



## **Eugenics and Other Evils: An Argument Against the Scientifically Organized State**

*G.K. Chesterton, Michael W. Perry (Editor)*

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In the second decade of the twentieth century, an idea became all too fashionable among those who feel it is their right to set social trends. Wealthy families took it on as a pet cause, generously bankrolling its research. The New York Times praised it as a wonderful "new science." Scientists, such as the brilliant plant biologist, Luther Burbank, praised it unashamedly. Educators as prominent as Charles Elliot, President of Harvard University, promoted it as a solution to social ills. America's public schools did their part. In the 1920s, almost three-fourths of high school social science textbooks taught its principles. Not to be outdone, judges and physicians called for those principles to be enshrined into law. Congress agreed, passing the 1924 immigration law to exclude from American shores the people of Eastern and Southern Europe that the idea branded as inferior. In 1927, the U. S. Supreme Court joined the chorus, ruling by a lopsided vote of 8 to 1 that the sterilization of unwilling men and women was constitutional. That idea was eugenics and in the English-speaking world it had virtually no critics among the "chattering classes." When he wrote this book, Chesterton stood virtually alone against the intellectual world of his day. Yet to his eternal credit, he showed no sign of being intimidated by the prestige of his foes. On the contrary, he thunders against eugenics, ranking it one of the great evils of modern society. And, in perhaps one of the most chillingly accurate prophecies of the century, he warns that the ideas that eugenics had unleashed were likely to bear bitter fruit in another nation. That nation was Germany, the "very land of scientific culture from which the ideal of a Superman had come." In fact, the very group that Nazism tried to exterminate, Eastern European Jews, and the group it targeted for later extermination, the Slavs, were two of those whose biological unfitness eugenists sought so eagerly to confirm.

## **Eugenics and Other Evils: An Argument Against the Scientifically Organized State Details**

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## Manuel Alfonseca says

ENGLISH: At first I thought that this book would be outdated, as Eugenics, which was a problem in 1917, when the book was written, would no longer be a problem. But then, in the second part, I saw that just the name has been abandoned, due to the fact that Hitler appropriated it, but the contents are still outstanding. In fact, Eugenics, which at the time Chesterton was writing was a capitalist conspiracy to keep the lower classes controlled, is now a capitalist conspiracy to keep the world population controlled. The world powers (namely big financiers such as Soros, and the governments of the European countries, either socialist or rightist) have taken control of the U.N. and are pushing and putting pressure for abortion, euthanasia and homosexuality in the Third World countries so as to control their population. Seen at this light, Chesterton's book is tragically up to date, although the terminology he uses and the actual examples he gives may be outdated.

ESPAÑOL: Al principio pensé que este libro estaría pasado de moda, ya que la Eugenesia, que era un problema en 1917, cuando se escribió el libro, habría dejado de serlo. Pero al llegar a la segunda parte, vi que el nombre ha sido abandonado, porque Hitler se lo apropió, pero el contenido aún está al día. De hecho, la Eugenesia, que en el momento en que Chesterton escribía era una conspiración capitalista para mantener controladas a las clases bajas, ahora es una conspiración capitalista para mantener controlada a la población mundial. Las potencias mundiales (los grandes financieros como Soros y los gobiernos de los países europeos, ya sean socialistas o de derechas) han tomado el control de la ONU y están presionando para imponer el aborto, la eutanasia y la homosexualidad en los países del Tercer Mundo, a fin de controlar su población. Visto a esta luz, el libro de Chesterton está trágicamente al día, aunque la terminología que emplea y los ejemplos concretos que da no estén actualizados.

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## Kirk says

"The wisest thing in the world is to cry out before you are hurt. It is no good to cry out after you are hurt; especially after you are mortally hurt. People talk about the impatience of the populace; but sound historians know that most tyrannies have been possible because men moved too late."

