



## The Question of Eugenics: A Critical Analysis of Plato's Eugenics Theory

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### Abstract

Plato's (428/427- 348/347 BC) philosophical doctrines and ideologies are believed to be the footnote of Western philosophy. He is believed to be the first to have written issues concerning eugenics. In his work *Republic* especially book V, he discussed the possibility of raising a guardian class comprising of a carefully selected men and women of superior traits who alone are allowed to propagate to transmit their noble qualities to their offspring without "tainting" from those with inferior traits. At the end he realized that it was improbable to accomplish such results with human beings. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was an attempt to revive the eugenics ideologies of ancient period, like those of Plato, by Francis Galton and his eugenics movement, who believed that it was possible, through selective breeding just as it was accomplished in husbandry, to raise a human race of superior traits through the enhancement of human gene pool. This can be termed as positive eugenics. Later it also meant suppressing people with low quality traits from propagating so that they could not pollute human gene pool. This can be referred to as negative eugenics. Inhumane methods were employed to achieve this as it was witnessed and culminated in Nazi regime and through Adolf Hitler. For this reason, eugenics acquired a negative connotation which brought the use of the term eugenics to an end especially at the end of Second World War. In the modern epoch, this has invited aggressive debates and discussions concerning the legitimacy and authenticity of eugenics practices in human beings in various disciplines. Eugenics has brought distinction and categorization of human beings who by nature are supposed to be equal and be respected as such.

**Key Words:** eugenics, selective breeding, positive eugenics, negative eugenics, superior race, inferior race, desirable traits, feeble-minded, gene.

## Introduction

Creation by itself ought to be perfect. All living things in the corporeal world are created to propagate themselves naturally when all conditions and environments are constant. For instance, dogs propagate themselves, just as individual plant species do. Human beings fall in the same category. Despite the above oughtness of creation, the development in science and technology has been used both positively and negatively in the effort to rectify some imperfections man realises in himself and in his milieu. The so-called First World Countries, through their racial biasness, advocate for selective breeding of human beings just as it has been in both plants and animals.<sup>1</sup> There has been an attempt to create supermen, “superior race”, which possesses desired traits to the utmost and considered to be above other humans through observations and experimentations just as it had been proven a possibility in husbandry. To accomplish this, various methods have been applied which, on one hand, enhance human gene pool of the “superior race” (positive eugenics) and on the other hand, suppresses the undesired traits of “inferior race” (negative eugenics) using various methods, such as; controlled marriages, contraceptives, sterilization (sometimes by use of coercion) and at worse through direct extermination of “unfit”.<sup>2</sup> This work shall attempt to analyse the determination of man to perfect himself through the eugenics theory in the light of Plato and the repercussion of his eugenics theory. To achieve this we shall analyse the work of Francis Galton in the field of eugenics theory and eugenics movement and its effect from the late nineteenth century onwards. Finally we shall consider the relevance of the eugenics theory under new terminologies in the modern world.

### 1.0 Meaning of Eugenics

Francis Galton in his work “*Essays in Eugenics*” defines “eugenics as a science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage”.<sup>3</sup> He is believed to be the first to coin the word *eu-genics* (*eu*-good, *Genics*- related to genes) to literally mean, “Well-born,” or “Good-births” which is an effort to transmit good genes to the progeny for the betterment of the society.<sup>4</sup> He further argues that, the goodness or badness he is talking about should be divorced from moral issues because morality is relative and not absolute according to his contemporary current form of civilization.<sup>5</sup> Eugenics movement that rose in the United States in the late nineteenth century defined eugenics as the science of modifying the human population by selective breeding, with the intention of “improving” the human race.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.1 Positive Eugenics

Positive eugenics can be termed has an idea of breeding for “desirable” traits to improve the human race. To achieve this some measures and agencies were put in place such as giving financial inducements in the form of tax disruptions and stipends to bolster the “best” to reproduce and transmit their traits. This was intended to encourage those with preferred traits

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<sup>1</sup> History, s.v. “*Eugenics*” by history.com editors, accessed on April 14, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/germany/eugenics>.

<sup>2</sup> R. Wilson, “*Eugenics: Positive Vs Negative*,” Accessed on April 14, 2021, <http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/5233c3ac5c2ec50000000086>.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Galton, “*Essays in Eugenics*.” (London: The Eugenics Education Society, 1909), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Galton, “*Essays in Eugenics*,” 35.

