

21st Century Eugenics

Andrew Linnell, 20 March 2014

The new development of three-parent babies has raised again the ethics of Eugenics. Three-parent babies is a technique where defective "parts" of a mother's egg are replaced with "healthy parts" from an egg of another woman to



form the ovum. This new egg is fertilized with the sperm of the father using IVF (in-vitro fertilization). The resultant zygote is then inserted into the womb of the mother for natural gestation.

This technique will help mothers who know that they carry genetic defects that they do not want to pass on to their offspring. The defect that led to this method being approved in the UK is mitochondrial disease. This disease affects the ability of a cell to convert foodstuffs in the blood into cell energy. The worst affected parts of the body tend to be those that burn the most energy: yeah, the brain, the heart, and muscles.

This means that the disease causes stunted growth, loss of visual and hearing problems, learning disabilities, neurological disorders, autonomic dysfunction, dementia, muscular dystrophy, anemia, gastrointestinal disorders, respiratory disorders, hypertension, lymphoma, seizures, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, and, oddly it is claimed, obesity. The physical and emotional issues typically translate into lifelong suffering.

When sperm and egg meet, only the mitochondria from the mother's egg will become the mitochondria of the future child. If you are hoping to be a mother but you have suffered with this disease as 1 in 4,000 in the USA do, then you most likely will be thrilled by this new medical miracle.

The medical ethics, at this point, seem to clearly bless this medical advancement. There are many more genetic defects that can benefit: Down Syndrome, Haemophilia, essentially all genetic related diseases might be overcome this way. What about genetic forms of sickle cell anemia? Cystic fibrosis? Congenital heart defects? Spina Bifida? Yes, yes, and yes!

Why stop there? Might you want a kid who will have a better chance to go to Harvard? Be gifted at playing the cello? Take Peyton Manning's spot in the record books?



Why not four-parent babies? Why not n-parent babies? The definition of the modern family no longer is established by the blood-line. How far should this go? Coincidentally, California's Legislature passed legislation in 2012 allowing a child to have three legal parents, but Governor Jerry Brown vetoed it.ⁱ

Is it a slippery slope?

In the future we will more and more separate our concept of self from our physical body which will become more and more just a vehicle for our journey on Earth. When that comes to be, those future humans will either

1. Expand consciousness to their other members (e.g. etheric and astral bodies), or
2. Have computers biologically linked their body - as Ray Kurzweil has already suggested back in 2005 in his book *The Singularity is Near*?

Will (2) lead us to become more soulless? Will humans beings find it harder and harder to incarnate into a body so prepared similarly to the time of Adam and Eve? Might both possibilities happen together?

Many argue "why shouldn't I receive the best possible body for my life?" The desire for a healthy vehicle to carry us through life is strong within humanity.

In November of 1911, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the building interest in Eugenics in the western world. In the lecture series entitled *The Challenge of the Times* he said, "By the eugenic capacity I mean the removal of the reproduction of human beings from the sphere of mere arbitrary impulse and accident. Among the peoples of the East there will gradually develop a brilliantly clear knowledge as to how the laws of population, the laws of peopling the earth, must run parallel with certain cosmic phenomena. From this information they will know that, if conception is brought about in accord with certain constellations of the stars, opportunities will thus be given for souls that are either good or evil in their natures to obtain access for earthly incarnation.

"This capacity will be acquired only by those individuals who constitute the continuation as races, the continuation in the blood stream, of the Asiatic population. They will be able simply to see in detail how what works today chaotically and arbitrarily in conception and birth can be brought into harmony with the great laws of the cosmos in individual concrete cases. Here abstract laws are of no avail. What will be acquired is a concrete single capacity in which it will be known in individual cases whether or not a conception should occur at a particular time."

With three-parent babies, we are venturing down this path of Eugenics. But it is motivated to please the parents as well as a stream existing in society to improve its own genetic stock. Are we not better off having eliminated the suffering from polio? Is it not the right Christian thing to eliminate such suffering from humans?

Steiner goes on to say, "This knowledge, which will make it possible to bring down from the heavens the impelling forces for the moralizing or demoralizing of the earth through the nature of man himself, this special capacity evolves as a continuation of the blood capacity in the races of the East. What evolves as a capacity there I call eugenic occultism. This is the second capacity — the capacity that will prevent the evolution of humanity as regards conception and birth from taking its course according to arbitrary impulses, and more or less accidentally.

