

CONTEMPORARY EUGENICS

An Interview with Author and Russian Scholar John Glad

The following exchange is an exclusive interview (conducted in late March 2007) with Russian scholar John Glad. He is the author of *Future Human Evolution: Eugenics in the Twenty-First Century*. The book is being translated by volunteers into a number of languages and is available free online at <http://whatwemaybe.org>. At current rates it will have been downloaded one million times by the end of 2008, making it – by multiples – the most widely read text on the modern eugenics movement. Curiously, despite a three-decade-long massive media assault on eugenics, it has yet to engender any objections on the part of reviewers.

Kevin Lamb
– editor



TOQ: *First, provide a brief description of your professional career, academic background, and life's work.*

JG: My Ph.D. is in Russian literature, which seemingly is unrelated to eugenics, but there is a connection: I edited and translated two Russian books on the Soviet forced-labor camps and one for Holocaust Library on the slaughter of Jews on occupied Soviet territory. I then went on to create a statistical model of IQ lowering as a result of violence targeted against high-IQ groups. To my surprise the mean was not significantly affected, but the right tail of the statistical curve suffered enormously. Imagine, for example, that two dozen of the world's most brilliant composers had never been conceived: The average ability of subsequent generations would not be measurably different, but how impoverished music would be! Since at the time I was directing the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies in the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, I was able to give a lecture on the topic in the Smithsonian Castle on the Washington, D.C. Mall. If I had had to submit a proposal to make such a presentation, it would have been denied.

The fact that my training is in a different field is not only not an accident, it's an essential precondition. Geneticists, sociologists, anthropologists, et al. who openly advocate eugenics are unemployable. My website (whatwemaybe.org) is the most widely visited of any website on eugenics. It is getting 8,000 hits a day, and a third of a million people have downloaded my free book *Future Human Evolution: Eugenics in the Twenty-First Century*.

TOQ: *What is the essence of your argument and the thesis of your latest book?*

JG: Despite the revolution in our knowledge of genetics that has taken place since the founding of the formal eugenics movement, the essential argument for eugenics remains unchanged: a negative correlation between intelligence and fecundity and also the need to maintain selection in a modern world where virtually every woman lives to experience menopause, thus transforming selection by survival into selection by fertility. We have effectively reversed evolutionary selection with devastating consequences for our genetic patrimony.



John Glad, author of *Future Human Evolution: Eugenics in the Twenty-First Century*

But eugenics is more than just preventing the squandering of our genetic patrimony. It is also continuing evolution. The most likely candidate for continuing evolution is the creation of the machine brain. Why should humans be the end of evolution? This is speculative, of course, and I may be wrong in betting on the cybernetic horse.

TOQ: *Why did you decide to write on this topic?*

JG: Ideology often serves as a rationalization for deep-seated emotional attitudes. Basically either we are satisfied with our own species and even see ourselves as created by God in his own image or we reject this view as hubris. Diversity is indeed a great richness within our species, but not when it extends to low intelligence and disease. The reality is that the bulk of humanity has been left out of culture, science, and civilization.

There is so much to admire in our species that it is a truly humbling experience. At the same time I'm not happy with the species in many ways. For that matter, I'm not all that pleased with myself.

TOQ: *You identify eugenics as a human rights issue. Could you elaborate on this point?*

JG: I define humanity, not as the totality of people alive today, but as the totality of people who will ever live. Thus the greater good argument (utilitarian ethics) dictates that we assume our parental responsibilities.

Our moral obligation to do everything in our power to ensure that children be born healthy and intelligent seems so obvious that it should not have to be argued.

Eugenics is also flesh and blood of the environmental movement. It is human ecology. We cannot act as the ultimate invasive species, counting on moving to a different planet after we have trashed our own. Eugenics is joined at the hip with the heritage of Malthus.

TOQ: *Considering the underlying science of the concept of selective genetic breeding (the concept of the thoroughbred among some species) is demonstrably sound, why does the topic remain so taboo as it pertains to human reproduction? Some would argue that establishing government eugenic programs is the slippery slope toward totalitarianism. Do you agree? Explain.*

JG: The traditional counterarguments to eugenics – that nurture is everything, that testing is useless, that heritability is zero – are strawmen that cannot be taken seriously. Nevertheless, the fear of eugenics is unfortunately not without justification. Marx never envisaged the Soviet purges. Proponents of eugenics cannot know who will take up their banner. But the refusal to intervene in human selection is also a choice. And it is a choice that reverses the momentum of evolution. So I would rather take a risk than face inevitable doom.

