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FRANCIS GALTON'S EUGENICS: RETHINKING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SCIENTIFIC DOCTRINE

Abstract: A number of articles and books published since 1979 have successfully shown that eugenics in Britain was compatible with various political views, including progressive ones. This contribution to the debate, however, argues that eugenics as originated by the scientist and explorer Francis Galton in 1865 was intended as an ameliorative doctrine of creating better human beings and a better society. It was based on Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and Galton's own studies of heredity. Both men believed that societies generally advance towards greater benevolence and altruism. Galton additionally thought that this process could be speeded up through selective breeding. He assumed most improvements in civilization were the result of superior minds. Moreover, eugenics could replace natural and sexual selection, which often had cruel consequences for the least "fit" members of a species. Eugenics, as Galton conceived it, was therefore an alternative to social Darwinism, not a synonym for it. In the first decade of the twentieth century, towards the end of his life, Galton began institutionalizing eugenics. This article analyzes these efforts through the use of Max Weber's theory called "charisma and its transformation." What became the Galton Laboratory at University College London was clearly meant as a continuation of Galton's work on eugenics. It was led by his chosen successor Karl Pearson. Galton's public lectures on race improvement, however, also inspired the founding of a Eugenics Education Society in 1907. This society had no initial connection with Galton and Pearson disapproved of it. Member contributions to the Eugenics Education Society's journal and other media outlets turned the doctrine into a variant of social Darwinism. Because the Eugenics Education Society was better at propagating its message than the Galton Laboratory, eugenics gained a reactionary reputation. By reconstituting Galton's original eugenics, we understand better why it also appealed to progressives.

Keywords: Eugenics, sociological theory

Non MeSH: Francis Galton, Karl Pearson, Charisma, Britain.

This article argues that eugenics, a late 19th and early 20th century ideology originating in Britain, was originally intended as an ameliorative doctrine. Guided by the theory of evolution and the scientific tools available at the time, it sought to improve humankind and society. However, this facet of eugenics was quickly relegated to a minority interpretation and is now only detectable at the analytical level. Even before the death of Sir Francis Galton, its founder, in 1911 the doctrine was well on its way to becoming divisive and controversial. For later generations eugenics has indelibly been associated with programmes of coercive sterilization practised in the United States, Germany, Scandinavia and elsewhere. In California alone 17,012 individuals were sterilized in state institutions 1909-1944, in Sweden the figure was 12,569 between 1934 and 1948, while Nazi Germany led the way with a staggering 350,000 sterilizations. [1]

Given such a dramatic outcome and the causal link between eugenics and sterilization, it is not surprising that historians have regarded the former in light of the latter. Even in Britain, where eugenics had a comparatively minor impact, supporters of the doctrine in the late 1920s and 1930s argued for sterilization as a perceived cure for various social problems. [2,3] The campaign was a failure and also destroyed any hope of aligning eugenics with visions of a better and more equitable society. Yet Galton, a Victorian gentleman-scientist, had not even advocated contraception, let alone sterilization, as a means of creating a genetically improved society. One of the definitions he proposed for eugenics: "the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also those that develop them to the utmost advantage", took cognizance of environmental reform too. [4]

The chosen method of proving this historical argument, that eugenics was designed to lead to social improvement but that its supporters ruined it, is sociological. There will be a standardized comparison with other cases which sets patterns for how a new ideology originates and develops. If we find that our particular case matches the model which the German sociologist Max Weber described, his observations about new ideologies are likely to encompass eugenics too. And one of these observations is that an ideology can be distorted to the point where its original intentions are lost. Weber's model of how incipient ideal movements develop is called the "transformation of charisma". It derives from a large number of empirical studies in ancient, early modern and late modern history. Here his model will be applied to organized British eugenics from its beginnings until about 1930.

The "transformation of charisma" suggests that there is a normal pattern in how a new ideology emerges and becomes a part of daily life. It comes into being as the product of one person's mind and wins approval or disapprobation on the basis of its founder's leadership qualities and ability to make others see things his or her way. This special gift is known as "charisma". Charisma can emerge in a variety of fields: religion, politics, warfare, art or science. It usually originates from outside the system, since everyday needs and ordinary actions are taken care of by the economy or institutions which are already in place. [5 p1112,1116,1121,1111] The leader is successful

in attracting followers and together they become a movement. But when the leader dies or departs, the movement will disperse unless it can be institutionalized. If it is institutionalized it becomes a church, religious order, party, charitable society, college or suchlike. Unlike when the movement was in its charismatic phase, it now needs regular sources of income. There may be schisms among the followers as the ideology accommodates itself to worldly realities.

