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## Eugenics As Social Movement

Eugenics has had many different faces throughout history and it is still prevalent in the world today. Laura Hix of Northwestern University does a good job of introducing eugenics. She starts by explaining eugenics means “good genes”. It is derived from the Greek word “eu” meaning good and “genos” meaning offspring. Before eugenics was applied to humans, it worked to improve the genetic traits of crops to make farming more efficient. Now, modern genetics focuses on repairing the “faulty” genes of people. She ends by explaining that the altering of the genes can range from genes associated with health conditions to genes that code for certain observable body features. Throughout its history, it has been considered in both positive and negative ways. While there are some positive aspects of eugenics, the horrific negatives outweigh these positives. This is especially true in the eyes of the ethical view of unqualified absolutism. Unqualified absolutists, most of whom are Christians, view the practicing of eugenics as unethical.

Sir Frances Galton coined the term eugenics in 1883. Galton was the cousin of Charles Darwin. He was very interested in Darwin’s works on evolution, so he began to do some research himself. “Initially Galton focused on positive eugenics, encouraging healthy, capable people of above-average intelligence to bear more children, with the idea of building an “improved” human race.” He decided the best way to achieve this would be by persuading people with “good genes” to mate so that these genes will continue in future generations. “Galton promoted the ideal of improving the human race by getting rid of the “undesirables” and multiplying the “desirables.” As this shows, eugenics has been a problem since its creation and should be considered unethical. God created everyone exactly the way he wanted and has a plan for their lives. Humanity should not have the right to say that God made a mistake in making people differently and with “undesirable” traits.

Eugenicists want to make sure that people with good and desirable genes are the only ones that mate and reproduce. So, this would mean that people who have “bad genes” and “undesirable traits” should not reproduce. But who is to decide what genes are desirable or not? This is one of the main problems of eugenics. People with non-Christian worldviews are the ones that are making these decisions. The main example of this in the history of the world is Adolf Hitler. The Holocaust Encyclopedia gives a great outline of Hitler and his beliefs. Adolf Hitler was the leader of the Nazi party. He believed that “Aryans” were the superior race and everyone else should be considered inferior. Aryans were ideally blonde-haired, blue-eyed, tall individuals. Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* in 1923 to outline his racist views. This book stated that Jews were the ultimate evil and should be removed from Germany by any means necessary. So, in 1933, Hitler came to power over Germany and established the racial purity law. This law stated that all “undesirables” would be sterilized. Over the next eighteen months, four hundred thousand Jews, physically, and mentally impaired were forcibly sterilized. But this is not where the atrocities Hitler and the Nazis enacted ended. The Jews and other “undesirables” that lived in Germany were not only forced to be sterilized but were also put to death. While the exact number will never be known, it is estimated that over 6 million died during the Holocaust, which is the name given to this horrendous genocide by the Nazi people.

While it would make sense that the ideology of eugenics would have ended with Hitler and the

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Nazis, but it definitely has not. It is still prevalent in our world today. There are many people who have many different ideas of why eugenics is acceptable and should be practiced. A good source of these ideas is from the book "Christian Ethics" by Norman Geisler. It states that contemporary eugenicists believe,

"Why should any child be born deformed? Why should the family or society be forced to care for deformed children? Abortion based on prenatal tests can eliminate these unnecessary and undesirable births. ... genetic purity of the human race should lead us to weed out bad genes from the human gene pool, from which all future human beings will come."

These are some of the same views that Hitler held but are from current times, which shows that some people in the world have not veered from Nazi views. People who do not have "desirable traits" are a burden on society, people with deformities are undesirable, and it is believed that bad genes should be sterilized to make sure our future generation's gene pool is as "clean" as possible. Geisler also talks about how in 1982, India Supreme Court said that it was permissible for a baby with Down Syndrome to starve to death. That is not the only case where this has happened; many hospitals allow workers to withhold care from children with "undesirable traits" which causes these children to die. Geisler also talks about how people who support eugenics view unborn children as less than human. These people believe this because fetuses do not have self-consciousness or have other human functions. Finally, eugenicists believe a person with a deformity would not have a good quality of life, so why should they be born? It would be more merciful to kill this child with undesirable traits than it would be to allow them to live an unfulfilling life that would potentially burden others. While it may be true that a child that has deformities may be a burden on their family, that does not mean that the child should be put to death. Everyone that God creates deserves a chance at life.

