

The Assault On The Family: Its Aims and Basis

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Fifteen years ago **Time** magazine published an extensive cover story about the astonishing successes and future trends of the new field called "genetic engineering." Thanks to the discovery of techniques for deleting and inserting codons into the inheritance molecule, DNA, scientists seemed to have arrived at the ultimate frontier — the manipulation of life and indeed the creation of new forms of life..

The article described stunning agricultural and medical applications and projected possibilities of remodelling living nature to suit human wish. The most audacious of these was the prospect of remaking man. There would be growth genes to make us taller; genes to make us brighter, more beautiful, more cooperative, or what you will. Reproduction would also be transformed. Artificial wombs would eliminate the need to carry babies. Cloning would eliminate the need for partnership in reproduction. Future mothers and fathers could have children who were genetic copies of themselves, which they could either carry or have harvested from the test tube. Governments too could get into the act by placing orders for cadres of future workers designed to specification.

This weird and imponderable destiny had been foreshadowed by Aldous Huxley in his novel, **Brave New World** (1932). Now that science was about to overtake imagination, the moment was ripe to consider the ethical issues raised by the prospect that **Time** styled "man into superman." This was transcendence so global that the relation between antecedent and sequel eludes definition: would superman be God? **Time** hesitated to award divinity to man or superman, and contented itself with calling this action "playing God." Moral philosophers and scientists were quoted as warning against the perils of finite man playing at that game. They were opposed by other moralists and scientists who concurred with Teilhard de Chardin that man should "seize the tiller of the world" and embark upon the great journey that would bear the human species to its higher and divine destiny.

MORAL CONFUSION

This expensively produced and influential **Time** article is instructive today because of its complete blindness to the relationship between the projected future and the present and recent past. The United States was then in a condition of moral confusion prompted largely by a singular piece of medical technology, the Pill. The Pill's advocates had spoken eloquently about the expected social benefits: the virtual elimination of unwanted pregnancies, the numerous advantages of planned pregnancies, and so forth. But public authorities, who like to bleat about "social responsibility," said nothing about the probable consequences of so great an inducement to promiscuity. Those consequences are now well known. Entire nations "turned on" to a binge of sexual excess. Business in pornography, abortion, sex aids, hallucinogenic drugs, and psychiatric services boomed. Homosexuals and feminists commenced campaigns that shattered a host of laws tending to confine sexual expression to marriage. The divorce rate, already high, climbed higher, as did the number of unwed mothers, child abuse, and the incidence of venereal disease.

Time was incapable of connecting the projected reproductive revolution with the sexual revolution that had already converted America into something very like the outpatient clinic of a mental hospital. It also failed to note that the experiment with superman had been attempted before in Germany. Might not that catastrophe hold some lessons for the bold challenge to divine wisdom? **Time** did not want to know about it.

Today the hankerings that lent the sexual revolution its hurricane force have been subdued by the spread of disease, particularly the killer AIDS. And young women are now well aware that casual sex places them physically and emotionally at risk. Yet the perturbations set up by the sexual revolution continue to wreak havoc. Family law courts are scenes of bewilderment and distress so deep that on three occasions it has led to the assassination of

judges. Tax and welfare compensations to "single parents" (meaning deserted mothers) have penalised the traditional family with a single bread-winner. Young women, finding no husband, take employment on road gangs. A noisy rhetoric backed by a multitude of laws bamboozles the public with contradictory commands to the effect that the sexes are equal but that women require special consideration, particularly when maternal obligations "disadvantage" them at work. The brutalization consequent to public acceptance of elective abortion has paved the way for an extension of medical killing, under the banner of "euthanasia", to the disabled. Biomedical innovations continue the turmoil begun by the Pill, driving the public into debilitating moral contradictions. Thus, the lives of the terminally ill are extended by organ transplants, yet euthanasia is demanded as a "right" of the disabled. Again, expensive fertility services are demanded as the "right" of infertile couples; yet adoption is difficult and abortion carries off 100,000 of the unborn every year. A Select Committee of Federal Parliament has devoted much time and expense examining the ethics of the destruction of embryos used in the IVF programme; yet judges have conferred legitimacy upon elective abortion at any stage of pregnancy. Such is the sublime moral condition of the creature who aspires to be superman.

THE NAZI HOLOCAUST

In their plodding way, scholars have gradually unearthed the historical bits and pieces that promise an overview of the assault on the family. An important step was psychiatrist Frederic Wertham's **The Sign of Cain** (1966). This scholar's study of the Affects of television violence on children led to a general study of violence, in the course of which he examined the origin and circumstances of the Nazi death camps. What he found had been fully aired at the Nuremberg trials; but the facts were so at odds with the Allies' propaganda image of the Nazi regime that they could not be made to fit stereotypes; hence the facts formed no part of the public understanding of the Holocaust until Wertham spelled them out.

