



## Eugenics, or Scientific Racism, in American Education

One of the evil fruits of the tree of evolution is the idea of eugenics, the notion that human beings can be bred to perfection by the same methods used to breed perfect cattle. Since evolution itself reduces man to the level of animal, it is not surprising that eugenics was adopted by many leaders among the educational elite as the means of solving man's social problems. But eugenics itself poses a problem: what does one mean by human perfection, and whose definition of perfection should be adopted?



The founder of the eugenics movement, Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), cousin of Charles Darwin, found his model of perfection in the British elite. But he was painfully aware that the birthrate of the elite was far lower than that of what he considered to be the inferior classes. In this he saw a great danger to civilization. He concluded that ways had to be found to encourage the fertility of the superior stock and to discourage the fertility of the inferior stock.

In order to determine which individuals had superior traits, Galton created an anthropometric laboratory in 1884 for the measurement of man, with the hope that by means of tests he could single out those individuals who should survive. However, Galton realized that physical measurements alone were not enough to determine the criteria he needed. He began searching for ways to investigate psychological differences.

In 1886, he was introduced to James McKeen Cattell, a young American who had just completed two years of study in the laboratories of Prof. Wilhelm Wundt, the world's leading experimental psychologist, at Leipzig University in Germany. It was there that Cattell conducted his reaction-time experiments which became the "scientific" basis for teaching children to read by the whole-word method. Cattell spent the next two years working in Galton's lab at Cambridge University where he used experimental techniques to investigate the mental differences among normal individuals. He coined the term "mental test." Cattell used Galton's framework of physical and physiological anthropology in which to conduct his experiments on individual differences.

Born in 1860, Cattell graduated in 1880 from Lafayette College (Easton, Penn.) where his father, a Presbyterian minister, was president. While at college, Cattell studied the ideas of Auguste Comte, the French philosopher who stressed the authority of scientific knowledge over religious or metaphysical forms of thought. This philosophy, known as Positivism, led Cattell to adopt a new "religion" of science.

In 1882-83 Cattell studied at Johns Hopkins University where his classmate was John Dewey and their professor was psychologist G. Stanley Hall. Hall was the first American to study at Leipzig under Prof. Wundt, and he encouraged Cattell to get his doctorate under Wundt at Leipzig.

After completing his studies in Germany and his experiments at Cambridge, Cattell returned to the United States where he became professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1891, Cattell moved to Teachers College, Columbia University, where as professor of experimental psychology he built the nation's leading department of psychology. He trained many young psychologists who then



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on October 10, 2011

---

fanned out across American academia to teach the new gospel of psychology. In 1904, Cattell arranged for his friend John Dewey to come to Columbia as professor of philosophy.

At Teachers College, Cattell's star pupil was Edward L. Thorndike, who espoused the principles of eugenics and became America's leading educational psychologist. He devised a new theory of learning based on conditioning techniques used in animal training. His book, *Animal Intelligence* (1898) laid the groundwork for the school of behaviorism.

Both Cattell and Thorndike were active in applying the principles of eugenics to education. Like Dewey, they held an organic view of society. Socialist Dewey wrote in his famous *My Pedagogic Creed*:

"I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals.... Examinations are of use only so far as they test the child's fitness for social life and reveal the place in which he can be of most service and where he can receive the most help."

This was clearly the educational philosophy of a collectivist state, not a Constitutional republic in which the purpose of government is to secure the God-given rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness of the individual. The purpose of education in a free society is to provide the individual with the skills needed to make his way in the adult world, not to determine where he can be "of most service."

Inherent in Dewey's creed is the notion that individual human worth is determined by social usefulness, a concept that is taught today in the lifeboat and fallout shelter survival exercises in which students must decide who to throw out of the lifeboat or kill in the fallout shelter. Dewey also wrote in that Creed:

"[T]he teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life.... In this way the teacher always is the prophet of the true God and the usherer in of the true kingdom of God."

It was inevitable that those who believed in eugenics would see society in racial terms and impose racist ideas on American education. The veneer of science made racism respectable among the social-radical progressives who were supposedly only interested in the future good of mankind.

Eugenics conferences were held in the United States to spread the new spirit of scientific racism within academia. G. Stanley Hall, who had become president of Clark University (Worcester, Mass.) in 1889, encouraged his students to develop tests to assess mental capacity. One of his students, Lewis Terman, devised a mental test that was to become the most famous of them all, one that measured the I.Q., or Intelligence Quotient. The I.Q. expressed the ratio of a child's mental age to his chronological age, multiplied by one hundred. Terman believed that intelligence was a matter of genetic inheritance and that genetic superiority could therefore be determined by this test.

The Anglo-American eugenics movement grew in influence on both sides of the Atlantic. In England it was embraced by Fabian socialists because they believed that an ideal society could be produced only by "superior" people. In America, it drew such progressives as Margaret Sanger, Gifford Pinchot, David Starr-Jordan, Charles M. Eliot, Emma Goldman, and such conservatives as Herbert Hoover and Charles Davenport. Sanger was motivated by her belief in eugenics to start the birth-control movement.

The eugenics movement persuaded Congress to pass new immigration laws to curtail the influx of "inferior" peoples from Eastern and Southern Europe. In 1921, the Second International Congress of Eugenics was held at New York's Museum of Natural History. Its president was Henry Fairfield Osborn, who wrote in the program:



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on October 10, 2011

---

The right of the state to safeguard the character and integrity of the race or races on which its future depends is, to my mind, as incontestable as the right of the state to safeguard the health and morals of its people. As science has enlightened government in the prevention and spread of disease, it must also enlighten government in the prevention of the spread and multiplication of worthless members of society, the spread of feeble-mindedness, of idiocy, and of all moral and intellectual as well as physical diseases.

It was this philosophy of government which enabled Congress to pass Prohibition, which made it illegal to drink alcoholic beverages. And we all know what a social disaster Prohibition turned out to be. Likewise, Mayor Bloomberg of New York believes that it is government's highest duty to determine what people should be allowed to eat. It sounds benign and sensible to a statist. But nothing in our Constitution gives government such powers.

However, there was nothing benign about scientific racism which affected more important aspects of life than just eating habits. To eugenicist Thorndike, blacks were inferior and had to be treated differently in education, and he was responsible for changing "certain schools for Negroes from a predominantly literary to a predominantly realistic and industrial curriculum."

In other words, as a result of "scientific research," pupils were now no longer being judged as individuals, but as members of different racial groups. Scientific racism became an integral part of progressive education policy.

In 1933, Hitler's new National Socialist (Nazi) government adopted a Eugenic Sterilization Law that resulted in the compulsory sterilization, within three years, of 275,000 people judged "unfit" by Hereditary Health Courts. In 1939, on the eve of World War II, the Nazi regime inaugurated a policy of euthanasia for the mentally diseased or disabled. Some 70,000 patients were shot and gassed to death. All of this was prelude to the mass extermination of Jews that would take place during the war years.

But all of that is in the dim past. In America today, eugenics has been replaced by multiculturalism, affirmative action, new liberal programs to help minorities advance economically, and special education in the public schools to help the mentally challenged (once dubbed "useless human beings") get a government education. The schools are now dumbing-down everyone, and functional illiteracy is now epidemic. In other words, we've gone from one evil to another. Scientific racism rejected Biblical religion, and today's progressives reject the supernatural. American culture is in a state of total philosophical chaos. The future of America is uncertain because of the raging battles among competing philosophies. Only by repudiating the statists and returning to the sane political philosophy of the Founding Fathers will this nation be able to reconstruct an American future in liberty and economic freedom for all.



## Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative, non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



### What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.

[Subscribe](#)