TOQ: *Resistance to eugenics, particularly as it applies to human reproduction, stems from religious beliefs over the “sanctity of life”; abortion, birth control, embryonic selection, in vitro fertilization, and gene replacement therapy contravene natural law according to many Christian denominations, most notably the Roman Catholic Church. Is this an unbridgeable chasm between religion and science? Would Catholics as well as fundamentalist and evangelical Protestants compromise their own religious convictions by embracing eugenics?*

JG: Religion represents an attempt to explain the universe. Science is a competing paradigm. There is also the inertia of tradition. Still, religion has accepted science in other areas. Religious believers accept the multiplication table, why not eugenics?

TOQ: *In her book Preaching Eugenics author Christine Rosen describes how several prominent religious leaders embraced the idea of eugenics. The Rev. William Dean Inge (1860–1954) is one of the more notable examples. Do you consider this to be an anomaly? What has changed since then to widen the gap between the clergy and eugenicists?*

JG: Prior to the issuance of the 1930 Papal encyclical *Casti connubii* the Catholic Church was in many respects supportive of eugenics. The antieugenics position of Pius XI was reinforced by the conservative religious denial of evolution itself. Then came the onslaught of radical egalitarianism – Marxism, behaviorism, Margaret Mead/Franz Boas-style anthropology, Freudianism. This was momentum that had been building for more than a century. Its weak spot is that it is scientifically invalid. Sociobiology in its study of animal behavior has fatally undermined traditional morality. Religion-based denial of evolution is a temporary aberration that could be reversed far more abruptly than many realize.

TOQ: *One misconception of eugenics is that it is “anti-family” in orientation. One could argue that the positions of active participants in the American Eugenics Society were “pro-family,” given their orientation toward “Fitter Family Contests” and their concern that too many professional couples were forgoing marriage and raising smaller families, thereby leading to dysgenic results, an underlying theme of the recent movie Idiocracy. How do you view this?*

JG: Traditional family values present a mixed picture. No animal breeder would even consider monogamy. The biggest hurdle that eugenics will have to overcome in the long run is the abandonment of the “reproductive rights” of genetically disadvantaged persons. No one is denying them the right to marry and have children by using donated sperm or eggs. With this reservation, the traditional family is a wonderful model for bringing future generations into the world. But resistance will be fierce and perhaps impossible to overcome.

TOQ: *One controversial argument of your book is that Jews, who were once avid supporters of eugenics in the pre-World War II era, are guided by misconceptions and myths that eugenics is synonymous with ethnic and racial genocide. Elaborate on your position of why you think Jews (and other groups) should come to value the importance of eugenics.*

JG: I am gathering material for a new book, to be entitled *Don't Do What I Do: Jewish Eugenics*. Jewry is in its very essence the historical product of eugenic inbreeding. And while it is true that the early eugenics movement was largely a WASP phenomenon, Jews played their own modest role in the movement. The Jewish assault on eugenics did not begin until the late 1960s – a quarter century after the end of World War II. Today Israel is the world leader in practicing eugenics; Jewish practitioners of eugenics just avoid using the word eugenics. But Diaspora Jews swim in the larger intellectual tide; more than half now marry non-Jews, and their Total Fertility Rate is below replacement level. Thus Diaspora Jewry is rapidly committing suicide as a result of its nominal rejection of eugenics. I published an article to this effect in the New York

newspaper *Jewish Week*, and the editor received a number of positive responses from readers, one of which he published. Given the reality of Jewish political muscle, the only way that eugenics can resume its formerly leading role is to explain to the Jewish community that they are acting contrary to their own best interests. The same is true for immigration controls.

I have been reading late nineteenth century anthropological discussions, and I am struck by the collegial spirit that prevailed among Jewish and non-Jewish scholars. Today the prevailing climate is one of anger on the one side and paranoia on the other. And since a handful of Jewish billionaires have bought up the media, the upshot is censorship. I must tell you that I see *TOQ*'s position as counter-productive. The eugenics movement can be revived and "damage control" can be achieved with regard to immigration only by bringing along Jewish opinion. This is doable. Any political position declared "anti-Semitic" is dead in the water.

Eugenics is for everybody. Those who advocate eugenics for their own group only are not only acting in an immoral fashion, they are hurting eugenics for their own group.

