

Genetic enhancement in humans: Eugenics

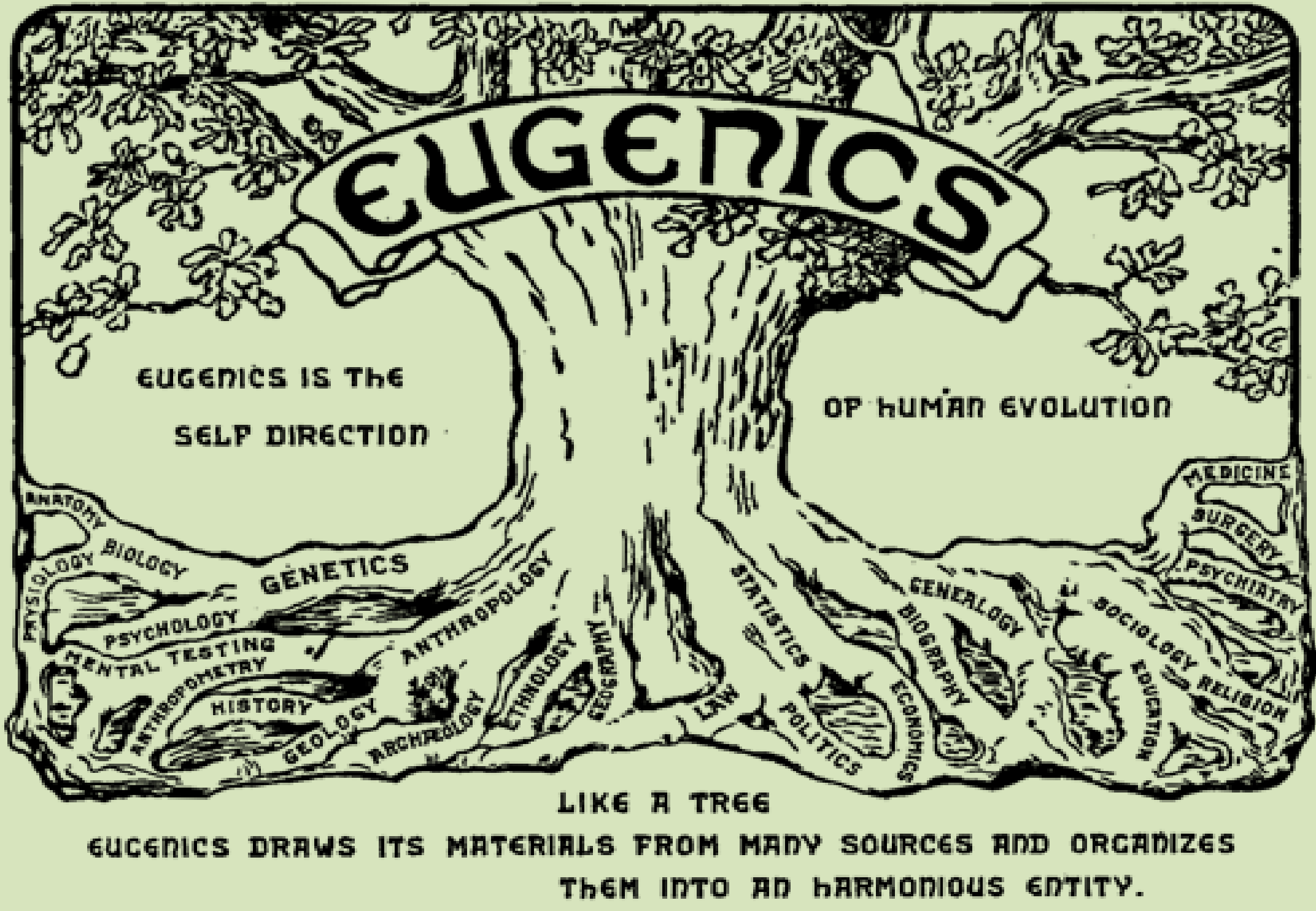
Analysis of eugenics' evolution through time and technology.

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What is eugenics?

Eugenics can be defined as an ensemble of strategies or decisions aimed at affecting, in a manner which is considered to be positive, the genetic heritage of a child, a community or humanity in general, meaning an attempt to improve the human gene pool.

T Y P E S	Positive	Strategies or decisions aimed at promoting what is considered to be a desired genetic heritage
	Negative	Strategies or decisions with the aim of avoiding or reducing what is considered to be an undesired genetic heritage
	Traditional	Focuses on groups of people and was often controlled by the governments, being executed with authoritative methods and using the law
	Liberal	Focuses on individuals and is voluntary. It relies mainly in genetic techniques.



Logo of the Second International Congress of Eugenics, 1921.

Chronology



Current eugenic techniques

Gamete/embryo donation:

- Anonymity
- Payment
- Positive eugenics

Prenatal diagnosis and pregnancy termination:

- Amniocentesis
- Genetic testing
- Eugenic abortion
- Fetuses' moral status
- Negative eugenics

PGD and embryo selection:

- Prevention
- Avoid pregnancy termination
- Medical surveillance on human reproduction
- Negative eugenics ("sick" embryos dismissed)
- Positive eugenics ("best" embryos chosen)

Genetic engineering:

- Early stages
- Interesting possibilities
- Worrying consequences
- Designer babies

Cloning:

- Reproductive human cloning
- Therapeutic human cloning
 - Stem-cells
 - Autologous transplantation
 - No rejection

SELECTIVE REPRODUCTION

Can be defined as the attempt to create one possible future child rather than another possible future child. The aim of this selection is to avoid disease or disability by choosing to create the child considered healthy. There also exists sex selection and, maybe in the future, traits selection.

Arguments supporting eugenics

- Healthier children:** modern eugenics tries to avoid suffering and so disease-free children are selected to be born.
- Preserving reproductive freedom:** liberal voluntary eugenics aims to preserve parental procreative freedom and autonomy.
- Cost of care:** as people with health issues often consume more resources, both human and economic, preventing the birth of disabled children could be effective.
- The new evolution:** as we seem to escape natural selection, eugenics can be viewed as a way for humans to continue with their evolving process and to control it, also fighting Dysgenics.

Arguments opposing eugenics

- Destruction of embryos and fetuses**
- Reduction in scope of reproductive choice:** if a restricted set of characteristics become the more acceptable norms, eugenics would contribute to the homogenization of genetic traits, possibly limiting genetic variety.
- Interfering with Nature or "Playing God".**
- Traits becoming disorders** (ex: polydactyly)
- Pressures from society:** parents may be socially judged based on their decision to use or not eugenic techniques.
- Fairness / accessibility / new classism**
- Discrimination against disability and suffering**
- Conditional and Unconditional Acceptance**
- Lost of children's "open future"**

Conclusion

- In our modern world, eugenics has become a tool of use to the individual, who makes his or her own informed decisions based on their principles and desires ➡ **CONSUMER EUGENICS**
- Scientists have to figure out which traits are genetic and potentially viable for the possible future eugenics movement to be efficient.
- Legal and ethic questions will have to be discussed along with technological progress, and debates should include the entire society as it is a human species issue.
- As human nature is a philosophical and spiritual matter, rather than a scientific one, therefore there will probably always exist a debate concerning eugenics between different sectors of society.

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