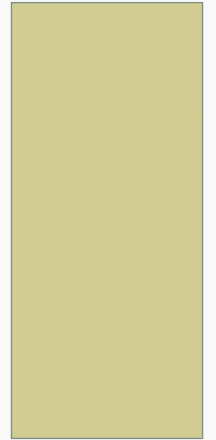


# EUGENICS

BASIC ISSUES



# EUGENICS

- In 1883 Francis Galton coined the term “eugenics” as the logical extent of natural selection, a theory first proposed by his cousin Charles Darwin at the conclusion of the *Descent of Man*.
- Observing the mating habits of animals, Darwin drew the parallel between selectively pairing certain breeds of animals in order to improve one's stock and the choice that lay before humanity: breed well, or breed ill.

# CONTROLLING OUR DESTINY

- The idea was quite simple and Darwin noted that the most attractively colored, or strongest males were chosen by the females to mate with. It was no different with humans- attractive women were sought as mates for men, and in return the fittest women chose the fittest men to marry and have children with, thus perpetuating their genetic lineage.

# REACTIONS

- The eugenic views of Darwin and Galton were received with mixed reviews in America.
- On one hand concepts of population control, mandatory sterilization, and other state-instituted forms of eugenics were appalling.
- But on the other side were the leaders who saw eugenics as a way of transmitting healthy, strong, and super future to their children.

# EARLY 1900'S

- American Eugenics Society which sponsored a Eugenic Sermon Contest in 1926.
- President Roosevelt saw that the future of American was at a crossroads and could only be salvaged through a fight against “race suicide” that was being committed by white, middle class families who did not have as many children as the poor of the country.

# MID-1900'S

- Popular eugenic rhetoric in American came to a head during World War II when Nazi Germany implemented the concrete extreme of the mostly philosophical ideas of eugenics in America.
- Americans were forced to re-think the implications of continuing on the path of eugenics, and many retracted their views- at least publicly.

# VIDEO

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laH0Ws8RtSc>

# EUGENICS TODAY

- Have you ever heard [or said] the phrase “stupid people shouldn’t breed”?
- Have you ever looked at a couple and said “they are exactly the type of people who should be having kids- they are smart, loving, and kind”?
- Have you ever known someone who had a kid and thought “that is the last person in the world who should be having a child”?
- These are all eugenics sentiments.



# EUGENIC THOUGHTS TODAY

- While most people would admit that certain types of people are more qualified to have kids than others [nice, healthy, 18 and over, smart, etc.] almost no one is willing to take the steps to ensure :
  - 1. that “good” people have kids
  - 2. that “bad” people don’t

But bioethics and eugenics have a sordid past

# SEX DISCERNMENT AND PGD

- Preimplantation genetic diagnosis provides a method of prenatal sex discernment even before implantation, and may therefore be termed preimplantation sex discernment or discrimination.
- Potential applications of preimplantation sex discernment include:
  - A complement to specific gene testing for monogenic disorders, which can be very useful for genetic diseases whose presentation is linked to the sex.
  - Ability to prepare for any sex-dependent aspects of parenting.
  - Sex selection for social reasons. A 2006 survey found that 42% of clinics that offer PGD have provided it for sex selection for non-medical reasons. Nearly half of these clinics perform it only for “family balancing”.

# OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Allowing for PGD of [female] fetuses would avoid: Sex-selective infanticide, Sex-selective child abandonment, Sex-selective adoption, and sex-selective abortion.
- This was in fact advocated in Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*.
- But concerns over gender-imbalance leading to polygamy, or rampant prostitution, higher crime rates, and the reiteration that women are less valuable remain.

# PGD AND SOCIETY

- As with all medical interventions associated with human reproduction, PGD raises strong, often conflicting opinions of social acceptability, particularly due to its eugenic implications.