This model, it will be argued, is a close theoretical description of British eugenics. Galton, the charismatic leader, emerged from outside the system. He never held an academic appointment of any kind. He pioneered the study of “genius” and his suggestions for how to increase the number of such people led to the new ideology of eugenics. These ideas were taken up by others. Towards the end of his life he began to promote eugenics through speaking in public meetings, funding research and hosting discussions. The ideology thus became a movement. At his death, Galton left most of his considerable wealth to endow a chair in “national eugenics” at the University of London. This marked the institutionalization of the doctrine, adumbrated by the earlier research which he had funded. We will now check to what extent early eugenics corresponded to Weber’s model.

Francis Galton as a charismatic leader

Galton, born into a family of industrialists in 1822, began as an explorer, gaining the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society in 1853 for mapping parts of sub-Saharan Africa. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1856 and was honoured by it three times, attaining its gold medal in 1886, its Darwin medal in 1902 and its Copley medal in 1910. He was also admitted to the Athenaeum in 1856 under rules which allowed for the election of very distinguished members, thereby by-passing a waiting list of almost two decades. [6] And his exploits as a huntsman also qualify him as a charismatic individual. Weber is clear that leaders of hunting expeditions possess charisma. [5 p1112,1118,1134] The reason why the exploration of unknown territories and the shooting of wild beasts qualify someone for leadership is because these are dangerous or uncertain activities. They stand out from daily routine, and whoever participates in them therefore gains the admiration of others. Although it was in the field of science that Galton became a leader and gained followers, such feats did not go amiss.

The ability to gain followers is what makes or breaks a charismatic leader. The doctrine preached is bound up with the claim to charisma. Although Galton was more than forty before he started developing eugenics, previous research in statistics, biology and anthropology had led up to it. He became interested in heredity as a result of reading his cousin Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* upon publication in 1859. In his autobiography, written towards the end of his life, Galton devoted the final two chapters to eugenics. The last few sentences of the book stated that he took this doctrine very seriously. This can be seen through his funding projects on

eugenics at the University of London or University College. Equally, admiration for Galton was usually linked to support for eugenics. The social researcher Beatrice Webb identified Galton as her ideal scientist and she became a convinced eugenicist. [7] Chosen successor Karl Pearson wrote a four-volume biography of his hero, totaling more than 2,000 pages. The third volume suggested Galton might be the greatest scientist of the 19th century.

This reverence for Galton is not universal. More critical observers note that he chose scientific fields without competitors, that he considered himself to be the ideal, tailoring a doctrine for the express purpose of increasing the number of Francis Galtons in the world, and that he utilized simplistic methods. [8] He was an intuitive thinker who needed others, particularly Karl Pearson, to prove mathematically what he had discovered or imagined. He was pleased when Pearson showed the like inheritance of mental and physical traits. Conversely, he was puzzled when Pearson could find no correlation between the size of the head and intelligence. One psychological interpretation of eugenics is that it compensated for the lack of issue in Galton's marriage and those of his two brothers. Nor did his wife's sisters have any children. [9]

Although perhaps not the profoundest of thinkers, Galton did have an original mind and the capacity to contribute to many fields of science. Even a writer as dismissive of eugenics as Stefan Kühl notes that Galton discovered the uniqueness of fingerprints, invented the correlation-coefficient in statistics, originated systematic meteorology and pioneered investigations of twins.¹ [10] These discoveries and inventions, and the story of Galton's life, are sufficient to qualify him as a charismatic leader within science. We note in passing that "choosing scientific fields without competitors" may instead be construed as breaking new ground.

The institutionalization of eugenics

Although Francis Galton had the original idea to make societal adjustments to foster an increased birth rate among families of desirable stock as early as 1865, he was engaged in many other scientific pursuits. Consequently, there was a long time lag before he began actively promoting eugenics, which only received its present name in 1883. He also probably feared ridicule, as several early American supporters of the doctrine argued for or practised free love. [11] He gingerly suggested possible improvements to the human race in his 1901 Huxley Lecture without using the word eugenics. By the time he was ready to promote the doctrine openly through two meetings of the Sociological Society in 1904 and 1905, he was in his eighties and almost deaf. He no longer matched the popular stereotype of a charismatic leader, but his reputation spoke for itself.

