

Darwin's Theory of Evolution and Eugenics

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Eugenics was born out an interpretation of the theory of evolution. Francis Galton, who was a half-cousin to Charles Darwin, desired to apply Darwin's theory that explained the development of plants and animals to humans. Darwin's work showed that evolution takes place through natural selection, and operates on a variety of traits and characteristics that influence ones survival and propagation of their species. Galton found the idea of questioning natural selection and variability in humans intriguing and in particular he was mostly interested in differences between individuals in their mental traits. He was interested in examining variation in mental traits, and mental ability or as Galton saw it their 'genius'. In his introductory paper, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, he defines eugenics in a footnote as the "science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had" ("*Inquiries Into Human Faculty and Its Development*", 24-25). Basically, Galton was interested in trying to improve the quality of our society by applying the principles of Darwinism to the human population.

Self-direction of human evolution. Darwinism could be seen as the identify of eugenics, and not the root of eugenics.

Darwin's influence on the elite shaped the way research, development, and progress

was made in major nations such as the United States. The majority of individuals in the United States rejected Darwinism, however some of the leaders, intellectuals, scientists, and biologists believed in the theory and so it was applied in many scientific, economic, and intellectual discussions and proposals in the United States.

References

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- [2] Galton, Francis. *Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims*. The American Journal of Sociology 10.1 (1904): 1-25. The University of Chicago Press. Web. 11 Nov. 2014.
- [3] Galton, Francis. *Inquiries Into Human Faculty and Its Development*. Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development (1883): 24-25. Web.