# DISABILITY AND BIOENGINEERING

- Many disability rights advocates, in particular, have been critical of PGD and prenatal screening.
- They point out that the definition of "disease" is to some extent subjective.
- Most support women's right to decide whether or not to have a child at a given time [agnostic abortion], but are critical of basing this decision on the traits of the particular embryo or fetus.

# EUGENICS AND DISABILITY

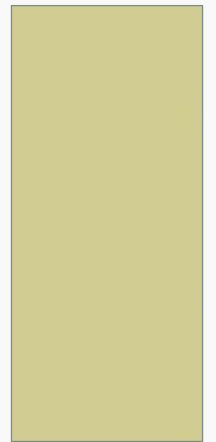
- Many people with disabilities are acutely aware that technologies enabling the selection of “good” genes and “normal” traits can devalue disabled people’s bodies and ultimately their lives.
- This concern is informed by past and ongoing discrimination against people with disabilities that often includes brutal practices.
- For example, 20<sup>th</sup> C. eugenicists in the United States and some European countries sponsored programs that sterilized tens of thousands of disabled people. The Nazi genocide began with doctors and nurses exterminating over 100,000 disabled people in German medical facilities; tens of thousands more perished in concentration camps.

# QUESTION

- Must eugenics be used for evil purposes?

EUGENICS

JUDAISM





# EUGENICS AND JUDAISM

- Unlike Christianity, Jews approach eugenics from a very different perspective.
- The holocaust and world war II ring present in the collective Jewish mind.
- Centuries of expulsion, mistreatment, and racism have put the Jews in a vulnerable place.

# EUGENICS, CONT.

- In fact, Jews are among the few groups who have actually had eugenic practices forced on them.
- Because of this injustice, the approach of “good breeding” is not taken by Jewish people, who are usually among the first to defend those who might have eugenics policies thrust upon them.
- For this reason PGD, sex selection, and even euthanasia are repudiated.

# A JEWISH EXPLANATION OF EUGENICS

- Eugenics, as a social philosophy, advocates improvement of human hereditary traits through social intervention.
- Eugenicists seek to create "more perfect" individuals and/or to alleviate human suffering through advocacy of policies that are perceived to lead to an improvement in the gene pool.
- Means to achieve these goals would include IVF-PGD. To determine the acceptability of any practice of eugenics requires that we distinguish ethically justifiable genetic "improvements" from those for which we would consider intervention to be morally repugnant.

# SEX SELECTION- OVERVIEW

- prenatal diagnosis (either through a sonogram, amniocentesis, or chorionic villus sampling) followed by abortion of fetuses of the unwanted sex.
- In India and China, where cheap mobile ultrasound clinics are readily available, women who discover that their fetus is female often opt for legal abortions. This practice has reportedly skewed sex ratios from the natural 106 boys to 100 girls to as high as 130 boys to 100 girls.

# OTHER OPTIONS

- pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) followed by selective implantation based on sex. In this technique, embryos are created through IVF (*in vitro* fertilization) and then one or two called "blastomeres," are removed from each for chromosome analysis and sex determination.
- Barring lab errors, PGD, like abortion, is 100% effective.
- There is also the less-certain technique of pre-fertilization separation of sperm into X- and Y-bearing spermatozoa followed by IUI (intra-uterine insemination) or IVF with the desired sperm.
- The Genetics and IVF Institute in Fairfax, Virginia, developed the technology for humans. It offers this service only for the purpose of "family balancing."

# OLD FASHIONED SEX SELECTION - THE TALMUD

- the Talmud contains a number of suggestions for gender predetermination.
- Praying for a child of a particular gender is prohibited during pregnancy—but only because by then it is too late to change the outcome;
- praying prior to conception would appear to be permitted

# OLD FASHIONED SEX SELECTION - OTHERS

- Ancient Greek medicine associated heat, moisture, and right predominance with males and cold, dryness, and left with females.
- In the Middle Ages, a number of physicians espoused the belief that the human uterus was comprised of seven chambers or cells and the location of the fetus within the uterus was thought to affect the sex determination of the offspring.
- the right-left theory of gender pre-selection was widespread and persistent until modern times.

