

Shine Brighter Première

FlashFile 16 Better babies?

Document 1, Extrait p.140 – Film de Andrew NICCOL, *Gattaca*, 1997

Maria and Antonio are a couple who meet with a geneticist in order to design their future baby.

GENETICIST

You've already specified blue eyes, dark hair and fair skin. I have taken the liberty of eradicating any potentially prejudicial conditions – premature baldness, myopia, alcoholism and addictive susceptibility, propensity for violence and obesity –

MARIA (*interrupting, anxious*)

We didn't want diseases, yes.

ANTONIO (*more diplomatic*)

We were wondering if we should leave some things to chance.

GENETICIST (*reassuring*)

You want to give your child the best possible start. Believe me, we have enough imperfection built-in already. Your child doesn't need additional burdens¹. And keep in mind, this child is still you, simply the best of you. You could conceive naturally a thousand times and never get such a result.

ANTONIO (*squeezing Maria's hand*)

He's right, Maria. That's right.

¹ fardeaux

Maria is only half-convinced, but the Geneticist swiftly moves on.

GENETICIST

Is there any reason you'd want a left-handed child?

ANTONIO (*blank*)

Er, no...

GENETICIST (*explaining*)

Some believe it is associated with creativity, although there's no evidence. Also for sports like baseball it can be an advantage.

ANTONIO (*shrugs*) I like football.

GENETICIST (*injecting a note of levity*)

I have to warn you, Mr Luca, he's going to be at least a head taller than you. Prepare for a crick² in the neck in sixteen years time.

Antonio beams proudly.

[...]

GENETICIST

Now you appreciate I can only work with the raw material I have at my disposal but for a little extra... I could also attempt to insert sequences³ associated with enhanced mathematical or musical ability.

MARIA (*suddenly enthused*) Antonio, the choir...

GENETICIST (*interjecting, covering himself*)

² *torticollis*

³ a group of DNA sequences

I have to caution you it's not foolproof⁴. With multi-gene traits there can be no guarantee.

ANTONIO

How much extra?

GENETICIST

It would be five thousand more.

Antonio's face falls.

ANTONIO

I'm sorry, there's no way we can.

Andrew NICCOL, *Gattaca*, 1997

⁴ *infaillible*