The stereotype holds that the Holocaust expressed a unique malice against the Jewish people. This points to German and European anti-semitism as the ultimate sanction of Nazi Germany's horrific deed. But forty years of study carried out on this assumption has gotten nowhere: the Nazi deed is set down as a dark irrationality inscrutable to the rational mind. Wertham realised that the facts say otherwise. The organisational engine of the Holocaust — the camp regimen, the killing methods,

and disposal of corpses — was not the work of a pathological killer in an SS uniform. It was designed by Germany's leading psychiatrists, who applied it to German patients in mental institutions from 1939 to 1945. When the SS began their killing beyond German borders in 1941, they merely copied the psychiatrists' tested procedures. Indeed, the crematoriums that had been especially designed were disassembled at the mental hospitals and transported to Poland. The question then is why did these men, whose high profession is healing, and who enjoyed international reputations prior to the war, become the instruments of mass killing? Were they suborned by a dictator? They were not. Were they seized by some malignant hatred then? Not at all. The so-called "Nazi doctors" acted from a clinical objectivity which was expressed in the unemotional bureaucratic killing routine of the death camps.

EUTHANASIA

What is this objectivity? Its technical name is "triage," a medical term meaning the assignment of priorities in the allocation of medical services. The triage concept requires that patients in the most urgent need should receive first attention; and in situations of scarcity, as happens on the battlefield, that first attention should go to those most likely to recover. In the 1880s, Darwinian thinkers discovered a populational-evolutionary complement to triage. They called it "euthanasia", from the Greek meaning "pleasant death". The word was evidently chosen with a view to consumer appeal because it expresses nothing of the scientific concept involved, which would suggest a quite different term — administered death.

Euthanasia or administered death was one of several measures proposed to cope with a hard dilemma that arises once one has the Darwinian perspective on human societies. It is this. Man is supposed to have advanced from his primitive condition as a hunter-gatherer to civilisation competence partly by replacing the brutal competitions of natural selection with a socially generalised altruism that provides safety and survival for many who otherwise would have perished. But the effect of this altruism over the longer term threatens civilisation, since it enables the deformed and social misfits to propagate their kind. At length their genes must impose an unbearable burden on the gene pool, just as caring for incurables and the incapacitated (whose numbers, on this theory, constantly increase), must at length become an intolerable economic burden. Administered death for the latter, and sterilisation for the former, were solutions advocated by

Darwinians.

In 1920, a leading jurist, Karl Binding, and a distinguished psychiatrist, Alfred Hoche, published a little book bearing a curious title, **The Release of the Destruction of Life Devoid of Value**. It is a compressed statement of the then internationally current Darwinian arguments for "releasing" administered death upon the terminally ill, the disabled, the severely retarded, and psychopaths. The Binding and Hoche volume caused no outcry against the perversion of medicine involved in combining the healing art with the administration of death. On the contrary, from their chosen point of view the authors undoubtedly argued rationally and in the highest interests of humanity. The architects of the death camps perceived themselves and their deed in just these terms.

EUGENICS

A second step toward a true perception of the present danger to the family was taken in 1977 when Allen Chase published his study, **The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Costs of the New Scientific Racism**. Chase greatly extended Wertham's demystification of the perception of Nazism as a political movement whose unique evil rendered it incomprehensible. Darwinism was the main clue. It was generally known that Nazi "racial policy" was strongly coloured by eugenics concepts that sprang from evolutionary biology. However, until then scholars had tended to dismiss this connection as window dressing put up by the Nazis to help legitimate their aims. Chase showed that this interpretation did not square with the facts. The Nazis' so-called "racial policy" was merely one aspect of a scientifically conceived population policy in which public health, sterilisation, euthanasia, family policy and race hygiene all had their place. Sterilisation, for example, was not an indirect tool of police terror; it was applied to Germans who fell into eugenically valid categories of undesirables, e.g. epileptics, schizophrenics, the intellectually handicapped, and those suffering from heritable diseases. When in 1934 the Nazis installed what after the war were called the infamous racial laws, there was no outcry from scientists about the travesty of science that those laws embodied. Far from it. The Nazi edicts were copied from American laws which had been drawn up by leading geneticists. Such men praised the Nazi regime's forward-looking racial geneticists. As late as 1940 overseas authorities inspected Nazi medical and legal bureaus and pronounced them good. Frederick Osborn's **Preface to Eugenics** (1940) discussed German population policy without a word of

criticism. In 1939 leading British and American geneticists issued a "Geneticists' Manifesto" that strongly endorsed eugenic principles espoused by the Nazis, with one exception: the belief in racial traits was called an "unscientific prejudice." The prejudice was not vehemently denounced, no doubt because the Manifesto authors well knew that it was a view strongly held by many eugenicists. They excused the prejudice as a belief that would persist until a peaceful world government was introduced.