# POLITICS OF SEX

- Many people, even the very liberal are queasy at the thought of sex selection for something other than prevention of disease
- Among pro-choice people, this too is felt.
- In other countries, girl fetuses are terminated, because they are not highly valued
- In the US, girls are preferred for adoption because they are thought to be “easy to raise” [80% prefer girls}



# CONCERNS - ETHICAL

- One concern is that the sex selection techniques could lead to a wildly skewed number of males and females in society.
- Another is that sex selection is a form of sexism—that is, that it regards one gender as inherently superior to the other.
- Some others see allowing the use of PGD for sex selection as a slippery slope to eugenics, as the same technique can be used to test for other genetic traits.

# CONCERNS- PHYSICAL

- women who underwent IVF had an increased risk of ovarian torsion during pregnancy.
- They were more likely to encounter pre-eclampsia (63% increased risk),
- placental abruption (over twice the risk),
- and placenta previa (over three times the risk)—all of which pose a significant health risk to the mother.
- Infants are at higher risk for adverse perinatal outcomes, including perinatal mortality, pre- term delivery, and low birth weight.

# PGD AND EUGENICS

- A fundamental issue that needs to be addressed in any discussion of selection of preferred offspring, is that of eugenics
- However, does the use of PGD for gender selection begin a form of eugenics?
- When a couple can orchestrate gender, what is next?
- Will we allow medical tests to screen fertilized eggs based on the couple's desires, such as hair and eye color?
- When do we cease to become partners of God and attempt to replace God?

# COMMODIFICATION AND EUGENICS

- PGD creates a world where “perfection” can be bought
- What is the significance for the child as a commodity?
- What effect might there be on the attitude of the parents to the child as a result of the loss of the deterministic aspect of bringing him into the world?
- will not the "slippery slope" eventually result in approval being given to all who apply, ultimately leading to where parents will be able to receive a child having predetermined genetic characteristics?

# VIDEO - GATTACA CLIP

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48-hnuiqpoA>

# EUGENICS AND SEX SELECTION

- Once we allow parents the option to choose the sex of their child for non-medical reasons, will we not be forced to permit to allow choosing among embryos for those traits they believe will give their children their best chances in life?
- many of the ethical dilemmas related to PGD, such as the possible reinforcement of gender bias, the "slippery slope" toward eugenics, the discarding of human embryos, threats to the well being of sex-selected children, self-determination, and the dignity of the individual remain to be evaluated.

# JEWISH RESPONSES

- halakhic Judaism generally allows IUI and IVF (using the gametes of the married couple) to overcome infertility problems.
- While Halakha may see no intrinsic flaw in wanting a child of a particular sex, it does not indiscriminately waive religious prohibitions otherwise in effect to realize this goal.
- The personal desire to have specifically a son or daughter does not in and of itself override the halakhic imperative to maintain natural marital relations.

# JEWISH CONTROVERSY

- The medical use of sperm sorting for sex selection in cases of sex-linked genetic diseases such as hemophilia was confirmed by K. Shelomo Zalman Auerbach.
- He opposed sex selection for family balancing
- But family balancing has a certain halakhic impetus. A man has not fulfilled the mitzvah of *peru u-revu* until he has a son and a daughter (*Shulhan Arukh, Even ha-Ezer 1:5*).
- Other rabbis have permitted it when there are 5-6 children of the same sex, and a different sex is desired.



# JUDAISM UNIQUE MITZVAH

## #1

- The Talmud (*Shabbat* 31a) lists a menu of questions asked to each of us after our passing in the heavenly court. One of the questions is: "*asakta be-pirya ve-rivyai*"
- or, "Were you involved in trying to fulfill the commandment of procreation (of having a male and female child)?"
- Notice the phraseology of the question. It is not "*kiyamta pirya ve-rivyan*—did you fulfill the mitzva of procreation, but rather, did you try?"
- Having a male and female child is not in our hands. Our responsibility is to try to have both genders.