<sup>5</sup> Galton, “*Essays in Eugenics*,” 35.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Friedl, “*Positive & Negative Eugenics: Ethical Implications*,” Study.com. ( 2021), accessed April 5, 2021, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/positive-negative-eugenics-ethical-implications.html>.

to propagate more. It also comprised discouraging those with undesired traits from reproducing and thus not pollutes the human gene pool. It was done through education and practicing selfless behaviours (altruism).<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2 Negative Eugenics

Negative eugenics encompassed preventing “unfit” from giving birth, generally against their will. It was functional where altruism did not work. It mostly comprised sterilization, marriage restrictions, and, in extreme cases, euthanasia. In most cases, it targeted the mental illness, pauper class, and those with other so-called “deficient” genes, usually crudely attributed to racial characteristics. The predicated result is to prevent “tainting” of the gene pool and bringing down the human race.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.0 Plato’s Eugenics Theory

In Book V of *Republic*, Plato discussed a possibility of coming up with the guardian class of men and women of superior qualities who are capable of defending and protecting the Athenian city state effectively. To achieve this, he thought it was very paramount for everyone to participate in the activities of raising this class of human beings. He thought first the strict laws should be enacted to give governing class authority to monitor the breeding of these individuals. First of all, he encouraged that those to be admitted to this activity are those who have proven themselves to be great warriors in various wars both men and women. They should be allowed to live together at their prime age training and propagating in a controlled situation and segregated from the rest of the community to avoid tainting from those who do not possess these qualities.<sup>9</sup> Their children should be nurtured by special nurses and mothers allowed to breast-feed them randomly without recognizing their babies. This will detach them from their children and allow them to train as well as have a spirit of living in their community sharing things in common.<sup>10</sup> Children who are born with defects or deformities should be terminated through exposure or other means.<sup>11</sup> With time, the good traits found in the parents will be transmitted to their offspring from one generation to the next and finally to have guardians of high qualities. But eventually Plato realized that his ideology was most unlikely as he concluded that even “Golden soul can produce bronze soul.”<sup>12</sup> But all the same he felt that at least eugenics could produce traits towards or nearer perfection.<sup>13</sup> From these arguments of Plato, he was considered to have been the first to advocate for eugenics which much later will be referred to by Francis Galton. It is considered that Plato was much fascinated by the fine soldiers of Spartan and his ideas might have been due to the influence of the training of these armies.

## 2.1 Spartan Civilization

Spartan civilization is known for its fine soldiers who were strong and with high levels of discipline and effectiveness. To form its strong army, Spartan soldiers’ training started right from birth. The new born babies were inspected by the city's elders, *Gerousia*, and then cleansed in wine to check if they were health. If the infant was deemed to live they were taken

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<sup>7</sup> Friedl, "Positive & Negative Eugenics.

<sup>8</sup> Friedl, "Positive & Negative Eugenics.

<sup>9</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato: The Federalist Papers Project*, 46, [www.thefederalistpapers.org](http://www.thefederalistpapers.org).

<sup>10</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato: The Federalist Papers Project*, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato: The Federalist Papers Project*, 48.

<sup>12</sup> (Wikipedia, “History of Eugenics”, *The Republic*, 457c10-d3).

<sup>13</sup> Allen G. Roper, *Ancient Eugenics: The Arnold Prize Essay for 1913* (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1913), 152-153, *Republic* 472a-e. *Republic* 461c.

home. If the child was thought to be sickly or to die soon, then they were taken to the top of a hill and thrown away, left to die from exposure or from hunger and thirst.<sup>14</sup> Or as Walter Berns in his work *"Making Patriots"* puts it "...whose infants, if they chanced to be puny or ill-formed, were exposed in a chasm (the *Apothetae* near the *Taygetus* Mountain) and left to die."<sup>15</sup> To Sparta, this practice enabled them to have the strongest survivors who reproduce and their good personality traits transmitted to the successive generations. Adolf Hitler considered Sparta to be the first "Völkisch State", and much like Ernst Haeckel who praised Sparta for its selective infanticide policy.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.0 Francis Galton's Theory on Eugenics