Pearson only met Galton towards the end of the latter's life, but was still mightily impressed:

1 Studying twins is of course a method of distinguishing between heredity and environment.

[T]he atmosphere of a really great man – and such unquestionably Francis Galton was – cannot be reproduced in words; the tones of voice, the subtle sequences in phases of thought, the characteristic combination of physical expression and of mental emphasis, which make the personality, can only be suggested by a great master of words; the student of science, unless he be endowed with a poet's inspiration, must fail to find even such adumbration. [12]

Even in the scientific field it is not the isolated individual working on abstruse topics who possesses charisma, but the well-regarded and well-connected man or woman who succeeds in putting notable ideas before other scientists or the public. Some form of eugenics, especially German racial hygiene, would probably have come into being even without Francis Galton.² [13] Indeed, such ideas existed in ancient Greece and early 19th century Britain. [14,15] However, it was Galton whose studies of heredity made the doctrine scientific and whose focus on “genius” showed this to run in families and to be a favourable trait. At the time when Galton was writing his two-part article on hereditary talent and character in *Macmillan's Magazine* (1865), the origin of eugenics, scientific conception of genius was hazy. Later, in 1891, the Italian anthropologist Cesare Lombroso argued that it was a pathological state. [16] This proves that Galton was the single most important individual in the growth of modern eugenics.

Galton considered eugenics his life's work. He wanted it to be made first an academic study, then a practical subject deserving consideration and, lastly, it would be incorporated into the public consciousness as a new religion. Pearson and the zoologist W. F. Weldon founded the journal *Biometrika* in 1901, a project with which Galton was nominally affiliated. The journal sought to apply statistical techniques to the study of biology. (This practice is known as biometry. Mendelian genetics concentrates on dominant and recessive genes.) This allowed the scientific continuation of Galton's non-Mendelian approach to eugenics, which he encapsulated in the essay “Probability, the Foundation of Eugenics.” In 1904 Galton took further steps to preserve his legacy. On 10th October he sent a letter to the Senate of the University of London, proposing the establishment of a research fellowship in “national eugenics”. He would provide £ 1,500 to cover three years' research into talented families. If the scheme proved successful, he would make the endowment permanent at about £ 500 a year. [17] The University accepted and appointed Edgar Schuster, a zoologist, to the position. The Eugenics Records Office, the first incarnation of the Galton Laboratory, existed between 1904 and 1907. In 1906 Galton and Schuster jointly published the work *Noteworthy Families*.

Schuster's heart was not in this research, meaning that he was not a part of Galton's school. Pearson, however, was. He had chaired Galton's first meeting of the Sociological Society at the latter's request, despite not being a member. He had par-

2 The Racial Hygiene Society was founded in Berlin in 1905 and thus at an early stage of Galton's institutionalization attempts.

ticipated in the committee which set up the eugenics fellowship, and had rescued the scheme upon Schuster's resignation. [18] In 1907 the Eugenics Records Office was converted into the Galton Laboratory for National Eugenics. This was Pearson's doing; Galton gave another £ 1,000, which was followed by endowments of £ 500 for each of the years 1910 and 1911. [19] When Galton died in 1911, in his will dated 20th October 1908, he left the residue of his estate to establish the Galton Professorship of National Eugenics. A codicil to the will stated that Karl Pearson should be appointed to this chair. This codicil was dated 25th May 1909, which gives us the moment when Galton officially chose his successor. It was by then obvious who would fill his shoes. On 31st January 1908 Galton had written to the University of London warning that it would be "disastrous" if Pearson stepped down from supervising the Galton Laboratory. [20]

This factual account of the development of eugenics matches Weber's schema to perfection. A novel idea is proposed and developed by an impressive and dedicated thinker. Towards the end of that thinker's life, efforts are made to perpetuate the doctrine through the founding of institutions. Thus it can be concluded that eugenics was subject to routinization of charisma.

What are the implications of that? It suggests that another of Weber's ideas is seriously worthy of consideration. He argues that a doctrine can be changed fundamentally either when it is institutionalized, or at any time thereafter through what its supporters emphasize. Because Galton kept such a close watch over the academic department which hosted eugenics, this was never likely to happen during his lifetime. But eugenics was a set of ideas more than it was a scientific methodology. People who were not scientists were able to advance their own versions of eugenics. In 1907 the Eugenics Education Society was founded by members of the Moral Education League and held its first regular meeting at the offices of the Sociological Society. The Eugenics Education Society would later take control of the doctrine, to such an extent that Galton's views and the work of the Galton Laboratory were sidelined.