# JUDAISM UNIQUE MITZVAH

## #2

- But, according to a number of authorities, one does not actually fulfill the mitsva *oi peruu-revu* until and unless one has a boy and a girl
- and they grow up and each in turn produces a child—one a boy and one a girl.
- In that case, selecting the gender of one's progeny can provide no more than a step towards fulfillment of the mitsva—but it cannot get us to fully meet the requirements that the mitsva entails.

## TWO OTHER VIEWS

- Philosopher David Heyd and bioethicist Julian Savulescu both argue in favor of the permissibility of IVF-PGD for sex selection.
- Interestingly, while Heyd argues that sex selection has no eugenic implications, Savulescu perceives it as a clear and important eugenic value.

# HEYD

- Heyd considers sex selection to be a "non-issue" and certainly not inherently wrong.
- From his perspective, in choosing the sex of one's child by IVF- PGD, "we do *not* interfere or manipulate the genome in any way". Therefore, there is no "slippery slope."
- The wish to choose the sex of one's child, as an extension of the desire to have a child, is a personal or cultural preference that is in no way related to any eugenic ideal.

# SAVULESCU

- He defends a principle which he calls Procreative Beneficence—the obligation for couples to select the child, of the possible children they could have, who is expected to have the best life.
- Savulescu claims that Procreative Beneficence differs from eugenics since it addresses individual families and not populations as a whole.
- Focusing on genes for intelligence and sex selection in particular, he argues that we should allow selection for non-disease genes even if doing so increases social inequality. For him, sex selection is an unambiguous positive value.

# JEWISH RESPONSE

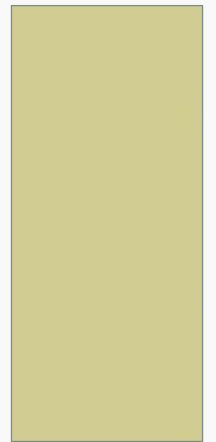
- traditional Jews, we do not view having children as a choice, but rather as a mitzva, the obligation of *peru u-revu u-milyu et ha-arets*.
- They do not perceive ourselves as having reproductive autonomy, the concept of sex selection as an extension of "reproductive autonomy" is not relevant.
- for the most part, rabbinic authorities have strongly opposed IVF-PGD for the purpose of sex-selection as inconsistent with Jewish values.

# QUESTIONS

- How does the command to have one of each gender influence Judaism and sex-selection?
- Is it always eugenic if a political minority is being chosen against?

EUGENICS

CHRISTIANITY





# CONFLICTING IDEAS

- How many children people should have, and how parents (and society) can ensure that only genetically fit children are born, have been enduring questions in American culture.
- Both quantity and quality count when attempting to form the kind of children who will contribute to a more perfect union.

# ORIGINS OF EUGENIC THOUGHT

- In 1883 Francis Galton, a cousin to Charles Darwin, coined the term “eugenics”, meaning “good in birth”.
- Darwin drew the parallel between selectively breeding certain breeds of animals to improve one's stock to the choice that lay before humanity: breed well, or breed ill.
- Although Darwin's other major work, *The Origin of the Species*, was disregarded and often virulently opposed by Christians who saw macro evolution as a direct attack on God, Creation and the Holy Scriptures, the views of Darwin and Galton were received with mixed reviews.

# RELIGIOUS RESPONSE

- On one hand theologians like G.K. Chesterton spoke out against eugenics in his 1922 book,
- but on the other side of the Christian spectrum were the religious leaders, like Protestant clergymen who used the pulpit as a way to transmit the new way of looking at America's future, and the American Eugenics Society which sponsored a Eugenic Sermon Contest in 1926.

