# Tell Aristotle\*

By Jim Ferris

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/jim-ferris>

*As to the exposure and rearing of children, let there be a law that*

*no deformed child shall live.*

           Aristotle, *Politics*

Tell Aristotle I lived.

Tell him Dave did too.

Tell him the state has not

yet fallen, though you know

kids these days. Tell him perhaps

all our words are but

elaborations, repetitions

of that crier's claim.

Tell Aristotle, tell the Spartans,

tell the legions of those

who think they can't afford the difference

that difference makes,

tell Montaigne, tell Hobbes,

tell Dr. Tiergarten

and that off-key singer

of sad and silly songs,

tell them the useless eaters

have survived,

tell them there are more of us now

than ever, disorderly,

imperfect, splashing out the gene pool,

what a messy species,

tell them my brother Dave and I

inhabit this moment,

tell Aristotle we are alive,

tell them all we thrive.

*\*This poem is part of a poetic sequence exploring, among other things, the impact of disability on the poet's family of origin, particularly after the birth of his youngest brother, David, who has Down syndrome. "Dr. Tiergarten" refers to the infamous Nazi T4 program of exterminating people with disabilities, named for the address of its headquarters at Tiergartenstrasse 4 in Berlin. Peter Singer is a philosopher still not fully discredited for his work which argues for a "right" to kill disabled newborns.*