Francis Galton's views on social issues

What did Francis Galton's original vision for eugenics involve? He wanted to encourage the breeding of individuals who were above average in ability, power of concentration, health, disposition and strength. This was to take place through earlier marriage. [21] He thought that more such people being born would raise the tone of society in general. It would make social reforms and improvements occur faster than would otherwise be the case. Galton did not despise people with other characteristics than these, admitting that life would become very dull if every citizen shared the exemplary attitudes of Marcus Aurelius or Adam Bede. His preferred political system to attain the goals of eugenics was what would later be called a meritocracy, in which all children were allowed to display their talents. Although most of the improvements in daily life would come about through the agency of the gifted, there was obviously

a role for others in society too. Galton wrote that everyone should have their physical conditions of life and their talents improved. [22] He did, however, think that the bottom tenth of the population should be cared for in institutions, where they would not be permitted to breed or, if left in the community, they should be restricted from marrying.

By today's standards this would not be considered a progressive agenda. Nevertheless, it is a far cry from how eugenics is perceived in modern discourses. No sterilization was envisaged, there was nothing even vaguely Nazi about it. Galton did write about "undesirables" (primarily habitual criminals, drunkards and the severely mentally afflicted) and his view was that society should organize itself in such a way that they contributed less than their numbers to the next generation. Wishing to shield them from the sordid struggle inherent in natural selection, he thought they might lead better lives in institutions than in the slums. For those at the bottom of the heap in bygone days, life could be very tough, as the well-known studies of Charles Booth and B. Seebohm Rowntree attested. Galton's hereditarian views made him disregard the possibility that his "undesirables" could be offered a worthy life through the redistribution of wealth and the provision of an education for them.

Galton, not much of a democrat in any case, was against female suffrage and saw no reason to depart from the familiar Victorian racial hierarchy. He was chided for the former attitude by Pearson. But Galton did not base his version of eugenics on racism and he was less narrow-minded than many of his contemporaries. Because of statistical variation, he thought *some* black people were superior to *some* Englishmen. [21 p338] And since blacks in America suffered social disadvantages, a comparison with white people was hardly fair anyway. In the same decade as Galton was writing this, the future abolitionist Abraham Lincoln told an audience of free black men that "On this brave continent, not a single man of your race is made the equal of a single man of ours." [23] Galton regarded the ancient Greeks as the most gifted race of all time. But since he claimed they had deteriorated from that point, it followed that such hierarchies were not set in stone.

Eugenics is often accused of justifying class divisions, yet Galton thought that existing social distinctions were often arbitrary, instead of being based on talent.³ As an agnostic, he believed we have to make life in the here and now better, as there may not be a future state. He hinted that he was a republican and thought the best member of an aristocratic family should serve in the House of Lords, not necessarily the eldest son. Most importantly, Galton was not a social Darwinist, writing that extreme competition did not bring out the best in individuals, but only led to suffering. [25] Eugenics was intended as an *alternative* to social Darwinism, not as a synonym for it. Galton was also interested in schemes to improve the lot of working men, such as

3 Dukes were often ennobled without good cause, such as by being illegitimate children of Charles II. Yet, there was always at least one duke in the Cabinet, enjoying political power equal to many thousands of ordinary Englishmen. [24]

the industrialist George Cadbury's model dwellings. [26] He envisaged that eugenics would help humankind progress towards a society of selfless individuals, where private property was not at the core. Galton's disdain for laissez-faire economics, capitalist accumulation and the status order of his day, prove that his views were not reactionary.⁴

Eugenics also provided answers to some difficulties raised by the theory of evolution. Evolution drew attention to how some individuals, namely those afflicted with congenital illnesses and deformities, were born to suffer. They in practice constituted rejected raw material for nature's task of improving the species. Natural and sexual selection could be cruel. This is what Galton had in mind when he wrote that eugenics could be more merciful and not less effective than nature. Eugenics could prevent such individuals from being born and thus spare them the suffering. Galton also hoped that as society and humankind improved, morality would become a factor in natural selection, whereas evolution presupposed that selfishness would often pay dividends.