Sir Francis Galton was a British scientist of late nineteenth century. He contributed largely in areas of statistics, experimental psychology and biometry. He is known as the founder of finger prints which is greatly used to identify individuals.<sup>17</sup> He is also well known as the father or originator of early twentieth century eugenics movement. He wrote several works in the field of eugenics such as *essays in the eugenics*, *Hereditary Talent and Character*, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*, *Memories of life*, *English men of science: Their Nature and Nurture* and others. In his *nature verse nurture* he attempted to postulate transmission of human personality traits. To achieve his goal he developed a family study method to classify likely inherited traits and formulated laws of genetic inheritance.<sup>18</sup> He was moved by the conviction that the mechanisms of the natural selection, as depicted in the work of his half-cousin Charles Darwin in his essay *"Origin of Species"*, were potentially bewildered by human civilization. He thought that humans should not interfere with the process of natural selection where social policies protected the weakling and underprivileged from this process responsible for their extinction, or what he calls "reversion towards mediocrity",<sup>19</sup> which will later change to a commonly known phrase "regression towards the means."<sup>20</sup>

In later age, Galton took a great interest in hereditary of talent and nobility. In his statistical inquiry, he used noble family lineages. He believed his result showed strong evidence that talent was heritable. Though his critics pinpointed that other factors can contribute to this, like wealth and education, his position still persisted. His works, *Hereditary Genius* and *English men of science: Their Nature and Nurture*, were written to respond to his critics.<sup>21</sup> In his later work, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (1883), he devised the term *eugenics* which generally concern with the study of heredity to improve genetic stock of human race.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Beckett, *The Ultimate Greek Warriors: Everything You Need to Know About the Spartan Civilization* (2016), 10-11.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Berns, *Making Patriots* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>16</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Book* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 18.

<sup>17</sup> *Embryo Project Encyclopedia* (2011-04-06), s.v. "Francis Galton (1822-1911)" by Lawrence Cera R., accessed May 19, 2021, <http://embryo.asu.edu/handle/10776/1800>.

<sup>18</sup> *Embryo Project Encyclopedia* (2011-04-06), s.v. "Francis Galton (1822-1911)" by Lawrence Cera R.

<sup>19</sup> Galton, "Essays in Eugenics," 35-41.

<sup>20</sup> Donald A. MacKenzie, *Statistics in Britain, 1865-1930: The social construction of scientific knowledge* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 51-72.

<sup>21</sup> *Embryo Project Encyclopedia* (2011-04-06), s.v. "Francis Galton (1822-1911)" by Lawrence Cera R.

<sup>22</sup> *Embryo Project Encyclopedia* (2011-04-06), s.v. "Francis Galton (1822-1911)" by Lawrence Cera R.

His works were geared towards proving that talent was heritable and thus society ought to encourage the breeding of individual with great talent. At the beginning his method could be termed as positive eugenics to distinguish it from negative eugenics which advocated for no reproduction of progeny with undesirable traits like criminals, weaklings and untalented.<sup>23</sup> In his work toward his death, referred to as *The Eugenic College of Kantsaywhere*, he attempted to write an Utopian world where eugenics programs had succeed in creating a perfected human race but this work was not published and a big portion of it was lost. Karl Pearson's, a pupil to Galton, preserved some portions of his work.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.0 Eugenics Movement

Several factors contributed to the development of eugenics movement in the late nineteenth century and twentieth century. In around nineteenth century there was great development in science and technology with emphasize on the observations and experimentations that saw the rising of great scientists and empiricist philosophers during this epoch and their insistence on the scientific methodology.<sup>25</sup> Through observations and experimentations, Charles Darwin came up with the theory of evolution through struggle of the fittest. Francis Galton later, and through the influence of Darwinian evolution theory, thought of eugenics theory that will improve the gene pool of human race. Going back to the time of Plato, he thought it was possible to revive the ideology of Plato and apply it through experimentations, to select and breed human beings with superior traits just as it was a success in husbandry. Science and technology also brought about industrial revolution and its achievement and challenges. Industrial revolution fostered rural-urban migration which saw the rising of pauper class that was living in poor conditions in slums. Due to the problem of urbanization, Edwin Chadwick (Sanitary reformer in around 1842) felt there was a danger posed by pauper class which he associated with high death rate and at the same time high birth rate and thus no surprise this class was found to having high fertility.<sup>26</sup> Thomas Malthus (an essay on the principle of population, 1789) too foresaw a danger of mass deaths that was to occur due low production of food and overpopulation which was associated with pauper class. He advocated for planned birth control and improvement of living conditions, but the latter part was not well pronounced as the former. All these ideologies and theories became the basis of eugenics movement that arose in the late nineteenth century and twentieth century.<sup>27</sup> Eugenics movement used the predicted findings of Malthus to advocate for its support.