"I beg you to consider the enormous social consequences, the enormous social motive forces that enter here! These capacities are latent. It is well known in those secret circles of the English-speaking peoples that these capacities will evolve among the peoples of the East. They know that they themselves will not possess these capacities within their own potentialities bestowed upon them through birth. They know that the earth could not reach its goal, could not pass over from earth to Jupiter — indeed, they know that **the earth would within a relatively short time diverge from the path leading to its goal if only the forces belonging to the West should be employed. It would gradually come about that only a soulless population could evolve in the West, a population that would be as soulless as possible** [*my emphasis*]. This is known.

"For this reason these people endeavor to develop within their own circles, through their capacities, mechanistic occultism. The endeavor is also made to establish a mastery over those peoples who will develop eugenic occultism. Every instructed person in the circles of the West says, for example, 'It is necessary that we rule over India for the reason that only through the continuation of what comes out of Indian bodies — when this unites with what tends in the West in a wholly different direction, in the direction of mechanistic occultism — can bodies come into existence in which souls will be able to incarnate in future who will carry the earth over to its future evolutionary stages.' The English-speaking occultists know that they cannot depend upon the bodies that come out of the fundamental character of their own people, and so they strive to possess the mastery over a people who will provide bodies with the help of which the evolution of the earth may be carried forward in the future."ⁱⁱⁱ

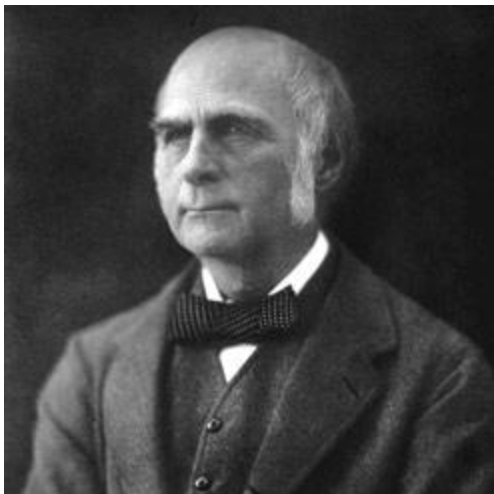
Less than 10 years after Steiner spoke this, America was leading the world in a Eugenics movement. Darwinian concepts had entered the social sphere. Traits such as intelligence, hard work, and cleanliness were seen as belonging to genetics and hence it was society's duty to ensure only the best procreated. Competitions were set up at county fairs to award the best human stock with blue ribbons. Alongside awards for the best livestock were awards for the fittest family or best potential baby.



Not only was better breeding promoted, eugenicists wanted to **prevent** the poor from breeding. They saw alcoholism, pauperism, and sexual deviancy as behaviors associated with the poor. They felt that those good-for-nothings are milking the welfare system. And eugenicists feared that the poor were more sexually active and irresponsible ending up producing too many future bums.



Eugenists had a major role in the Immigration Act of 1924 that set up strict quotas limiting immigrants from countries believed, by eugenicists, to have inferior stock. Thus, immigration from Southern Europe, Africa, and Asia was limited. President Coolidge, who signed the bill into law, had stated when he was vice president, "America should be kept American. . . . Biological laws show that Nordics deteriorate when mixed with other races." Sweden had a eugenics program that



continued until 1975. Immigration debates in European and American continue to hear the voice of Eugenics.

The history of Eugenics is itself interesting. Francis Galton is considered as the father of modern eugenics. In 1883, Galton published his observations and conclusions in a book entitled *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*.ⁱⁱⁱ Galton was the half-cousin of

Charles Darwin.

Galton coined the word *eugenics* putting together the Greek words *eu* (well) and *genēs* (born). Galton was convinced that the racial quality of future generations will improve via eugenics.

Like Galton, Karl Pearson had his training in the medical field. Pearson claimed in his lecture "Darwinism, Medical Progress and Eugenics" that everything concerning eugenics falls into the field of medicine. As a foreshadowing of three-parent babies, he states that Eugenics will be able to eliminate hereditary diseases such as hemophilia and Huntington's disease.

By the late 1920s, American eugenicists produced dramatic literature promoting eugenics and sterilization. These spread to other countries especially to German scientists and medical professionals. Soon California led the world in forced sterilization. The forced sterilization program engineered by the Nazis was inspired by California's. Key to funding this movement was the Rockefeller Foundation who helped develop German eugenics programs. California eugenics leader C. M. Goethe wrote to a colleague, "You will be interested to know that your work has played a powerful part in shaping the opinions of the group of intellectuals who are behind Hitler in this epoch-making program. Everywhere I sensed that their opinions have been tremendously stimulated by American thought . . . I want you, my dear friend, to carry this thought with you for the rest of your life, that you have really jolted into action a great government of 60 million people."^{iv} By 1934, in Germany alone more than 5,000 people per month were being forcibly sterilized.