It should be clear that Galton's social and political views were not what is stereotypically associated with eugenics. They explain why he had no compunction in choosing Pearson, a socialist, as his successor. All manner of thinkers coming into contact with eugenics were attracted to the doctrine. Why should this be the case? Weber wrote that charisma is the answer to extraordinary needs. Intellectuals who were dissatisfied with Christianity as a guiding force in life and saw science as a possible replacement for that long-standing world-view, might turn to eugenics. It ironed out some of the less laudable consequences associated with Darwinism. In valuing society over the individual, it combined easily with the Victorian philosophy of utilitarianism, which sought the greatest happiness of the greatest number. However, there were other people who saw *no* difficulties with evolution and liked all its implications. They turned instead to another scientific ideology: social Darwinism. When eugenics became entangled with social Darwinism, especially in the 20th century, the result was that the former lost its ameliorative features.

Eugenics changes direction

The staff and disciples crystallized themselves after Galton chaired a meeting at his home on 30th October 1905. [27] He asked permission to use the offices of the Eugenics Records Office after hours for the same purpose. Among the invitees were James Slaughter, an American social scientist, and Caleb Saleeby, the Edinburgh gynaecologist and future Fabian Society member. Both would later play leading parts in the fledgling Eugenics Education Society. The founding of the Galton Laboratory in 1907 was the high point of this institutionalization. A formal organization was set

4 The "free power of bequeathing wealth [...] interferes with the salutary action of natural selection by preserving the wealthy, and by encouraging marriage on grounds quite independent of personal qualities." [25]

up, consisting of Pearson as director, David Heron as research fellow, Ethel Elderton as research scholar and Amy Barrington as computer. The members of staff in the Laboratory also shared in Galton's charisma, as a Weberian concept, as they too could advance the ideological basis of the doctrine.

Additionally, as mentioned, the Eugenics Education Society was founded in 1907, though not by Galton himself. Galton's two presentations to the Sociological Society, occurring on 16th May 1904 and 19th February 1905, had nevertheless been the inspiration for the venture. Most members of the Eugenics Education Society did not share in Galton's charisma. Only a few were able to advance the doctrine through serious publications.

This article therefore considers only the Galton Laboratory to be a continuation of the founder's community. According to Pearson, it was necessary to find the true principles of heredity before eugenics could be popularized and disseminated among the population. If this in fact had been the approach taken by British eugenics, the movement would have avoided much of the opprobrium piled on it. Pearson proceeded cautiously and in accordance with scientific methodology. The Society, on the other hand, had been set up to propagandize, and its members immediately conflated social Darwinism and eugenics. It soon came into conflict with the Galton Laboratory, primarily through not being scientific enough and for not recognizing the greater claim of the academic institution to be the inheritors of Galton's legacy.

Given that Galton's resources and name were at the service of the Laboratory, the outwardly surprising fact is that the Society got the better off the Laboratory. British eugenics as we know it was the product of the Society. It was a class-based, reactionary, laissez-faire and unscientific version of the doctrine. In practice, it was a right-wing ideology because most members were of that tendency. The Society's officers were wedded to its guiding principle of political impartiality. They sought support from all political parties and tendencies, including a number of left-wing organizations.⁵ [28,29] However, they could not stem the tide of overwhelmingly prejudiced articles being put forward for publication in the Society's journal and in the press.⁶

There was especially one fact which greatly exercised and dismayed members of the Eugenics Education Society. Whoever succeeded in leaving large numbers of offspring behind was having a greater impact on the future of humankind than those who left only a few. Because the use of birth control was closely related to social status in the early 20th century, poor people were outbreeding the wealthy. The citizenry was increasingly going to be replenished from the bottom of society. This linked with a pre-existing discourse of "degeneration", an alleged process whereby stunted growth, illness and crime were becoming more prevalent. Galton and Pearson were

5 And a fair number of socialist intellectuals were responsive.

6 These were too numerous for details to be given here. However, as an indication, no later than in the second issue the imperialist Arnold White argued for sterilization of the "unfit" and described a slum where "defective brains were the rule rather than the exception". [30]

also worried about degeneration, particularly that mental deficiency and various psychological conditions which were thought to be hereditary, were spreading. Members of the Eugenics Education Society explicitly bewailed the trend whereby the number of children a woman gave birth to was inversely proportional to social standing. In response, they sought political changes (e.g. tax cuts for parents and family allowances proportional to earnings) to encourage the middle classes to have more children.