TOQ: The grip of contemporary political correctness on modern intellectual life in Western societies constricts freedom of inquiry and speech beyond general taboos to the point of quasi-criminalization of certain views and perspectives. Do you see parallels between what is happening within academia and among elites in these societies and the rigid government-enforced conformity that defined the Stalinist period of the Soviet Union? Where do you think this is headed? Is there reason to be optimistic about a return to more open debate and discussion of taboo and controversial subjects without the risk of losing a job or facing some sort of social sanction?

JG: All societies have always been regulated by a mixture of manipulation and coercion. The Soviet government placed greater emphasis on coercion than does the U.S. governmental duopoly, which has proven more skilled in manipulation. But the iron fist of coercion is always on the ready, should manipulation fail. The war on terrorism is snake oil. Any modern state is inherently and hopelessly vulnerable. The current U.S. government is laying the foundations of a police state that would have immeasurably greater resources for controlling the population than did the Soviets. Still, it is unwise to underestimate the power of chaos.

TOQ: In the past eugenicists have proposed various government-sponsored initiatives to implement eugenic policies and programs. They range from positive eugenic measures, such as William McDougall's tax-subsidized payments to middle and upper middle-class couples for having large families, to negative eugenic plans, such as William Shockley's proposal to pay welfare mothers not to have children. Should the government establish eugenic policies, and if so, which policies should the

government adopt? If you were overseeing the government's initiative in this area, what specific policies would you urge?

JG: First of all I want to say that I believe in a universalist eugenics that is based on genuine affection for all ethnic groups, without exception.

The very diversity of human populations, shaped over the ages by radically differing environments, is a great resource for our species, even though eugenics does aim at a reduction of that portion of genetic variance that leads to sickness and low intelligence. All groups have strengths, and any association of eugenics with intergroup hostility or the denigration of other groups creates ill will for eugenics and is counterproductive.

Eugenics is feasible only to the degree that currently living people are willing to implement it. That means that radical solutions are not practical. It goes without saying that the ability to guide subsequent evolution depends on the strength and will of government, but even a relatively weak government can exercise considerable influence over fertility.

In my opinion the proposals advanced by Shockley and McDougall have no chance for implementation just now, but the following steps are entirely doable within the current intellectual climate, so different now from what it was a hundred years ago:

First, quantity, not quality, should be the chief priority of population management. It does appear that there are too many people for the environment to sustain them in perpetuity without environmental degradation.

If this perception proves to be overly pessimistic, the error can be easily and expeditiously corrected. If it is correct, however, the consequences will be irreversible.

Women all over the planet generally want to limit their fertility. U.S. foreign policy should shift away from its current fixation on political manipulation, codenamed "democracy," and provide the encouragement that women require and the assistance that they want. The "demographic transition" is too uneven and needs to be urged along. To take but one example, Bangladesh is home to 150 million people but is only about the size of the state of Wisconsin, and 80 percent of its land area is flood plain.

Who will take in these people in the face of rising sea levels?

Resistance to abortion as part of family-planning can be overcome by presenting family planning as the ideal way to reduce abortions, albeit not eliminate abortion since termination of pregnancy is often the only line of defense for low-IQ populations.

Second, the current system of rendering assistance exclusively to needy single mothers is a genetic disaster that makes low-IQ groups our breeding pool. It should be replaced with national medical insurance and free day care for all. This would provide essential assistance to welfare populations

that would permit them to work, but not encourage them to have still more children.

Third, it is not in America's national interest to massively import the underclass of other countries to "do jobs that Americans do not want to do" and who then become part of our breeding pool. On the other hand, neither is it morally right for us to rob the underdeveloped countries of their persons of ability. Unfortunately, and I stress the word "unfortunately," the introduction of an enforceable national ID card that will remove the source of temptation is essential.

Fourth, incredibly, a majority of Americans still advocate the teaching of creationism in the schools. How can genetic selection even be discussed in such a climate!? The government needs to invest heavily in education.

Fifth, the Jewish community, which suffers disproportionately from genetic illnesses as a result of historic inbreeding, is actively pursuing genetic testing and counseling in a truly enlightened fashion, and its policies should be held up as a model for everyone.

None of these policies is not particularly controversial and all are entirely feasible within the context of the current intellectual climate. More ambitious measures can be undertaken when eugenics wins broader acceptance.