Harry H. Laughlin developed Model Eugenic Sterilization laws that, in 1935, were implemented in the Nuremberg racial hygiene laws.^v Because of this, Laughlin received an honorary doctorate for his work on the science of racial cleansing at an award ceremony in Germany (that happened to be on the anniversary of Hitler's 1934 purge of Jews from the Heidelberg faculty where the ceremony took place). Laughlin proclaimed a "common understanding of German and American scientists of the nature of eugenics."^{vi}

Who else were proponents of Western-style Eugenics? Theodore Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, John Maynard Keynes, George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Margaret Sanger, John Harvey Kellogg, and Linus Pauling are just a few.

When did this movement stop in America? Once we saw how Eugenics had, in Nazi Germany, led to the concentration camps and mass sterilizations, Americans backed away in horror. Adolf Hitler, in *Mein Kampf*, praised eugenic ideas and later ensured Eugenic legislation was enacted and carried out.

There are arguments against three-parent IVF being made from religious groups and centers for ethics. Wesley J. Smith's writes in *Now Is The Time To Stop Three-Parent IVF*,^{vii} [These matters] "involve both safety and ethics. We already know that children born via IVF have poorer health outcomes than children conceived naturally. The danger would probably be even more pronounced with three-parent reproduction. For example, the technique literally uses broken eggs. Mammal cloning—which involves a similar genetic modification of eggs—can lead to terrible developmental problems during gestation and born clones often have significant health concerns. For example, Dolly the sheep died before her normal lifespan, perhaps as a consequence of being a clone. Safety concerns are not merely conjectural. A recent study published in *Science* warned against moving forward with the technology because of significant health issues seen in three-parent mice." Wesley concludes that finding our way with this "amounts to blatantly unethical human experimentation."

While similar to a chimera that results from the merger of more than one fertilized egg, this new technique fertilizes a merged egg. Chimeras start out as fraternal twins. Then early in development, the two embryos fuse together to create a single embryo. Chimeras have two sets of DNA. Some of their cells have the DNA from one twin and the rest of their cells have DNA from the other twin. The result can be a mixture of sexes for example. It is not known how frequently individuals are chimera, that is, people with two or more different genomes, but studies suggest that IVF may increase this possibility.^{viii}

Ethics Questions:

1. Do we exclude people with genetic defects from parenthood?
2. Does the fear of passing on a genetic defect amount to an indirect form of sterilization?
3. Do we reintroduce Eugenics with new unforeseeable consequences

4. How do we balance the welfare of these future children with the moral health of society?
5. Do we have the consent of future generations?
6. Might something that is considered to be a genetic defect actually be an unknown strength for another malady such as immunity from malaria?
7. Does IVF itself alter the fertilization and growth process in unknown negative ways?
8. Do we accept the potential of long-term consequences of these new techniques? Will all future generations from such a new line be at risk?
9. Are we "commodifying" the relationship between children and their parents?

How does an Anthroposophist approach this moral dilemma? One could say that Eugenics developed in the West and not in the East likely will be soulless and lead to evil uses. Another could say that they cannot sleep at night knowing that other human beings are suffering. Some may dismiss all this saying we already have altered our children with GMO crops, poisoned environments, ruinous education, and utter separation from nature making this small potatoes in the larger picture.

Would general knowledge of karma and reincarnation help? Perhaps a bit, but I suspect we would still be facing this problem. The outcome, I feel, will have profound implications for the ability of humans in the far future to achieve Atma and the goals of Earth.

Let me know your insights.

Andrew Linnell

ⁱ The Washington Times, California bill allowing more than two legal parents vetoed, [article](#), September 30, 2012,

ⁱⁱ Steiner, Rudolf, *The Challenge of the Times*, Lecture 3, 15th November, 2011

ⁱⁱⁱ Wikipedia on [Francis Galton](#)

^{iv} Black, Edwin, *Eugenics and the Nazis -- the California Connection*, [SFGate](#), Nov. 9, 2003

^v Jackson, John P. & Weidman, Nadine M. (2005). *Race, Racism, And Science: Social Impact And Interaction*. Rutgers University Press. p. 123

^{vi} Lombardo, Paul, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles; Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008

^{vii} Smith, Wesley J., *Now Is The Time To Stop Three-Parent IVF*, [Center for Bioethics and Culture](#), September 27, 2013,

^{viii} Strain, Lisa; John C.S. Dean, Mark P. R. Hamilton, David T. Bonthron (1998). *A True Hermaphrodite Chimera Resulting from Embryo Amalgamation after in Vitro Fertilization*. [The New England Journal of Medicine](#) 338: 166