The eugenics of Galton and Pearson was less class-based. Galton spoke in terms of what he called "civic worth", a rough measure of ability and morality combined. Galton thought that the "civic worth" of an individual *correlated* with social class but was not identical to it. Pearson, as a socialist, did not distinguish much between mental and manual occupations in 1888. By the first decade of the 20th century, he had come to the conclusion that the middle classes were more intelligent than workers, but his complicated calculations made intelligence just one of a range of factors. [31,32] In an important difference between these two men and the typical Eugenics Education Society member, Galton and Pearson were in favour of state intervention and social reform.⁷ They were also scientists, not zealots for a popularized version of eugenics. The end result was that their claims, and those of the Galton Laboratory later, were more moderate and grounded in facts than what the Society promoted.

The problem was that neither Galton nor Pearson were able to control the popular movement which arose from the interpretive lens eugenics had created. Pearson was vehemently opposed to the Eugenics Education Society, while Galton was in two minds about it. Galton feared that it would become too extreme in its pursuit of eugenics, and he would have liked other people to serve on its council. At times his opinion improved; in July 1908 he described it as "really promising." [34] Once he had joined he could see ways of utilizing the Society to further the eugenic cause, for instance as an awarding body for eugenic fitness certificates. He also thought it suitable for making the public more aware of eugenics. But he continued to have nagging doubts about the Society. He disliked the truculent manner in which some members aired their views. [35] Eventually, he came to the conclusion that especially Caleb Saleeby was a negative influence. He was forced to write a letter to the *Journal of Inebriety* denying Saleeby's claims that there were tensions between the Society and the Laboratory. [36]

This was, in fact, true. And the Society was far more successful in defining what eugenics was and affecting the public's perception of the doctrine than the Laboratory. Under its tutelage British eugenics became a social Darwinist doctrine, advocating laissez-faire, abjuring social reform, regarding social class as identical with eugenic worth and teaching that poverty was natural because those at the bottom of society had bad heredity. What had happened to Galton's ameliorative doctrine? Weber is

7 Pearson wrote: "In the first place I assert that we are nearly all Socialists nowadays, in that we believe that the direct object of government is to form a stable society; that all real legislation, that all foreign action must ultimately be guided by the aim of increasing national welfare." [33]

clear that the social carriers of an ideology exercise real influence on its teachings. [37] Since eugenics appealed the most to wealthy professional men and their female relations in early 20th century Britain, it is hardly surprising that eugenics generally came to be associated with capitalism, a class-divided society and regressive attitudes.

The Galton Laboratory, the continuation of its founder's community, did useful work: as early as 1909 it had published investigations on the inheritance of ability and insanity, traits in cousins, defective sight, child welfare and intelligence. The major series *The Treasury of Human Inheritance* was underway. It offered meticulous scholarship on specific hereditary illnesses. Nevertheless, it is hard to find instances of these studies actually having impact. Ernest Lidbetter's research for the Society into 172 pauper families in the East End of London, which began in the 1910s and continued into the 1920s, is much better known. Despite doing little to set eugenics up as a respected science, it was the Society which attempted to deliver on Galton's goal of fostering a eugenic conscience. This became one of its official aims, after it had abandoned the goal of restricting parenthood to "fit" individuals. [38] Officers of the Society seldom peddled prejudice, but this was widespread in member contributions to its journal. From a sociological point of view, these members did not share in Galton's charisma; that was limited to writers who, like him, were able to advance eugenics through original contributions.

Karl Pearson's travails

It would not be correct to regard the Laboratory and the Society as entirely disparate. David Heron, as research fellow in the Galton Laboratory, was also a member of the council of the Society. Leonard Darwin, who was president of the Society 1911-1928, sat on the Board of Advisors in Eugenics of the University of London, which regulated the Galton chair. [39] Nor was the division of labour whereby the Laboratory should conduct research and the Society propagate the eugenic message, absolute. In the early days of the Laboratory there were some lectures and adult education classes intended for the public. [40] Conversely, in 1912 the Society formed a research committee, whose first chairman was Edgar Schuster, the former University College eugenics fellow. It became inactive after about a year, but was eventually resuscitated in 1923. [41] Just before the end of the First World War prominent Society members Alexander Carr-Saunders, a biologist, and Harold Laski, the Labour party thinker, worked in the Laboratory. But in general terms, the evidence points to the Laboratory doing meticulous scientific work which had next to no impact, whereas the Society created eugenics, as it was perceived by the public, in its image.