Thus Chesterton opens his work, published in 1922, roughly a decade before the Nazi Party came into power in Germany where they would act upon the "science" of eugenics to its fullest extremes. The reader comes away appreciating Chesterton's rather prophetic denunciation of this "Prussian" issue which gained a following in England and beyond, but this book does not limit itself to one topic. Rather, Chesterton blends and weaves in his philosophy and observation on related subjects such as capitalism, socialism, ownership, marriage, and human sexuality with great dexterity. It is Chesterton's aptness for criticizing, what may seem, both sides of an argument along with his ability to induce laughter while seriously examining the issues that makes him immanently readable. With this book, come for the intriguing period evaluation of eugenics, but stay for an evaluation of early twentieth century society that is strikingly relevant nearly one hundred years later.

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## **Brent McCulley says**

Chesterton was a literary genius. His satirical prose and command of the paradox leads the reader dumbfounded how anyone could accept the tenants that Chesterton argues against in his *Eugenics and Other Evils*. Don't be fooled by the age of this book; the eugenics movement has *not* gone away, it has just changed its shape and name. Things like state-run birth control and abortion may have been theory back in the late 19th century, but they currently are our *reality*.

Chesterton was ahead of his time, writing during the early 20th century, Chesterton would not live to see the horrors that eugenic ideals can lead to; viz., National Socialism in Germany and the morally repugnant programs conducted by Nazi scientists. Elegant and sardonic, *Eugenics and Other Evils* is one giant argument ad absurdum - to which I agree wholeheartedly and completely with Gilbert.

Brent McCulley (11/13/2013)

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## **Jordan says**

For the most part, eugenics has receded as a respectable academic discipline. But while one would have a hard time finding blatant exponents of the idea of eugenics, the principles of eugenics are very much alive today. The common misconception is that they died with Nazism, but even a cursory glance at the social and political landscape proves that to be false.

So, while much has been done to discredit eugenics, its spectre still hovers around us today, threatening to snatch up the wage-earners, the poor, those in debt, and those considered feeble. I think, though, that as racism declines, the eugenicist will be more influenced by the net worth of the so-called "undesirables" and not their skin colour. Indeed, Chesterton even began to note this himself, a hundred years ago. It should be said of Chesterton that he was challenging eugenics when few others were. H G Wells, who enjoys more fame than his jovial contemporary, was a proponent. Certain Canadian provincial governments were involved in the forced sterilization of "undesirables." Before Hitler, before the grisly details of Auschwitz and the other camps were engraved in the collective brain of Western society, eugenics was quite popular. And it was Chesterton, ever forward-thinking and prophetic and astute, who took eugenics to task before Hitler even applied to art school.

Chesterton's critique centre on the reality of economic injustice in late-19th and early-20th century England, and how poverty (the primary targets of eugenics being the poor) had little to do with genetics and more to do with poisonous and destructive economic policies.

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## **Johanna says**

A bit lengthy, but compelling none the less. It is terrifying to think that such evil people existed, and perhaps even more terrifying that they still exist today, masquerading their cold-blooded intents under the guise of science and the "betterment" of human society. If you thought that eugenics and ethnic cleansing ended with the nazis, take a close look at the major heads of the green movement. Many are calling for a culling of the human race, and where else would they start but with the sick and disabled. How is it that in a world where we pride ourselves on being so compassionate and tolerant, there can be such a horrific and outright evil way

of thought? Interesting, frightening, very important to read and learn the history about.

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### **Mary says**

What's Chesterton's theory? I'm kind of on a Chesterton kick--don't know if you noticed--but I'm still trying to sort his ideas out. He combines a kind of libertarian dislike of government interference in morality with a Christian (especially Catholic) concern for "living wages" for the poor. This book is very bold, especially at a time when even U.S. president Woodrow Wilson was a proponent of eugenics and, as the Chesterton society points out "The New York Times gave it constant and positive coverage. Luther Burbank and other scientists promoted Eugenics. George Bernard Shaw said that nothing but a Eugenic religion could save civilization."

