

EUGENICS

INTRODUCTION

Humanity has always been concerned about the improvement of humans, especially about the offspring, for the biological features as well as the physic and intellectual capacities.

Eugenics is defined as the procedures that allow the improvement of humans.

New contributions of human biology and reproduction techniques have allowed eugenics to get a scientific support and in consequence a major intellectual credibility and moral authority.

Nowadays, there are new techniques that may be consider as eugenics such as prenatal diagnosis, therapeutic abortion or genetic engineering, which opens window to the eradication of hereditary diseases incurable until today.

It could be thought that eugenics from the last century and the actual share the same aim: restrict legally reproduction in order to guarantee a healthy offspring.

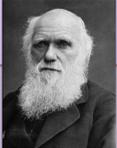
ORIGIN

Francis Galton is considered the father of eugenics. He introduced the term in 1883 in his work "Inquires into Human Faculty and its Development". [1]

Galton's eugenics:

- Born to be a science, the science of the improvement of the lineage.
- Inspired by the evolution and natural selection theory of Darwin. [2]
- Its function was to carry out an artificial selection supported by a politician program directed to regenerate population biologically.

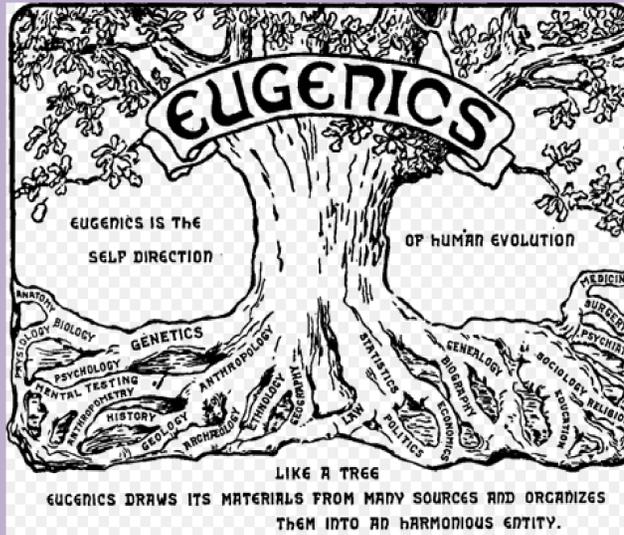
A new tendency was born: Social Darwinism which defends the survival of the fittest based on the Darwin's evolution theory, as the social evolution driving force. [3]



Charles Darwin



Francis Galton



TYPES OF EUGENICS [1]

• **Negative eugenics:** expected to prevent the reproduction of the "bad" lineages. Nowadays it defends avoiding proliferation of genes considered defective.

- Forbid marriage considered inappropriate
- Sterilization
- Prenatal diagnosis
- Therapeutic abortion

• **Positive eugenics:** defends proliferation of the beneficial genes.

- Stimulate procreation
- Germinal selection
- Cloning

HISTORY [4]

England:

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister. One of the major European defenders of eugenics.

- Compulsory sterilizations of people to "save Britain's race from decline".
- 1943: bombing to Hamburg → 48.000 civil dead
- 1945: bombing to Dresden → 2000 civil dead

Eugenics society:

- Eugenics education .
- Prevent reproduction of "inferiors" and promote it of the "best".
- Expand the idea that the degenerate ones cannot reproduce.
- Create legislative support.

Sweden:

- 1934: Compulsory sterilization law.
- From 1934 until 1975, 62.000 persons were sterilized to be considered deficient, disabled and a burden for the society.



Euthanasic institute in Hartheim (Austria)

USA:

- Thirty-three States carried out sterilization programs.
- German scientists and civil servants were influenced with eugenics ideas by Californian eugenicists.



Germany:

Nuremberg laws, 1935

- Compulsory sterilization programs.
- Impede marriages considered as race inferior.
- Lebensborn, a German organization that offered financial help to SS member's spouses and take in young women to procreate with SS members.
- Aktion T4, an euthenasic obligatory program.

EUGENICS IN PRESENT

Nowadays, eugenics is personalized and medicalized.

There are different techniques that may be considered eugenics and there is a controversy between the eradication of genetic diseases and the expansion of humanity towards biological features considered ideal. [5]

- **Prenatal diagnosis:** selection against detrimental genes and avoid the propagation of them → negative eugenics
- **Genetic engineering:** its objective is to eradicate genetic diseases but the improvement of this techniques may aim for the progress of humans establishing which are the optimal biological features.
- **Therapeutic abortion:** in case of a serious disease, behind a medical and parental consent, it is possible to interrupt the pregnancy.



ETHICS

The eugenics procedures during the XX century were an attack against human rights.

The ethical principles were violated when compulsory sterilizations and euthanasia, tortures in concentration camps or isolation were carried out to those considered inferiors to be deficient or have a disability.

Autonomy

- The Supreme principle of morality.
- Dignity
- Integrity

Beneficence and non-maleficence

- The maleficence may be avoided by not acting, but it is necessary to act to do the beneficence.

Justice

- Treat equally the equals and differently the different.

CONCLUSIONS

On the twenty century, the knowledge of genetics was quite limited so it was considered that individual features such as intelligence, homosexuality or a disability could be inherited so the aim was to encourage reproduction of the ones considered the fittest.

Despite the fact that this is not happening worldwide, personally, the great progress has been allowing people to exercise the autonomy principle. Everyone has its own ideas and the concept of "the good" it is not shared by everybody but there is the freedom to act in respect of your own thoughts and beliefs.

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