

# Eugenics

## The History, Philosophy and Sociology Of a Complex and Persistent Movement

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# Eugenics

- Meaning and Purpose
- Origins: Ancient and Modern
- British Eugenics
- American Eugenics
- Global Eugenics
- Philosophy, Ethics and Sociology
- A Theological Perspective



# Eugenics: Its Meaning & Purpose

- Derived from the Greek: eu-genea (or eu-geneas)
  - Meaning “well born” (Cf. Eu-thanasia)
  - Coined by Sir Francis Galton
  - Cf. “dysgenic”
- Sir Francis Galton: “the study of all agencies under human control which can improve or impair the racial quality of future generations”
- James D. Watson: “Once you have a way in which you can improve our children, no one can stop it.”



# Eugenics: Positive and Negative

- Positive Eugenics: encouraging men and women of superior genetic endowment to reproduce. Matchmaking.
- Negative Eugenics: screening men and women with inferior genetic endowment. Discouraging or preventing their reproduction.
- Voluntary Eugenics: educating men and women about the consequences of reproducing, encouraging some to undergo sterilization or have few children, others to have many.
- Coercive Eugenics: forbidding some men and women to reproduce, or forcing them to be sterilized.
- Eugenic Culling: terminating the lives of those deemed unfit, either directly or through environmental stressing.
- Genetic Engineering: altering the DNA structure of cells.
- Eugenic Targeting: subsidizing the availability of contraception, sterilization and abortion among certain populations, forcing it upon them or engaging in “eugenic cleansing.”
- Eugenic Cleansing: removing putative genetic inferiors from a preferred geographic region or access to life sustaining resources.



# Modern Genetic Selection

- In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF):
  - Choosing viable or best embryos (*selection*) and freezing the rest – *Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis* (PGD)
  - Implanting multiple embryos, then selecting one or more for abortion (*selective reduction*) to favor the rest - “Octomom”
- Sperm-Banks and “shopping” for a “match”
  - Sperm “motility” must survive “freezing.”
- Surrogate motherhood and “shopping” for a “match”
- Selective abortion following prenatal testing, including *amniocentesis*.



# Ancient Eugenics

- Many ancient tribes practiced eugenics at some time.
- Sparta, Athens, then Rome: exposes unhealthy infants to the elements.
- Sparta also “challenged” infants with survivability testing – described by Adolf Hitler as the first “voelkish” state.
- Plato (*the Republic*): devised a positive eugenics program, concealed by a lottery.



# Who is Sir Francis Galton?

- Pioneered the modern Eugenics Movement
- Cousin of Charles Darwin
- Galton's Contributions:
  - Attention to “nature v. nurture”
  - Suggested studies of twins
  - Theoretical contributions to statistics (e.g., standard deviation, regression towards the mean, fitting data to distributions)
- Succeeded by Carl Pearson
  - Galton Chair of Eugenics, University College, London



# Who is James D. Watson?

- Co-discoverer (with Francis Crick) of the double helical structure of DNA
- First Director of the Human Genome Project
- Initiated the “Ethical, Legal and Social Implications Program”
- Proponent of genetic screening and bioengineering
- Although considered “politically incorrect,” his main ideas are typical of modern “soft” or “progressive” eugenics.



# British Eugenics Movement (1)

- Prominent exponents (Galton Institute):
  - Arthur Balfour (PM: 1902-05, For. Sec.: 1916-19)
  - William Beveridge (Economist)
  - Julian Huxley (Evolutionary Biologist, 1<sup>st</sup> Dir. UNESCO)
  - Arthur Neville Chamberlain (PM: 1937-40)
  - Charles D'Arcy (Ab. Armaugh: 1920-38)
  - Havelock Ellis (Sexologist, Physician, Social Reformer)
  - John Maynard Keynes (Economist)
  - Margaret Pyke (Birth Control Pioneer)
  - Eliot Slater (Psychiatrist: Pioneered Psycho-Eugenics)