And it is as funny and cutting as Chesterton alone can be, with many elegant parallelism. One of his best passages (which I think he quotes in the introduction to "The Man Who Was Thursday"):

"Most Eugenists are Euphemists. I mean merely that short words startle them, while long words soothe them. And they are utterly incapable of translating the one into the other, however obviously they mean the same thing. Say to them 'The persuasive and even coercive powers of the citizen should enable him to make sure that the burden of longevity in the previous generations does not become disproportionate and intolerable, especially to the females?'; say this to them and they sway slightly to and fro like babies sent to sleep in cradles. Say to them 'Murder your mother,' and they sit up quite suddenly. Yet the two sentences, in cold logic, are exactly the same"

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### **Matthew says**

More Chesterton genius in this most entertaining collection of essays on a deadly serious subject.

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### **David says**

This book was truly prophetic. George Bernard Shaw said of G.K. Chesterton "he was a man of colossal genius"-- he most certainly was. But Chesterton was beyond intelligent. He was wise.

That is, he had a firm grasp on human nature. He represented the absolute best side of cynicism and while he may have been a cynic, Chesterton was not a pessimist.

His social commentary was priceless, not to mention way ahead of its time. To my knowledge, Chesterton was the one of the only voices at the time to speak out against eugenics; certainly he was the only voice who spoke loudly.

It is simultaneously frightening, amusing, and enlightening how much the world of today is like the world of yesterday. So many of the issues he grapples with here (personal liberty, the state, socialism etc.) -- are the same issues we face today.

Of course, there are no easy answers and this is exactly what society must come to understand. Taking

polarized sides and arbitrary stances won't solve anything in the long run. Rather than bypassing intelligent discourse (which may be uncomfortable at times) in favor of a superficial examination and quick fixes, we should exercise our brains a little more often -- yes, I said 'should'.

Reading this, I could not help but think (and laugh) of South Park and the whole "Rabble, Rabble, Rabble!" of the masses. SO true.

While we have learned much about the humane genome and nature/nurture since then, it's amazing how Chesterton captured the essence of what was essentially to come. He did not deny hereditary or our ability to influence it, but he did deny our ability to control it to the extent eugenics would have had us thought possible.

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### **Skylar Burris says**

Chesterton began this book in the 1910's, before eugenics realized its full horror in the holocaust, but it is a disturbingly prophetic and surprisingly poignant book even in our own day. What makes this book so arresting is that it is about far more than eugenics: it is about how evil succeeds subtly, about politics, and about economics.

Especially interesting was Chesterton's categorization of the four types of defenders of eugenics, because these categories can apply to the defenders of a great many social policies, past and present, and they describe well the various kinds of insufficient arguments used in political discourse. There are the Euphemists, who do not call a policy by its real name or speak of it in blunt language, but use scientific terminology and much verbosity to disguise its more disturbing ramifications. ("I mean merely that short words startle them, while long words soothe them. And they are utterly incapable of translating the one into the other, however obviously they mean the same thing. Say to them 'The persuasive and even coercive powers of the citizen should enable him to make sure that the burden of longevity in the previous generation does not become disproportionate and intolerable,...'; say this to them and they will sway slightly to and fro like babies sent to sleep in cradles. Say to them, 'Murder your mother,' and they sit up quite suddenly. Yet the two sentences, in cold logic, are exactly the same.") Then there are the Casuists, who equate their more disturbing policies with much more limited policies and suggest that if you permit the one, you must concede the other. ("Suppose I say, 'I dislike this spread of Cannibalism in the West End restaurants.' Somebody is sure to say, 'Well, after all, Queen Eleanor when she sucked blood from her husband's arm was a cannibal.' What is one to say to such people? One can only say, 'Confine yourself to sucking poisoned blood from people's arms, and I permit you to call yourself by the glorious title of Cannibal.'") Next are the Autocrats, who trust that their proposed reforms will, despite all possible concerns, work out okay, because they'll be there to make sure they work out okay. ("Where they will be, and for how long, they do not explain very clearly...And these people most certainly propose to be responsible for a whole movement after it has left their hands.") Then there are the Endeavourers, who optimistically rely on their honest attempts to deal with a problem, without bothering to determine what the effects of their policies will be. ("[T]he best thing the honest Endeavourer could do would be to make an honest attempt to know what he is doing. And not to do anything else until he has found out.") Finally, there is a category "so hopeless and futile" that Chesterton says he cannot think of a name for them. "But whenever anyone attempts to argue rationally for or against any existent and recognizable thing, such as [a specific piece of:] legislation, there are always people who begin to chop hay about Socialism and Individualism; and say, 'YOU object to all State interference...'" But, Chesterton insists, "I am not going to be turned from the discussion of that direct issue to bottomless

botherations about Socialism and Individualism, or the relative advantages of always turning to the right and always turning to the left."