These circumstances mirrored the earlier difficulties Pearson had in gaining supporters for his point of view, even among renowned scientists. As one of the founders of the Biometric school, he sought to make statistics a respectable branch of applied mathematics. It was far too liable to be seen as the hobby-horse of controversialists and amateurs. That this did not go well can be seen from Pearson's

asking for Galton's advice on 13th May 1906 on whether to resign his fellowship of the Royal Society. His last paper on biometrics had almost been rejected, and the council had passed a resolution requesting him not to mix statistics and biology. Such difficulties were only compounded when Pearson shared a field with naïve amateur eugenicists who were making sweeping statements on the basis of inadequate facts. Saleeby thought eugenics would "bring to earth a heaven compared with which the theologian's is but a fool's paradise." [42] Pronouncements from the Society made it much more difficult to establish eugenics as an impartial science, Pearson reckoned. On the other hand, William Inge, a clergyman and influential member of the Society, accused Pearson of wanting to wait fifty years before doing anything practical about eugenics.

Nor was Pearson successful in influencing government. In many of his early reports about the work of the Laboratory he noted that its own projects had been put on hold in order to do work for official bodies. [43] To his dismay he found that this hardly advanced eugenics. In 1914 William Beveridge, assistant secretary in the Board of Trade, inadvertently revealed to Pearson that he did not particularly appreciate the Galton Laboratory's work compiling data about the unemployed for it. Beveridge was forced to backtrack on his views when he learned how disappointed Pearson had been. [44] Although it can scarcely be reckoned as extensive, it was the Society which was to have what little legislative success there was. The Mental Deficiency Act (1913) allowed subnormal people to be segregated in institutions, and was almost wholly the fruits of the Society's efforts in influencing MPs of all parties. It was amended and updated in 1927. It had also managed to secure tax rebates for raising children and put biology on the school curriculum. Earlier, for the 1911 census, the Society had managed to insert occupational status as a question. [45] The Society was also consulted by various Royal Commissions, including on the feeble-minded (1904-1908) and venereal diseases (1913-1916). [46]

It was the Society which thereby made eugenics part of the public discourse. The Laboratory's work was only of relevance to very well-informed eugenicists. Pearson claimed that writers in the Society's journal constantly deprecated the work of the Laboratory. Saleeby even described the Galton Laboratory in its infancy as a waste of its founder's money. Pearson had been offered the presidency of the Society. He declined by stating that he felt his role lay more in accurate statistical work underpinning eugenics than in popularization attempts.⁸ Had he accepted he would have had a greater influence on how British eugenics developed.

Weberian theory states that it is common for routinized charisma to be used in defence of existing inequalities. In this case it was not strictly the routinized charisma (the Laboratory) which performed this task, but the popular version of the doctrine

8 In the absence of Pearson's consent, the Eugenics Education Society appointed Leonard Darwin, the son of Charles Darwin, to this role in 1911. This is a clear example of what Weber calls lineage charisma. [5 p1136]

as interpreted by the public. Current conditions were reinterpreted through this new prism, as is generally the case with a new value-system. Many early historians of eugenics saw the justification of class differences as the *raison d'être* of the doctrine, and most writers agree that eugenics constituted what Weber would call "class action." [47-49] This view has stuck and is surely accurate, but if this feature is common to new movements which receive support, it suggests there was more to eugenics. (By way of comparison, the main message of an earlier charismatic ideology, namely Christianity, is hardly that the rich deserve to keep what they have. Yet that religion has consistently been used as a bulwark against revolution across societies and time periods.) There *was* more to it: Galton provided a rationale for social reform, promoted what was later called "meritocracy" and urged both individuals and society as a whole to think scientifically. These were aspects of modernization which steadily advanced in the 20th century. Eugenics played a part in this movement towards new ways of thinking, which is, however, obscured by the negative reputation it has accumulated. [50] A strident opponent of the doctrine's effects, Stephen Trombly, describes Galton as "a moderate among eugenisists." [42 p16] That is one way of putting it, but this article has instead been arguing that Galton's original intentions were significantly altered by the social carriers of the doctrine bearing his name.

