

March 30, 1942

Dear Mother,

My thanks for your letter and enclosures from Dobzhansky and Darlington. I am returning the two latter.

I am heartily glad that Dobzhansky persuaded Darlington to drop the last two paragraphs, where is introduced the curious dogma that natural selection will favour any arrangement which increases the number of fertile eggs <sup>divided</sup> ~~provided~~ by the adult population. (As though the 'species' made a profit by *reducing*!)  
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The fact is, and this is a case which illustrates it well, that people hear the phrase "natural selection", and perhaps some trivial example of its action, and at an early age persuade themselves that they understand how it works. Usually, indeed, when first heard of in childhood it is expounded by someone who not only does not understand it, but does not know that there is anything to understand.

So far as I can see, Dobzhansky, though right in suppressing the paragraphs, has advised this course principally for the wrong reasons, for the statements he makes as to differences between North and South, high and low stations, Winter and Summer, are in no way evidence at all against a stable selective balance, although

what he seems to say at first as to great fluctuations in the gene ratio, if this can be interpreted as meaning fluctuations not due to the larger factors he mentions, would be evidence of instability, or at least evidence that not in all conditions was the gene ratio stable.

However, the great thing is that the cytological discussion has not been marred by such an unhappy adversion to the selective problem. I have been looking at ~~Mr~~ Saghmanidis thesis, and I think he expresses himself well, in decent English, reflecting intelligible ideas. This is really more than can be said of most Ph.D. candidates, but you will know better than I whether he has a real understanding of what he is writing about.

A viva, though not now compulsory, is, I imagine, always desirable. What do you think of coming to lunch some day and examining him here in the afternoon. You might be able to bring some Lythrum families at the time. I want, if I can, to get these planted out before the 16th, if they are sufficiently hardened, so perhaps they should be sent in advance of your visit, if you are able to make one.

Yours sincerely,