Like Wertham, Chase had not set out to write about the Nazi regime. The data came at him as he investigated his chosen theme, the use by contemporary scientists of alleged over-population as a bogey to support measures that in his opinion amounted to a "new scientific racism." Despite his own ample evidence to the contrary, Chase could not free himself from the convenient fiction, current among scientists today, that Nazi eugenics was pseudo-science. His belief in the moral inerrancy of science, together with his conviction that the population bomb scare cloaked a deeply immoral purpose, made him depict his entire subject as an unfortunate binge of science gone off the rails; thus, he blamed the luckless Malthus even though his cast of characters were self-styled Darwinians. But Chase followed the tracks of so-called pseudo-science into the finest scientific company. If that was specious, where was genuine science to be found? Chase was unable to say.

Chase turned up a lot of evidence of great interest, such as the early and continuing affiliation of eugenicists, feminists, birth controllers, family planners, abortion and euthanasia advocates, and population bomb scarers. His faith in the inerrancy of science prevented him from interpreting these data. But a series of studies of eugenics, beginning with Anthony Smith's **The Human Pedigree: Inheritance and the Genetics of Mankind** (1975) and culminating in Daniel Kevles' **In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Crisis of Human Heredity** (1985) enable us to place the entire movement in accurate historical and conceptual perspective. To obtain a clear picture, we need to lay hold firmly to the key eugenic beliefs. They are:

1. The civilisation-relevant traits of human beings (physical, emotional, and intellectual) are determined primarily by inheritance. Acculturation and training presuppose this natural endowment and add nothing to it that is heritable. This belief is not based on a sociological inventory of peoples but follows directly from general biological principles that interpret man as an animal species.

2. The evolutionary premise is that animal species evolve, that is, acquire or discard traits by differential reproduction. If individuals with genes for a given trait leave more offspring than individuals who lack it, the trait will spread through the breeding population at rates varying with the rates of differential reproduction. This premise is meant to explain the adaptation of all species as well as variations between populations, e.g., the physical adaptations of human populations to differences of climate, altitude, and habitat. A corollary of this premise is that genes for maladaptive traits are deleted from the gene pool by natural selection.
3. The conditions of reproduction in civilised circumstances are dysgenic because they tend to preserve maladaptive traits. This happens because civilised institutions extend the hand of charity to the weak and the deformed. It follows from (2) that bad genes will tend to spread in civilised circumstances, leading inevitably to the decline of culture and to the degeneration of civilised populations.

CONTROLLING HUMAN EVOLUTION

This key premise may be styled "evolutionary anxiety." Without clear grasp of it we cannot comprehend the strange moral posture of eugenics. Understanding it, the programme makes sense in its own terms. Eugenics is the action programme prompted in benevolent scientists by evolutionary anxiety. The programme would redeem the human species from inevitable degeneration by removing the weak and deformed. The aim is to control the direction of human evolution. The means is eugenic control of reproduction. But control of reproduction is an enormous task requiring the replacement of accustomed sanction of reproduction — the family — by reproduction according to scientific plan. This implies the destruction of the traditional family, and every means to this end is fair: birth control, abortion, feminism, population control, family planning, sterilisation, artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilisation, artificial wombs, etc., together with a public rhetoric which inculcates a sense of "reproductive responsibility," meaning, that individuals should replace their personal reproductive wishes by the advice of expert "family planners." However, to fine-tune populations, one must control not only entry into the world but exit from it. Euthanasia is triage applied to these superfluous persons.

Recent scholarship has shown, then, that eugenics is deeply entrenched in our culture under a variety of services and concepts. However, the

variety of eugenics current among us differs from the Nazi version; and it is important, for purposes of clarity, to understand the difference. It relates essentially to political strategy rather than to aim. The vehicle of Nazi eugenics was racial politics. The vehicle of current eugenics is one-worldism. It originated around 1935 with evolutionary biologist Sir Julian Huxley and Nobel geneticist Hermann J. Muller, both of whom were well-disposed to the Soviet Union. These scientists redesigned the eugenics project to make it more acceptable to multiracial, democratic societies. The redesign imposed one considerable cost — an intermediate, preparatory phase characterised by social disruption whose effects would be substantially dysgenic. The cost was deemed to be acceptable in view of the advantage obtained, which was popular acceptance of trends tending to institutionalise scientific control of breeding. The Huxley-Muller plan was essentially this. Rather than proceed, as Germany had, forthwith to breed eugenically from the nation's best, one should take the opposite course and place the whole population on a single level of social equality. This would have two effects. It would provide a means of distinguishing between natural superiority and socially-conferred advantage, since those who stood out in conditions of equality must owe their position to natural endowment. Secondly, the equality option harnessed a powerful popular impulse to a cart steered by eugenicists in the direction of sexual equality and freedom. This initiative, powered by feminism and lust, armed with sexual enlightenment and a benevolent evolutionary religion, would disrupt the family and gradually entrench eugenics via the medicalisation of reproduction (sterilisation, abortion, contraception, family planning).