# British Eugenics Movement (2)

- Fabians:
  - George Bernard Shaw
  - Sidney Webb
  - H.G. Wells
- Sir Winston Churchill
  - While Br. Home Sec. in 1911, introduced “forced sterilization” bill – part of the 1913 “Mental Deficiency Act” (Cf. “Churchill and Eugenics” at <http://www.winstonchurchill.org>)
  - Opposed by G.K. Chesterton
- Carl Pearson (Statistician – Successor to Galton)



# G. K. Chesterton's Book

- *Eugenics and Other Evils – An argument Against the Scientifically Organized Society*
- Published by Cassell &c., London, 1922
- Reissued (with edits by Michael W. Perry) by Inkling Books, 2000.
- Critiques what Friedrich v. Hayek and Karl Popper called “scientism,” or the belief that science holds the key to understanding “life, the universe and everything.”



# American Eugenics Movement (1)

- Alexander Graham Bell (Com. On Eugenics, ABA)
- Eugenics Record Office
  - Charles B. Davenport (Biologist)
  - Harry H. Laughlin
  - Supported by the Carnegie Institution
- Forced Sterilization Laws
  - Woodrow Wilson (1911, Gov. NJ, signed f.s.a.)
  - Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1927, Buck v. Bell)
  - Paul B. Popenoe
    - *Sterilization for Human Betterment*
    - Influenced the Nazi sterilization program



# Buck v. Bell

- O.W. Holmes, Jr. majority opinion
  - We have seen more than once that the public welfare may call upon the best citizens for their lives. It would be strange if it could not call upon those who already sap the strength of the State for these lesser sacrifices, often not felt to be such by those concerned, in order to prevent our being swamped with incompetence. It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind. The principle that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover cutting the Fallopian tubes.



# American Eugenics Movement (2)

- States enacting laws permitting forced sterilization of the mentally handicapped:
  - 1907: Indiana
  - 1909: California, Connecticut
  - 1911: New Jersey
  - 1912: New York
  - 1913: Kansas, Michigan, North Dakota, Oregon
  - 1924: Virginia
- Supreme Court Case: Buck v. Bell (1927)
  - S.C. Justice Oliver Wendel Holmes, Jr. majority decision



# American Eugenics Movement (3)

- Eugenics Record Office (programs, ca. 1924)
  - Immigration Restrictions
  - Anti-Miscegenation Laws
  - Chief ERO Activists (ca. 1924)
    - Charles B. Davenport (ERO founder)
    - Henry H. Goddard (Psychologist)
    - Madison Grant (Conservationist)
- Race Betterment Foundation
  - John Harvey Kellogg (Entrepreneur)
  - Irving Fisher (Mathematician, Economist)
  - Charles B. Davenport (Biologist)



# Planned Parenthood & Eugenics

- Margaret Sanger (Nurse, Feminist)
  - Founder of Planned Parenthood
  - Exponent of negative eugenics
  - Established PP facilities in poor & minority neighborhoods
- Alan Frank Guttmacher (Obstetrician/Gynecologist)
  - Founder Assoc. Reproductive Health Professionals
  - Founder Assoc. for the Study of Abortion
- Title X (1970) Public Health Service Act (1946)
  - Administered: HHS Office of Population Affairs



# Assoc. Voluntary Sterilization (Morphology)

- 1937: Sterilization League of New Jersey
- 1943: Sterilization League for Human Betterment
- 1943: Birthright, Inc.
- 1950: Human Betterment Assoc. of America
- 1962: Human Betterment Assoc. for Vol. Steril.
- 1965: Assoc. for Voluntary Sterilization
- 1971: AVS, ACLU, ZPG - “Operation Lawsuit”
- 1972: AVS funded by USAID
- 1984: Assoc. for Voluntary Surgical Contraception
- 2001: EngenderHealth (Gates Foundation)