According to eugenicists, the pauper class, which was parasite to the society, needed to be controlled by suppressing their multiplication so that it could not degrade human gene pool. They were seen as the species to be eradicated by nature as evolution was taking place and as the struggle for existence was favouring the better species which also needed a space to occupy. There was a need to hasten the evolution process through the struggle of the fittest, and the fittest (superior class) emerging the winner in this war.

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<sup>23</sup> *Embryo Project Encyclopedia* (2011-04-06), s.v. "Francis Galton (1822-1911)" by Lawrence Cera R.

<sup>24</sup> *Embryo Project Encyclopedia* (2011-04-06), s.v. "Francis Galton (1822-1911)" by Lawrence Cera R.

<sup>25</sup> Rose S. Woolhouse, *A History of Western Philosophy: The Empiricists*, 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1-3.

<sup>26</sup> Pauline, M.H. Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings: The Eugenics Society, Its Sources and Its Critics in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1992), 2.

<sup>27</sup> Quamrul Ashrafy and Oded Galorz, "Malthusian Population Dynamics: Theory and Evidence," Working Paper, Department of Economics, Brown University, No. 2008-6 (2008): 4-5, accessed June 22, 2021. <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/62638>.

#### 4.1 Methodology used by Eugenacists

Eugenics spread beginning from Britain to the other parts of the world by taking different forms according to national background and historical context of various countries:

In Britain, it was the casual labourers or pauper class whose low intelligence and high fertility were dangerous to society, as it had been throughout the nineteenth century. The feeble-minded were taken to be the epitome of this class. In the United States, the undesirables with the high birth rate who provided the source of feeble-mindedness and crime, and who filled up the asylums and the prisons, were the immigrants from Southern Europe. In Germany, it was the psychotics and psychopaths who were the main target of eugenics research, though when sterilization laws came with National Socialism, the feeble-minded were on the list too. There was no suggestion in Germany that danger to the race was associated with class.<sup>28</sup>

Eugenics Society's preferred to use pedigree as a scientific methodology for both investigation and propaganda. The method was at the same time used differently in various countries. For instance, in America it was used to claim that a trait was inherited as a Mendelian unit character. In Britain it was used as a straightforward demonstration with no specific theory of inheritance implied. As long as there was no need to try to answer the question of the relative parts played by heredity and environment in the creation of pauperism, pedigree construction worked very well as a general technique for both investigation and demonstration.<sup>29</sup>

In the twenties things took another direction. There was an effort with Eugenics Society to distinguish that which was ideological and the method which created a big strain. In 1930s, arose a new mathematical method in the hands of the new breed of aggressively outspoken left-wing critics of eugenics which was able to fulfil the intended demand and more.<sup>30</sup> It was now possible to distinguish that which was scientific and the effects of heredity and environment, but also between the simply biological and what was social and human, and between 'Value-free science' and class prejudice. These mathematical techniques were developed in Germany, within the German eugenics movement, but in Britain they were introduced by the *contras*, in the hope of purifying their science of the ideological accretions attached to human genetics through the eugenicist problematic.<sup>31</sup>

Eugenacists were handling the issue of pauperism from genetic point of view. That is, the poor people, "feeble-minded", certain race and those who fall under that category were in this state due to their bad gene inherited from their parents and are capable of passing the same to their progeny thus a need to control their birth rate, this brought about The Poor Laws policies. To achieve their goals, certain measures were proposed, such as; birth control by use of contraceptives, sterilization sometimes through coercion, castrations and at worse direct eradication of life as it was witnessed in Nazi regime under leadership of Adolf Hitler. In twentieth century the term eugenics became associated with these negative effects.

#### 5.0 Eugenics in the Modern World

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<sup>28</sup> Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings*, 2-3.

<sup>29</sup> Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings*, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings*, 3.

