

A Shock from Genetic Discrimination

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Movie can always be a good thing, can't it? Come on! Let's begin our trip of movie!

In the not distant future, human beings are distinguished only by their genes. The moment a baby is born, its future can be foreseeable—the life-span, intelligence, body construction, the probability of getting cancer. When you take part in a job interview, resume and the first impression are no longer important. Nothing is expected except the sample of your blood. Gattaca Corp. is such a company in that era. Blood is the only ID of each employee. Those of superior genes enjoy high social status, while those with inferior genes are regarded to be the defect, who are eliminated from the so called “*normal society*”. Vincent (by Ethan Hawke) is such a defect person. He was born by normal pregnancy rather than genetic reforming, unluckily, he is foreseen to be heavily shortsighted, high probability to get heart disease, low IQ and life-span of only 35. Struck by the reality, Vincent's parents decided to have one more baby by sifting excellent genes from their both sides. Thus, Vincent got a brother, a perfect “*normal person*”. Even though Vincent took great efforts to catch up with his brother, he had to confess that he was the weak. Unwilling to stay in a family full of indifference and discrimination, Vincent left home one night himself. He wanted to prove that he would be an exception in the world dominated by DNA, but he failed. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't get a job except to be a cleaner, because he can never conceal his genes, which can be easily obtained from his hair, fingerprint, saliva and many other small aspects.

Have you been shocked? The movie is called “Gattaca”(G A T C——four elements of our DNA).It's about the future, but the meaning works in our real life. Movie is a prediction, also an allegory. Now you can go on your trip yourself, but now let's come back to the reality. I guess it's a new concept to you (for it's the same to me) that mentioned in “Gattaca”——*genetic discrimination*.

Actually it's not that a strange concept in America. In 2008, representatives of the U.S. government voted to outlaw genetic discrimination. In a related report “Genetic discrimination: Unfair or Natural?” (by Michael Kinsley published on “Time”), the reporter explained the main reason, “The bill tells employers and insurance companies that they may not use the results of genetic tests in choosing their employees and customers.” Obviously, genetic discrimination is *not* far away.

“Gattaca” was made in 1997, and the genetic discrimination really came to be a serious problem nowadays. What a foresighted director and writer Andrew Niccol is! Let's follow the step of this

genius director and think about the problem of sifting genes ahead. As is showed in the movie, in Vincent's case, sifting excellent genes in advance is a kind of responsibility of parents to their next generation. In fact, really not a small number of babies are born to be congenital defect nowadays. Many of them have to bear the pain from the disease itself but also being looked down. Some are even abandoned. Obviously, it's unfair. Then, what's the result of this unfairness? Michael Jackson whitened his skin; pop singers do surgery on face and body; hundreds of people everyday are chewing vitamin..... Actually, we're expecting congenital excellent genes, but we haven't, so we have to change it after we are born. To be frank, we sympathize with Vincent, but hope to be his brother. Selfish can never be a crime but just human nature. You see. It's a good excuse for those refuse congenital defect employees and customers.

About Mr. Niccol's prediction, let's hear some other voice.

Q: After you got some knowledge of the world the movie predicted, what you think about "genetic discrimination"? Will you have a doubt about your genes or just ignore it?

Jam & Ricky Rosit (Philippine / male/ scholars of CUK / Catholic):

God helps me.

A: (Jam)You are defect, and I'm defect as well. Nobody is perfect. (Ricky Roisit)Discrimination exists everywhere, and it's impossible to deracinate it by changing the genes, for there comes up the new discrimination. In stead, one shall have a hope in the life. I'm a catholic, so I believe in God. When I suffered from some negative words, God told me to be calm. My motto is "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you all the desires of your heart." This passage for me means in everything that I do here on earth I have to see to it that God is very pleased so that in return as His reward for me, He will give me all the desires of my heart. I just ignore the discrimination and go on my happy life.

Q: If you are living in Vincent's era, will you choose to sift excellent genes ahead so that you can ensure a perfect baby at least a normal one?

Yang Biqi (Chinese / female / exchange student to CUK / no religion)

A: There is limitation of everything, including human beings. To live longer, to live perfectly is to close to die. Man is not the only dominator of the world. What's more, if the parents know everything of their child in advance, it'll be a boring thing to bring up a child. I want to have experience of overcoming growing-up problems with my child. That's meaningful. However, personally, I have to confess that I don't expect that'll be a congenital defect baby. Even I'm a millionaire, I don't want to spend all the money in curing. I can accept to choose genes ahead only to avoid suffering an "accident".

Victoria (American/ female / professor of CUK / no religion)

Life will teach you more.

A: I don't think even a person with excellent genes can be perfect. Science cannot be that definite. I think life will teach you more. One of my cousins is deaf, but he has great eyesight. He plays the piano very well. And now he got married. I mean that if you're a congenital defect person, you won't have a burden, because your parents won't expect too much of you. Actually, you have more freedom than a normal one. Be confident and you will be better.

Seungmi Kang (Korean / female / senior student of CUK / no religion)

A: Self-fish is human nature, but it's bad to be individualism. Parents cannot decide everything of their children. We're all human beings with love and heart. If we all sift excellent genes to have baby, then they will be the same to each other. All perfect is no perfect.

Through some interviews, it seems that everyone is throwing eggs to what Mr. Niccol has predicted in "Gattaca". Of course, it's good and necessary to be optimistic toward our future. But is it really so? Science experiments are going on and further studies of DNA will be a forever company. Maybe one day we will naturally enter the genetic world without even realizing it. Nobody knows. What really matters is our way of thinking. Taking off the cover of genetic discrimination, there is more serious problems actually existing —— our way to treat each other. We can lay down policy for the weak, but our attitude toward each other can never be forced to change. It's whose problem? Expert's? Yours? Mine?