asking women if they wanted their children to be more beautiful, intelligent, or happy than themselves, responded with 98% hoping their children would be. Still uncertain?

There are many who see genetic selection as unnatural. Dr. Rodger Gosden asked us to *"Imagine the reaction there would be if organ transplantation were prohibited because it is 'unnatural'"*. Years ago, people told us it wasn't what nature intended. Would you deny your child a kidney, if theirs was failing? No? So why would you deny them the possibility of health, of freedom from this pain altogether? Genetic selection, like organ transplantation, saves lives. Our families lives. When your family is sick, and cannot afford treatment, consider how genetic selection would prevent this debt. By ensuring your son, or your daughter, never has to set foot in a hospital. Never looks at healthy children and ask why they're not like everyone else. Why they need others organs. Surgery.

I ask those reading to consider a young girl, Sarah. Her parents love her, they want nothing but the absolute best for her. She becomes sick. One day when attempting to wake her up, she doesn't. The doctors tell them that their little girl Sarah, has leukaemia. They face the realisation that their daughter, who they've loved since the day she was born, will die, and they have to watch. They aren't suitable donors, and neither is anyone else. Genetic selection can save her. They can conceive a perfect genetic match in a child, who can save their daughter. You could argue that the child was only born to save another. Could. They have done what any parent would have; they have saved their daughter. They will love this IVF child, for granting their other one life. Consider now what you're taking away from girls such as Sarah. Often times we do not fully understand what the consequences are. You do now, so what have you to say, when you take away their lives?

You may still argue of its ethics, you may still consider the decision. Take just a moment, and imagine a future. Envision a place where genetic disorders are unheard of. This is our ideal world. However, it's only a vision. Why? Parents are unable to save their children, to allow them an easier, a better, existence. They will advance the human race, society, and give us the tools to save the world. We could stop overpopulation. There are still those who insist parents are vain. Tell me, how can you say a mother, or a father, does not love a child who they've spent years planning, spending tens of thousands to ensure their child is free of all the terrible things they've had to endure? How can they be berated, when alcoholics and drug addicts continue to have children of their own?

We cannot simply criticise our world. We have to correct it. Voice your opinion, protest, make the right decision in IVF referendums. Don't you want your child to be more creative, more intelligent, happier with themselves? Will you save them from cystic fibrosis, from muscular dystrophy? It may be too late for you, but it's not too late for your children. Plato, an ancient philosopher, famously said *"We all wish for an ideal world – we simply fear the path getting there."* I can say little else to persuade you, other than the obvious; do not mess with children's lives. Do not interfere or criticise parents who want to help their children. If you do, then our ideal world really is nothing more than an intangible Eden.