After Second World War, there was an attempt to reintroduce eugenics but under new terminologies; science of human genetics or genetic engineering but avoiding the usage of the term eugenics because of its negative connotation. There was a great fear that these terms might be a former eugenics under disguise and due to this there is great opposition to this developing science. Just as Charles Epstein in his work, “*Is Modern Genetics the New Genetics?*” argues that, “The worst accusation that can be levelled against modern human genetics and medical genetics is that they are eugenic, if not a literal return to the eugenics of the past, at least a reincarnation of that eugenics in a new guise. The mere use of the word “eugenics” brings forth very visceral responses.”<sup>32</sup>

There is an effort to use the term eugenics but with positive connotation, for instance, such terms as; new eugenics, reformed eugenics and liberal eugenics which are supposed to translate to the use of positive eugenics administered to an individual voluntarily. I further concur with Charles Epstein when he argues that there should be a cordial dialogue between the scientists who advocate for human genetics or new eugenics with their critics who are also raising genuine questions that need considerations.<sup>33</sup> There was really an enormous error committed by Charles Darwin and former eugenicists when they perceive man just like any other animal led by strong instincts. This view stripped human person of all his dignity and respect as a rational, spiritual and moral being and lowered him to a level of a mere animal commanded by social instinct.<sup>34</sup> This has called upon the arguments from critics in all aspects that defend the dignity and respect of a human person. No human person in his right senses would support eugenics based on the theory of evolution through the survival of the fittest where man devours his fellow man mercilessly in the name of struggle of the fittest applying various methods that were intended to exterminate human life that was perceived not worth living. Thus making former eugenics as it was practiced and conceived intrinsically wrong.<sup>35</sup>

## 5.1 Ethical Arguments against Eugenics

Eugenics in the past was intrinsically wrong because it violated numerous inherent rights of individuals. These rights can be approached from various perspectives but pointing to the same human person. They can be perceived from intellectual, moral or spiritual viewpoints but all of them refer to the same human nature. According to Christianity, morality has its origin from divine revelation, but to Immanuel Kant and other enlightenment thinkers based their ethics in human rationality and even other British philosophers based ethics on moral feeling that are inherent in human nature.<sup>36</sup> Darwin summed up his opinion of ethics and morality by stating that anyone who does not believe in God or after life, “can have for his rule of life, as far as I can see, only to follow those impulses and instincts which are the strongest or which seem to him the best one”.<sup>37</sup> Let now discuss some arguments levelled against eugenics.

### 5.1.1 Argument from Respect to Human Life

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<sup>32</sup> Charles Epstein, “Is modern genetics the new eugenics?,” *Genetics in Medicine*, 5, no.6 (2003): 469, <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.GIM.0000093978.77435.17>.

<sup>33</sup> Epstein, “Is modern genetics the new eugenics?,” 469.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Darwin, *Autobiography* (New York: Norton, 1969), 94.

<sup>35</sup> Epstein, “Is modern genetics the new eugenics?,” 472.

<sup>36</sup> Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler*, 9.

<sup>37</sup> Darwin, *Autobiography*, 94.

According to Christian notion, death is something unnatural, an evil to be conquered. The idea of the sanctity of human life has been central to Christianity and thus every human person has the right to life. Judeo-Christian ethics prohibit the killing of innocent human life and thus Christian church clearly opposes and forbade murder, infanticide, abortion, suicide, euthanasia and any other way that translate to killing of innocent human life.<sup>38</sup> In general, the religion of Christianity and in particular Catholic Church always emphasizes the need to respect human life in all spheres of existence. As Pope Francis argues, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, ““Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality.”<sup>39</sup> Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that “everyone should look upon his neighbour (without any exception) as 'another self,' above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity.”<sup>40</sup>

The sanctity of human life became preserved in classical liberal human rights ideology as “right to life” which according to John Locke and the United States declaration of independence, was one of the ultimate rights of every individual. Before the second half of the nineteenth century, the European legal codes strictly prohibited assisted suicide, infanticide and abortion to uphold the tenet of the sanctity of human life.<sup>41</sup>

### 5.1.2 Argument from Equal Dignity to All People

The principle states that we ought to value disables and non-disables equally. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that, “Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation ... the person represents the ultimate end of society”<sup>42</sup> “The equality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it: Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design.”<sup>43</sup>

### 5.1.4 Principle of Unique and Unrepeatable of Human Person

This principle contends that human person must always be understood in his unrepeatable and inviolable uniqueness. Who always exists as an “I” capable of self-understanding, self-possession and self-determination. In fact, man exists above all as a subjective entity, as a centre of consciousness and freedom, whose unique life experiences, comparable to those of no one else, underlie the inadmissibility of any attempt to reduce his status by forcing him into preconceived categories or power systems, whether ideological or otherwise.<sup>44</sup> Eugenics

<sup>38</sup> Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler*, 75.