Conclusion

This article has investigated British eugenics through a sociological approach developed by Max Weber. It was not set up to be a reactionary doctrine but it became so. The Eugenics Education Society enjoyed greater clout than the Galton Laboratory. Little over a decade after being founded it had taken over as the prime mover of eugenics in that country. This was reflected in its change of name to the Eugenics Society in 1926. Most of its members were of a right-wing persuasion, and many openly displayed prejudice against sections of the proletariat or the entire working class. This made eugenics a controversial doctrine, did it no favours with the left and exposed it as far less scientific and objective than would otherwise have been the case. Only in the 1930s, in the context of the Society's voluntary sterilization bill being defeated primarily by Labour MPs in the House of Commons in 1931, were there serious attempts to overcome this unfavourable legacy.

G. R. Searle and then Daniel Kevles labelled the new emphasis on the doctrine being class-neutral, basing itself on real scientific methodology and stressing compatibility with left-wing thinking, as "reform eugenics." It was in fact a reassertion of Galton and Pearson's *original* intentions for the doctrine. Both men would have preferred a society in which the state was highly interventionist and which distributed goods by merit, not according to inherited privilege. Galton believed eugenics to be independent of political standpoints, writing that it sought to create better people within each class or sect and then leave them to work out their common civilization as they saw fit. But his interest in improving humankind, his agnosticism, his

opposition to extreme competition and the hoarding of material wealth, his lack of respect for traditional values and his desire for social change, meant that his views often overlapped with those of the left.

It was therefore unedifying for the doctrine Galton created that its social carriers should so signally change its tone. Weber's insight is that these have the power to radically change the tenets of a doctrine. In the hands of its official supporters eugenics became a hard-edged version of social Darwinism. Part of the reason eugenics went off track was that Galton was slow in institutionalizing the doctrine. The real role of eugenics was to correct a number of problems arising from the theory of evolution. Pearson was a supporter of social Darwinism, but his interpretation was to minimize conflict within society so that Britain could stand up to the more populous Germany. Thus Pearson wanted a better deal for the disadvantaged in his homeland. That was an aspect of the official doctrine researched at the University of London called "national eugenics." In common with other ideological movements noted by Weber, its teachings and foci changed quite significantly in the second generation.

Rezime

Brojni članci i knjige objavljeni u poslednjih četrdeset godina pokazali su da je eugenika u Britaniji kompatibilna sa različitim političkim stavovima, uključujući i progresivne. Međutim, u ovom radu se tvrdi da je eugenika osmišljena od strane naučnika i istraživača Francis Galtona 1865. kao ameliorativna doktrina stvaranja boljih ljudskih bića i boljeg društva. Bila je zasnovana na teoriji evolucije Čarlsa Darvina i Galtonovim sopstvenim studijama o naslednosti. Obojica su verovali da društva generalno napreduju ka većoj dobroti i altruizmu. Galton je mislio da se ovaj proces može ubrzati selektivnim uzgojem. Pretpostavio je da je većina poboljšanja u civilizaciji rezultat rada superiornih umova. Štaviše, eugenika bi mogla da zameni prirodnu i seksualnu selekciju, koja je često imala okrutne posledice za najmanje „uklopljene“ pripadnike neke vrste. Eugenika, kako je Galton zamišljao, bila je stoga alternativa socijalnom darvinizmu, a ne sinonim za nju. U prvoj deceniji dvadesetog veka, pred kraj života, Galton je počeo da institucionalizuje eugeniku. Ovaj članak analizira ove napore pomoću teorije Maksa Vebera koja se naziva „harizma i njena transformacija“. Galtonova laboratorija na Univerzitetu u Londonu je zamišljena kao nastavak Galtonovog rada na eugenici. Laboratoriju je vodio njegov izabrani naslednik Karl Pirson. Galtonova javna predavanja o poboljšanju rasa su, međutim, takođe inspirisala osnivanje Eugeničkog društva za obrazovanje 1907. godine. Ovo društvo nije imalo nikakvu početnu vezu sa Galtonom i Pirson ga nije odobrio. Članci članova Eugeničkog društva za obrazovanje u sopstvenom časopisu i drugim novinama pretvorili su doktrinu u varijantu socijalnog darvinizma. Pošto je Eugeničko društvo za obrazovanje bolje plasiralo svoju poruku nego Galtonova laboratorija, eugenika je dobila reakcionarni ton. Rekonstruisanjem Galtonove originalne eugenike bolje shvatamo zašto je ona bila primamljiva progresivcima.

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