# AVS, etc. Prominent Members

- Margaret Sanger
- Alan Guttmacher
- Joseph Fletcher (situation ethics)
- Paul Ehrlich (*Population Bomb*)
- Brock Chisholm (First Dir. WHO)
- Paul Blanshard (*American Freedom and Catholic Power*)
- Hugh Moore (Entrepreneur, Dixie Cup Co.)
- Isaac Asimov (Biologist, Sci-Fi Author)
- Millicent H. Fenwick (R-NJ, Amb. UN Agencies for Food and Agr.)
- Garrett Hardin (Ecologist; Author, *The Tragedy of the Commons*)
- Abigail Van Buren (Advice Columnist)
- Edward P. Morgan (Journalist, TV News Commentator)
- Nafis Sadik (Physician, spec. advisor to UN Sec. Gen., former head of UNFPA)



# American Eugenics Society

- Morphology:
  - 1922: American Eugenics Society
  - 1972: Society for the Study of Social Biology
  - 2009+: Society of Biodemography and Social Biology
- Founders:
  - Madison Grant, Harry H. Laughlin, Irving Fisher, Henry Fairfield Osborn, Henry Crampton.
- Other Prominent Members:
  -



# International Scope

- International Federation of Eugenics Organizations
  - Founded by Charles Davenport, 1925
  - Ended in 1947-48
- Julian Huxley's Vision
- United Nations: UNFPA, UNESCO
- International Planned Parenthood Federation
- NGOs dealing with population, sustainability, etc.
- The Good Club?



# Julian Huxley's Vision

- 1<sup>st</sup> Director of UNESCO, 1946-48
- What to do about the bad odor of eugenics?
  - [E]ven though it is quite true that any radical eugenic policy will be for many years politically and psychologically impossible, it will be important for UNESCO to see that the eugenic problem is examined with the greatest care, and that the public mind is informed of the issues at stake so that much that now is unthinkable may at least become thinkable. – Julian Huxley, 1947



# Who is Julian Huxley?

- Evolutionary Biologist, Humanist, Internationalist
- Brother of Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Director of UNESCO (1946-48)
- Knighted (1958)
- Special Lasker Foundation Award Recipient (1959)
  - Planned Parenthood – World Population
- President, British Eugenics Society (1959-1962)
- Founder of the World Wildlife Fund



# Julian Huxley's Eugenic Ideas

- He was an evolutionary biologist who believed in a secular (i.e., non-religious) form of humanism.
- This led him to advocate scientific eugenics.
  - No-one doubts the wisdom of managing the germ-plasm of agricultural stocks, so why not apply the same concept to human stocks?
  - The lowest strata are reproducing too fast. Therefore... they must not have too easy access to relief or hospital treatment lest the removal of the last check on natural selection should make it too easy for children to be produced or to survive; long unemployment should be a ground for sterilisation.
  - ... unless [civilised societies] invent and enforce adequate measures for regulating human reproduction, for controlling the quantity of population, and at least preventing the deterioration of quality of racial stock, they are doomed to decay ...