<sup>39</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church: revised in accordance with the official Latin text promulgated by Pope John Paul II*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vatican: Libreria ed Itrice Vaticana, 1994), §2258, 544.

<sup>40</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium Et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, (1965), 27§1.

<sup>41</sup> Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler*, 75.

<sup>42</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*., §1928-1929, 468.

<sup>43</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium Et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, (1965), 29§2.

<sup>44</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church: Compendium*, §411-412, 124.



thought that through the elimination of the “inferior race, pauper class, feeble-minded” and the rest perceived as with undesirable traits, the “superior race” that come out of this will have perfect qualities. But they forgot people are born unique and they exist in a very unrepeatable way, thus people can never be the same, the result targeted could be erroneous.

### 5.1.4 Argument from Expressivism

The Expressivist Argument states that “striving to avoid the births of children with disabilities or diseases (using PGD and the like) expresses an erroneous and morally unacceptable attitude towards such people”<sup>45</sup> These practices are immoral in the sense that they cause offence and hurt to people currently living with and in such conditions. This might send message to them that it would have been better if they, too, had not been born. It expresses inequitable and negative views towards disabled, feeble-minded, poor people and those who fall in that category.<sup>46</sup> We can ask ourselves some questions relating to this: Does it mean that the world would be a better place to be if it were free from disabled people? Or does the message of selective reproduction say to the disabled that the world would have been happier if their mothers could not have conceived them? If the answer is YES, then the message is clearly untrue and morally dreadful. The proponents of selective reproduction hold that, less limitation makes everyone better in life and therefore, the world would be a better place if the whole human race were happier.<sup>47</sup> All in all, the message to choose against disabilities and the likes remains the same if one holds that the world would be a better place to be if they had not been born.

### 5.1.5 The Principle of Human Dignity

An individual has an innate dignity that cannot be infringed by anyone not even the society or nation. Eugenics never considered the dignity of the human person in the name of struggle of the fittest where by the mighty annihilate the weak without sympathy or compassion in order to thrive and increase the number of its own kind which they considered as the process of nature. Human being is a special being created with inalienable dignity and rights which are equal to every human person. A just society can flourish only when it respect the transcendental dignity of every of its member. Any individual represents the supreme end of society, by which it is ordered to the person. Thus the society work to the benefit of it member since the order of things are to be subordinate to the order of persons, and not vice versa. “In no case, therefore, is the human person to be manipulated for ends that are foreign to his own development. The person cannot be a means for carrying out economic, social or political projects.”<sup>48</sup> “Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognized by it. They are the basis of the moral legitimacy of every authority: by flouting them or refusing to recognize them in its positive legislation; a society undermines its own moral legitimacy.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Stephen Wilkinson, *Choosing Tomorrow's Children: The Ethics of Selective reproduction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), 149.

<sup>46</sup> Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs* (London: Routledge, 2006), 35.

<sup>47</sup> Wilkinson and Garrard, *Eugenics and Ethics of Selective Reproduction*, 13.

<sup>48</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1929-1933, 469.

<sup>49</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris: Encyclical on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, justice, charity, and liberty* (Vaticano: Libreria ed Itrice Vaticana, 1963), §65.  
[https://www.vatican.va/content/johnxxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jxxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/johnxxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jxxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html).

### 5.1.6 Argument from Harmful Consequences

In the cases where selective reproduction is exercised in order to reduce disabilities and diseases, might bring forth harmful consequences to those already living with such problems. For instance, if the number of people born with disabilities is reduced, then those who remain with disabilities would experience stigma due to less acceptance. This is because, they would look unusual and alien to those who are non-Disables. Another harmful consequence is that, in the societies with fewer numbers of disables, government resources might be restricted in those places hence becoming disadvantageous to the disabled family.