Chesterton offers insight, too, into how tyranny develops, how "the excuse for the last oppression will always serve as well for the next oppression." And he predicts a state that is on its way to arriving, and has, in small part, already arrived: "our civilization will find itself in an interesting situation, not without humour; in which the citizen is still supposed to wield imperial powers over the ends of the earth, but has admittedly no power over his own body and soul at all. He will still be consulted by politicians about whether opium is good for China-men, but not about whether ale is good for him. He will be cross-examined for his opinions about the danger of allowing Kamtschatka to have a war-fleet, but not about allowing his own child to have a wooden sword."

I credit Chesterton with partly revising my view of Socialism, which I have always seen as a system that, unlike Capitalism, does not take into account the fact of original sin (and therefore assumes that a redistribution of wealth could actually work without causing many to stop working altogether). While I still think socialism overlooks human motivations, and that, practically speaking, Capitalism makes better outcomes of a fallen world, I can now agree with Chesterton that Socialism is not actually (as I formerly believed) a system founded primarily on naïve optimism. "The Socialist system," he writes, "in a more special sense than any other, is founded not on optimism but on original sin. It proposes that the State, as the conscience of the community, should possess all primary forms of property; and that obviously on the ground that men cannot be trusted to own or barter or combine or compete without injury to themselves. Just as a State might own all the guns lest people should shoot each other, so this State would own all the gold and land lest they should cheat or rackrent or exploit each other....it seems almost incredible that anybody ever thought it optimistic." The problem, of course, is that the State too is composed of fallen men. Socialism and Capitalism are both, Chesterton argues, types of prisons, but at least in the prison of Capitalism, there is more chance of escape. "Capitalism is a corrupt prison. That is the best that can be said for Capitalism. But it is something to be said for it; for a man is a little freer in that corrupt prison than he would be in a complete prison. As a man can find one jailer more lax than another, so he could find one employer more kind than another; he has at least a choice of tyrants." In a Socialist system, however, "he finds the same tyrant at every turn."

In any event, we now have neither Socialism nor Capitalism, but a horrid compromise, which Chesterton describes well: "It may be said of Socialism, therefore, that its friends recommended it as increasing equality, while its foes resisted it as decreasing liberty....The compromise eventually made was one of the most interesting and even curious cases in history. It was decided to do everything that had ever been denounced in Socialism, and nothing that had ever been desired in it...we proceeded to prove that it was possible to sacrifice liberty without gaining equality....In short, people decided that it was impossible to achieve any of the good of Socialism, but they comforted themselves by achieving all the bad."

Sometimes Chesterton requires great patience to follow. He will move from medieval planning to the American colonies to Shakespeare to the French War in a matter of pages, and one cannot help but wonder, "Where is this going? What does this have to do with the topic of his book?" But if you are patient, the connections do come, and they are often rewarding. And there is always wit sprinkled throughout his work; even while reading a volume on so serious and heavy a topic as "Eugenics and other evils," I found myself laughing out loud.

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### **Melita says**

"I know that it numbers many disciples whose intentions are entirely innocent and humane; and who would be sincerely astonished at my describing it as I do. But that is only because evil always wins through the strength of its splendid dupes; and there has in all ages been a disastrous alliance between abnormal innocence and abnormal sin. Of these who are deceived I shall speak of course as we all do of such instruments; judging them by the good they think they are doing, and not by the evil which they really do. But Eugenics itself does exist for those who have sense enough to see that ideas exist; and Eugenics itself, in large quantities or small, coming quickly or coming slowly, urged from good motives or bad, applied to a thousand people or applied to three, Eugenics itself is a thing no more to be bargained about than poisoning."