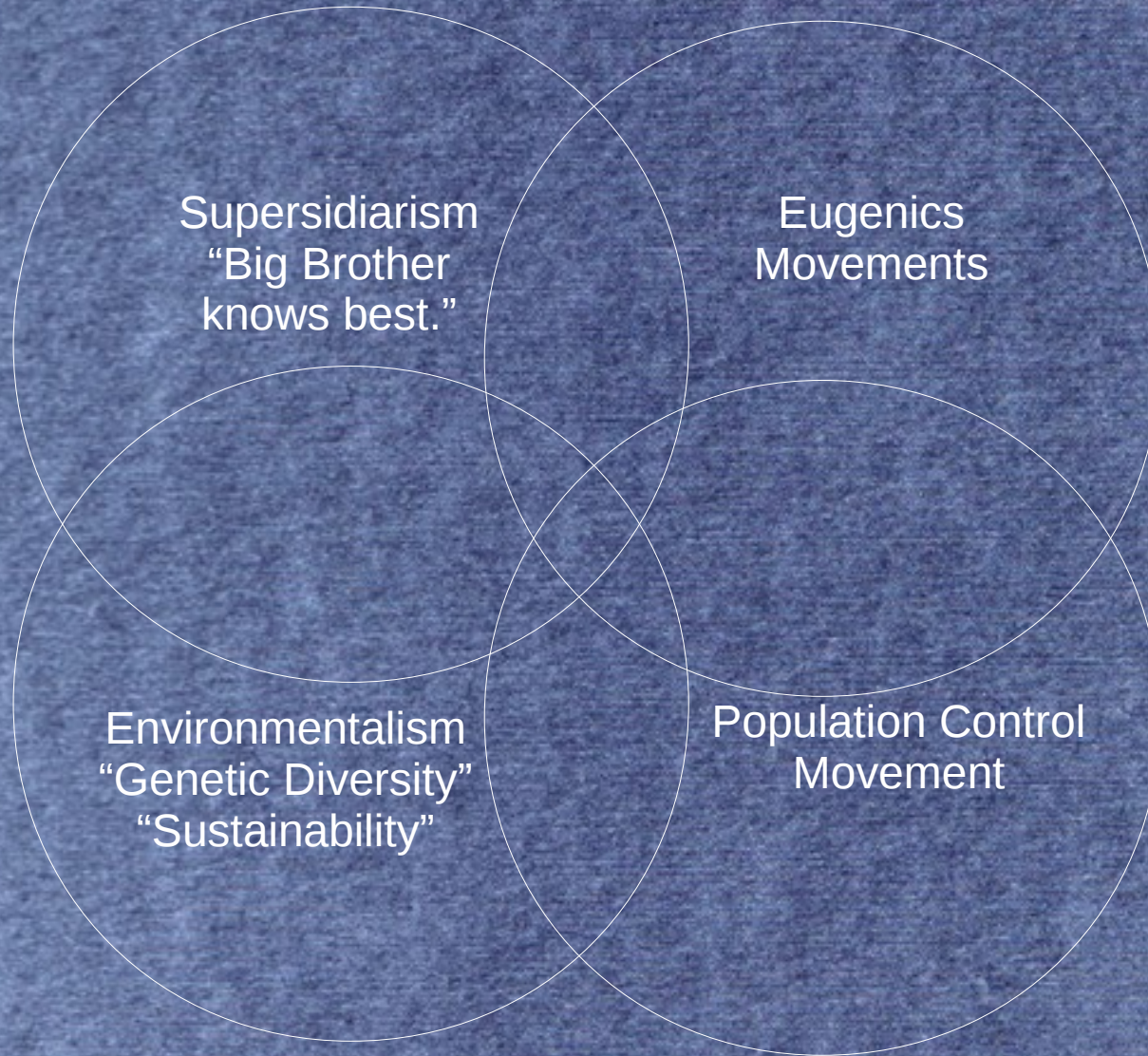


# United Nations Population Fund

- Mission:
  - UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that *every pregnancy is wanted*, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.
- Strategic Plan Includes (based on MDG):
  - Goal 2: universal access to reproductive health services by 2015, and universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention by 2010 for improved quality of life.
  - This especially includes access to contraceptives (esp. condoms) and post-abortion care.



# Political Intersections





# Philosophy and Sociology

- Friedrich Nietzsche: The Will to Power (*Der Will zur Macht*) – coined “ubermensch”
- Pragmatism, Utilitarianism, Situation Ethics and Consequentialism
- Nazism v. Communism v. Fabianism and the Progressive (or Social Democratic) Movement
- The Human Potential Movement and Transhumanism
- Materialist Bioethics (Julian Huxley, Peter Singer)



# Popular Cultural Correlates

- Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*
- Friedrich Nietzsche's *Übermensch*
- Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*
- Arthur C. Clark's *Childhood's End*
- Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster's *Superman*
- Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's *X-men, et. al.*
- J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*
- Tim Kring's *Heroes*



# A Theological Perspective

- Secular Humanism:
  - Primary Concerns: fulfillment, growth and creativity for both the individual and humankind in general – the will to power.
  - Ethics: optimized (via search and experimentation) to suit primary concerns.
- Christianity:
  - Primary Concerns: Redemption – communion with God and with the saints in heaven – the will to communion.
  - Ethics: Teleological (revelation and natural law)