### 6.0 Eugenics Repercussions

The first concept of eugenics advocated for positive eugenics where Galton was of the opinion that it was to encourage the breeding of those of upper classes who possessed the desired traits. But the actual employment of eugenics ideologies took another direction of negative eugenics for it also meant non-survival of those who had undesired qualities.<sup>50</sup>

If the first concept is taken, that is positive eugenics, then it can mean that any human community could be considered as thinking and acting eugenically in the sense that it strives to have its children and members free from diseases and with the projections of having a fruitful and fulfilling lives.<sup>51</sup>

However, eugenics brought about division and categorization that has permeated every sector of human life. Immanuel Kant in his work *Von den verschiedenen Rassen der Menschen* (1775) argued that originally mankind had only one race, that is, white which appeared in dark brown. The black race existed due to humid weather conditions on the white species. He categorized humankind according to spirituality where blacks and indigenous Americans were on the lowest level, that is, four categories: White, Yellow, Negro and American (Red) in descending order respectively.<sup>52</sup> This was the racial seed that was planted before eugenics movement and had a great impact on it which runs down to the present age where human beings are racially categorized as such. Other categories are in the lines of haves and have not, those with high IQ (intelligence quotient) and those with low IQ, superior class and low class and many more that has infiltrated every sector of our lives. In Indian communities we can talk of two categories of communities; high caste and low caste.<sup>53</sup> In many African cultures before marriage, investigations were to be carried out first to determine family background of the spouses, in some aspects, to ensure that the family lineage one is marrying from is not that of people associate with witchcraft, adultery, thugs et cetera. Even in the Church, when one is about to join religious life some scrutinises has to be done to ensure the background of the candidate is of sound mind and a person capable to embrace the demands of the religious life. These examples have been given without any biasness and prejudice and thus should not be

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<sup>50</sup> Allen Buchanan et al., *From chance to choice: Genetics and Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 30.

<sup>51</sup> Epstein, "Is modern genetics the new eugenics?," 470.

<sup>52</sup> Maurice M. Makumba, *An Introduction to African Philosophy: Past and Present* (Nairobi: Pauline Publication Africa, 2007), 37.

<sup>53</sup> B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste: The annotated Critical Edition*, ed. and annot. S. Anand and Introd. Arundhati Roy (London and New York: Verso, 2014), 16-17.

misquoted but only to show, in a way, eugenics thinking and acting have pervaded our minds and lives.

## Conclusion

This work has highlighted significance of Plato's eugenics theory in Francis Galton eugenics theory and eugenics movements till to the modern eugenics. As seen above, Plato advocated for the selective breeding of human beings with predictable result. After reasoning of the methods to be employed, he realised that it was difficult to accomplish the intended goal to human beings due to the fact that many other factors that he did not consider would also contribute the making of superior traits, such as the environmental factor and the complications of human gene. Plato's eugenics ideologies were revived by Galton, who thought that human beings have the responsibility to improve their Gene pool. He was fascinated by the findings of his half-cousin Charles Darwin in his evolution theory. To prevent the "regression towards the mean," human beings should stop interfering with the theory of evolution but in fact they were capable of hastening it by not protecting the weaklings, feeble-minded, unfit and the likes that were doomed to extinction. He thought that the theory of evolution by natural selection through the survival of fittest was the answer to the improvement of human gene pool. This could be termed a positive eugenics that was meant to better the human race. But immediately negative eugenics took the upper hand through eugenics movement with their attempt to apply Galton's theory, targeted the elimination of the pauper class also involved others with undesirable characteristics. These people were responsible for the "regression towards the means." Cruel methods were secretly and forcibly applied, such as; sterilization, castrations, contraceptives, forbidden marriages, and direct extermination of human lives that climaxed with Nazi regime. Negative eugenics became more pronounced than the positive one. Due to this, the term eugenics acquired a negative connotation. In the modern world there has been attempt to revive positive eugenics by use of more humane and voluntary methods through new sciences that try to avoid the use of the term eugenics and preferred to use terms connected to human genes, such as; human genetics and genetic engineering. Though new scientific technologies have really improved the lives of human beings especially in the area of medicine; like curing many hereditary diseases and also interfering and controlling serious defects that might occur in future lives, there are still great fears the development in the modern sciences might take us back to past eugenics by applying the same eugenics techniques. This has invited a lot of debates and discussions in other social sciences trying to address the issues of the legitimacy and authenticity of the use of eugenics in disguise. The human person is discussed from various dimensions to approach this issue holistically. Thus bearing the witness that human person is not just a mere animal that is led by instinct but also a rational, spiritual, moral and ethical being.

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