TOQ: *If each racial-ethnic group practiced eugenics on a comparable level, where more competent individuals with stable personalities – those on the upper end of the Bell Curve – reproduced at comparable rates, would this close "the educational/IQ gap" and would disparities in socioeconomic indicators (income, crime, educational achievement) decline as a result? If not, why not? Will we have to live indefinitely with differences in average ability levels and the prospect of human inequality from group to group?*

JG: The question of between-group abilities and emotional proclivities is a scientific question with moral implications. Eugenics is for all groups, and all groups possess persons whose genetic patrimony should be preserved. A group of lesser native ability can even outstrip a more talented group, depending on the energy with which it pursues genetic selection. We should not feel threatened by other groups' successes, but instead should be happy for them and attempt to emulate their success.

TOQ: *Do you envision a future in which popular opinion or at least a large part of it will come to embrace eugenic policies?*

JG: I advocate the de-demonization of eugenics, but I am leery of seeing it "embraced" by the broad public. The historical eugenics movement was quite influential on a more selective basis, and even then the amount of dilet-

tantism and sheer snobbery was depressing. A delicate balance is necessary, enlightening elites, who go on to take genetic consequences of government programs into consideration. Practical eugenics is actually a very conservative, low-key, common-sense worldview. What is wild-eyed radicalism is the extreme egalitarianism that is still being presented to the public. But to be fair to its proponents, they have legitimate fears – fears that I share – and thus they present an ideology in which they themselves only partly believe, but which is really intended for the masses.

TOQ: *Genetic screening is frequently attacked as “the new eugenics.”*

JG: Actually, in a sense precisely the opposite can be true.

Prior to the advent of genetic testing, the only method of combating genetic illnesses was to reduce fertility among persons actively manifesting such diseases, but this was extremely ineffective in instances of recessive genes, which usually do not occur with great frequency.

The current practice of prenatal diagnosis followed by abortion of affected fetuses is the mirror image of inbreeding, which seems to be dysgenic in that it increases the frequency of tragic genetic illnesses but at the same time reduces the number of carriers – a decidedly eugenic consequence. Similarly, selective abortion seems eugenic in that it reduces the number of persons actively suffering from genetic illnesses, but also increases the number of carriers. Eugenic is what helps the gene pool. It is of course desirable that genetic screening be employed to reduce the number of sick people in the next generation, but carrier fertility also needs to be reduced.

Heightened mortality is evolution’s cruel way of correcting for inbreeding. Primitive societies evolved genetically through polygamy and inbreeding. Selective abortions liberate harmful genes from negative selectionary pressure and allow them to replicate themselves with greater frequency.

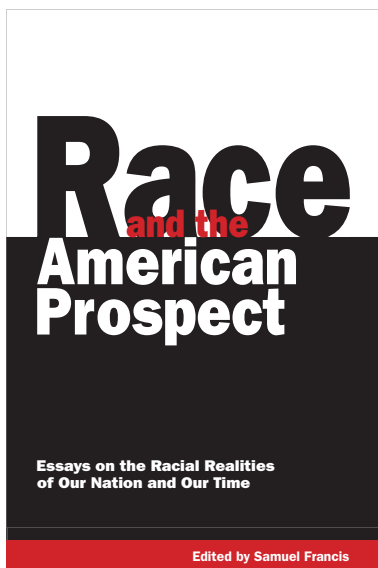
TOQ: *And just how do you reduce such undesirable fertility?*

JG: We have been molded by evolution to sacrifice everything for our children, and even to neglect our own parents, since effort expended on them is effort taken away from our children, reducing what sociobiology refers to as our “fitness” as a species. But concern for distant posterity is not part of our mental hardware. In discussing eugenics I have frequently heard the objection “What have future generations ever done for me?” The fundamental dilemma of eugenics is that it argues on behalf of a still nonexistent constituency, so that no quid pro quo is possible. Politics amounts to coalition building. Who will partner with them?

The available social levers are either a) an appeal to conscience or b) coercion. The former is ineffective, and the latter is improbable. This is the strongest argument against eugenics – that it is utopian and thus unrealistic. That is always the response to idealism. Sometimes you have to do what you can – even when prospects seem bleak.

Still, when all is said and done, while genetic illnesses are significant, they are peripheral to the fundamental core of eugenics – the negative correlation between intelligence and fertility, and, as plant and animal breeders have always known, “like breeds like.” Modern genetic knowledge has never challenged that fundamental fact. So perhaps the optimists have a chance at success after all. We have to try. ■

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