Eugenicists and Christians have two very opposite viewpoints. Unqualified absolutism is one of the six ethical views in the ethical community. It is defined as, "...the ethical pattern governed by the determination that there are many definite ethical laws which must never be broken, that they are never in conflict with one another, and that, should they ever appear to be in conflict, it is only because the one perceiving the supposed conflict is confused or misinformed of the situation." Most of the people who hold this view are Christians, so they would negatively view eugenics. They believe it is wrong to take a life and it is wrong to alter the way God has made his creation. The Bible states in many places that eugenics is wrong. Genesis 1:26-27 says,

"Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

This passage shows that God created everyone. He made every person in his image. Psalms 139:16 says, "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them." As with the passage out of Genesis, this shows that God created everyone in his image. It adds that after he forms someone, he knows everything about them and has a plan for their life. Deuteronomy 32:39 says, "Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand." This shows that God is the creator and taker of life. When a woman conceives a baby, no matter what imperfections it may have, God has allowed this conception to take place, so the fetus has a

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right to life. Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This shows that no one should be looked down upon, no matter what "undesirable" traits someone may have. God loves everyone equally and created everyone with a purpose. As stated earlier, people who have the unqualified absolute belief system believe there are obvious moral laws and these laws should not be broken. And as these people are Christians, they use the Bible as a guidebook. And these quotes from the Bible definitively state that eugenics is wrong and unethical.

The ideology behind eugenics is considered wrong by most people who hold unqualified absolute ideas. But, some people hold this unqualified absolute belief and think that eugenics is good for the world today. This is because some beneficial things come out of eugenics. Scientists and doctors are working together to try to screen for and fix potential diseases and genetic abnormalities that are found in a fetus. If they achieve this, it would lower the number of people with "undesirable" traits in the world today. But is this a good thing? Jessica Chin of CUNY discusses this. She states,

"More recent scientific advances include the 2012 development of Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats-(CRISPR) associated protein 9 (CRISPR-Cas9) technology. Established by American biochemist Jennifer Anne Doudna and French professor... Emmanuelle Charpentier, CRISPRCas9 demonstrates the ability to edit gene sequences as observed by the natural type II restriction enzymes."

She talks about how a Chinese scientist He Jiankui claimed to produce genetically modified twin babies using this newly created eugenics technology. Jiankui claimed that these twins were immune to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). While this fact is not confirmed, it is confirmed that the genetic information of the twins has been altered. While creating a way for someone to become resistant to HIV is a very good thing, the process of how Jiankui changed these twin's genes is unethical. He experimented on living human beings without knowing the final result. And after the experiment, it is still not clear if his experiment was successful or not. It is also unknown if these experiments have caused any underlying problems or conditions in the twins. Another problem that could arise from this technology is where does this gene altering stop? Would a parent be allowed to change their kid's hair or eye color while it is in the womb? Would they be allowed to change the child's sex? These are all moral questions that need to be considered before this technology becomes more readily available. If people start choosing to change their child's features, then this is altering the way that God intended his creation to be. As stated earlier, God created each person in his own way for a specific reason. So, who are we to change his beautiful creation? This is why eugenics should be viewed as unethical.

Eugenics has a terrible past and a worrisome future. Does it have the possibility to benefit some people in the future? Yes, it definitely does. But these benefits do not outweigh the possible misuse of eugenics. As seen in the past, someone with power can misuse eugenics and turn it into a mass genocide. It also could allow for parents to alter their child's genes to fit their own desires. The twins altered by He Jiankui, the babies with deformities that are not given care and allowed to die in hospitals, and the Nazi's genocide of Jews should show that eugenics should be considered unethical. Unqualified absolutists should pray that this rise in eugenics does not become unmanageable and use the Bible to speak out against eugenics.