THE HUMANISTS

Muller exercised little influence beyond the small circle of genetics, but Huxley's influence was prodigious and he used it to transmit his scheme to the mainstream of contemporary culture. As the first Director-General of UNESCO, he married that organisation and its large budget to eugenics; this influence soon spread to the World Health Organisation. In 1952 he became the first president of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, an umbrella for dozens of humanist associations around the world. Although Huxley had long been influential among humanists, from about this date the impress of his scheme becomes evident in the publications of the two most potent humanist groups, the British Humanist Association (**The New Humanist**) and the American Humanist Association (**The Humanist**).

Sequential reading of these publications over the period indicated deeply impresses upon one the awesome power of humanists. They initiated and directed every campaign of the sexual revolution: the numerous liberations (of sexual expression, homosexuals, pornography, drugs, paedophilia); the drive to reform laws of marriage, age of consent, homosexuality, and pornography; the initiative to mould school curricula into the humanist pattern; the battle against religious revival in America, including Creationism controversies; the Equal Rights Amendment; opposition to the Vietnam war; advocacy of euthanasia; advocacy of all medical interventions in reproduction — no stone is unturned in the relentless drive to visit maximum destruction upon the family and upon patriotic feeling.

For obvious reasons of propaganda advantage humanists prefer not to admit that they are hell bent on destruction. They prefer to emphasize the positive — the liberation of human potential from the fetters of tradition and superstition, and the advance of humanity to a higher stage of psychosocial evolution. However, it is simple logic that whoever is keen to leap into an unknown evolutionary future must be less than content with the known present, mankind as it is.

Despite their unctious professions of benevolent intent and unending self-congratulation for superior "social conscience," a deep misanthropy presides over the humanist project. It shows itself in the intolerance and contempt directed toward institutions and attitudes that humanists propose to reform; for those institutions and attitudes are universal to the human race.

It is simple logic that the advocates of superman must despise man as he is. The mass killing that they have helped unleash on the unborn, and the even greater killing that they hope to unleash under the guise of "euthanasia," reveals the dark thoughts that humanists harbour against mankind.

More threatening than these intentions, however, are subversions of professional ethics vital to civilised life. We must reckon with the fact that the medical profession now accepts that the administration of death is legitimate medical practice. We must reckon with the fact that the legal profession and the courts are not far behind the doctors. We must realise that opinion in schools, universities and church hierarchies has been heavily influenced by humanist thinking. There are, I believe, two reserve powers to call upon in the endeavour to rectify this threatening situation.

TWO RESERVE POWERS

The first is public awareness. The astounding

success of the sexual revolution was due not only to the astuteness of humanist tactics, but owed much to the circumstance that no public had ever before been exposed to such politics. It did not occur to us that professional authorities whom we were accustomed to trust had combined in a deeply laid plan to destroy the family, and to sell that plan as a glowing expansion of sexual and reproductive consumerism. We did not know what was hitting us. But the severe social dislocation, personal distress, and crushing financial burdens of the revolution have now awakened the public to the fact that the authorities advised badly. In North America that awareness has engendered - a vigorous conservative movement which is successfully challenging the humanist hegemony. The same pattern, somewhat time-lagged, is now visible in Australia. As the public become more aware of the true intentions of their benevolent leaders, we may expect the common decency of ordinary citizens to assert itself with great effect.

The second reserve power is a tremendous tension within the biological sciences that has now shattered the theoretical framework upon which Huxley based his eugenics politics. The Darwinian concept of evolution, which pictured a gradual uniform change brought about by natural selection, is today deeply contentious among the experts because it is so ill supported by empirical evidence. A fundamental revision of evolutionary theory appears to be in the making.

In addition, Huxley's assumptions about the relative weight of nature and nurture have been falsified by the development of behavioural biology over the past twenty years. His eugenics politics assumed that social and sexual behaviour were not closely tied to reproductive biology. Today an impressive body of theory and empirical evidence show the contrary in considerable detail. The family, although not necessarily the monogamous family, is seen to be the natural reproductive, nurturing, and social unit of our species. The family cannot be abandoned in the short run without causing extreme distress; and it cannot be abandoned in the long run at all. This is the ruin of the scheme to separate the sexual and the reproductive functions with a view to eugenic manipulation. The public policy voice of the biological sciences, which knows only the script written by Huxley, is already seriously compromised by this contradiction and must in the future either abandon integrity altogether or assert it altogether. On the latter alternative, eugenics politics would have lost the battle in the citadel and will be buried as an obsolete idea.