# VIDEO

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IaH0Ws8RtSc>

# CHRISTIANS JUSTIFICATION FOR

- Harry F. Ward, professor of Christian ethics at Union Theological Seminary from 1918 to 1941 and founder of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (1907), who in his article "Is Christian Morality Harmful, Over-Charitable to the Unfit?" (1928) encouraged Christians to help remove "the causes that produce the weak."
- Walter Taylor Sumner, dean of the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Chicago from 1906 to 1915, instituted in 1912 his own system of inspection for prospective couples to ensure that they were "normal physically and mentally"
- John Haynes Holmes, Unitarian minister of New York's Church of the Messiah, concurred (in 1913), encouraging his fellow members of the Liberal Ministers' Association of New York "to perform nothing but health marriages."

# POLITICIZATION

- Even major Christian figures like President Theodore Roosevelt saw that the future of American was at a crossroads and could only be salvaged through a fight against “race suicide” that was being committed by white, middle class families who did not have as many children as the poor of the country.
- Popular eugenic rhetoric in American came to a head during World War II when Nazi Germany implemented a drastic extreme of the mostly philosophical ideas of eugenics in America. Eugenics became covertly reformulated, and still exists today in various forms.

# WHY DID THIS WORK?

- A charitable interpretation of mainline Protestant's attachment to this idea is simply that they simply wanted to reduce human suffering.
- Perceiving a stark and growing contrast between respectable middle-class families and the "teeming broods" of new immigrants in the urban centers, progressive leaders turned to eugenic science to control what seemed the otherwise uncontrollable plight of the poor.

# ANOTHER SUGGESTION

- Maybe Protestants joined on the bandwagon because they sought to shore up their status as part of the "responsible middle-class" by underscoring the discrepancy between their own "fit" families and those of the under- class.
- That was certain at play in the words of Teddy Roosevelt.



# PLANNED PARENTHOOD CONTROVERSY

- In 1957, Margaret Sanger authored a short article entitled “Too Many People” for the *Methodist Together* magazine
- Sanger, known as the founder of Planned Parenthood, called on the faithful to examine the population problem as a spiritual issue, using virtuous language.
- She embraced the Malthusian notion that a world running out of food supplies should halt charitable works and allow the weak to die off.”
- Planned Parenthood began providing contraception for the women of all classes-though the started in Brooklyn.

# EUGENICS NOW

- Many theologians today believe eugenics still exists with new reproductive technologies.
- With reference to IVF/ ET *Donum Vitae* said, “The facts recorded and the cold logic which links them must be taken into consideration for a moral judgment on IVF and ET (*in vitro* fertilization and embryo transfer): the abortion-mentality which has made this procedure possible thus leads, whether one wants it or not, to man's domination over the life and death of his fellow human beings and can lead to a system of radical eugenics.”

# ART AND EUGENICS

- With new biotechnological tools emerging daily, many people deem parents personally and socially responsible for the results of their choosing to bear children, i.e. all test should be done, and parents are responsible for only “keeping” healthy children.
- Some fear parents may soon be left to their own devices if they have children who require extra time and social spending.

# CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE CHILD

- The conviction of Christians is that each life is intrinsically, incalculably valuable is subtly but significantly different from the conviction that we cannot judge a child's worth by the color of her skin or by her gender.
- To affirm instead that no human life may ever be rightly measured for estimable worth is to challenge both the old and the new eugenics.
- Such an affirmation leads some parents to refuse to ask "what kind of children?" Such an affirmation prompts some to be open to the frequent interruption of pro-creation, others to adopt supposedly "at risk" children.

# QUESTIONS

- Is there any legitimacy to wanting healthy children for oneself and one's country? When is the line crossed between making healthy children available [through genetic tests, ART, etc.] and offering preventive care [i.e. taking folic acid when pregnant, avoiding alcohol]? How can we tell if we've gone too far?

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