"I had thought of calling the next sort of superficial people the Idealists; but I think this implies a humility towards impersonal good they hardly show; so I call them the Autocrats. They are those who give us generally to understand that every modern [16]reform will "work" all right, because they will be there to see. Where they will be, and for how long, they do not explain very clearly. I do not mind their looking forward to numberless lives in succession; for that is the shadow of a human or divine hope. But even a theosophist does not expect to be a vast number of people at once. And these people most certainly propose to be responsible for a whole movement after it has left their hands. Each man promises to be about a thousand policemen. If you ask them how this or that will work, they will answer, "Oh, I would certainly insist on this"; or "I would never go so far as that"; as if they could return to this earth and do what no ghost has ever done quite successfully—force men to forsake their sins. Of these it is enough to say that they do not understand the nature of a law any more than the nature of a dog. If you let loose a law, it will do as a dog does. It will obey its own nature, not yours. Such sense as you have put into the law (or the dog) will be fulfilled. But you will not be able to fulfil a fragment of anything you have forgotten to put into it."

"Lastly, there is a class of controversialists so hopeless and futile that I have really failed to find a name for them. But whenever anyone attempts to argue rationally for or against any existent and recognisable thing, such as the Eugenic class of legislation, there are always people who begin to chop hay about Socialism and Individualism; and say "You object to all State interference; I am in favour of State interference. You are an Individualist; I, on the other hand," etc. To which I can only answer, with heart-broken patience, that I am not an Individualist, but a poor fallen but baptised journalist who is trying to write a book about Eugenists, several of whom he has met; whereas he never met an Individualist, and is by no means certain he would recognise him if he did. In short, I do not deny, but strongly affirm, the right of the State to interfere to cure a great evil. [19]I say that in this case it would interfere to create a great evil; and I am not going to be turned from the discussion of that direct issue to bottomless botherations about Socialism and Individualism, or the relative advantages of always turning to the right and always turning to the left."

"But as an incapacity for any kind of thought is now regarded as statesmanship, there is nothing so very novel about such slovenly drafting."

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### **Steve says**

A marvellous web of paradoxes! Eugenics is back with a new respectability. Therefore, read this.

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### **Jeremy Egerer says**

I was under the impression that this was a book about eugenics, and it was -- but it was also a beautiful defense of property rights, a powerful assault on plutocratic elitism, and an unusually compassionate statement about the dignity and difficult position of the post-Victorian working poor. I expected little from this book, since I bought it on a whim, and it turned out to be one of my favorites. Useful as a balance against Rand's *The Virtue of Selfishness*.

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### **Jesse Broussard says**

I write down commonplaces as I read books: little items worthy, as N. D. Wilson said, of imitation and remembrance. I have several of these empty, unlined notebooks filled, and have broken tradition with Chesterton in not actually keeping track. With Tolkien, I devoted an entire commonplace book. With Chesterton, I'm not even going to bother trying. His complete works are contained in 37 (or more) large volumes put out by Ignatius Press, and I will just have to allow that to be my Chesterton commonplace book, though I will continue adding in some of his best.

This book, *Eugenics and Other Evils*, is about what it says it's about, which is odd enough, as Chesterton stays remarkably and uncharacteristically on topic. I think having a target to dismantle has something to do with it, but not really a whole lot, as he proves the impossibility of Eugenics in a single sentence somewhere towards the middle of the book. The other possibility is that his topic is a large enough cage for his mind to momentarily content itself within its confines, which seems more realistic.

Chesterton is always sheer delight to read, always fun, always unbelievably brilliant and flippant and enormous, but I had rarely encountered him with an axe in his hand, and he proves Lewis right: for the child with an axe, the joy is in chopping. This book could have a great deal of writing against government interference in the private sphere, and is written defending the old ways, the noble and chivalrous ways over and against the new ways, the stainless steel and minds too close to Saruman's in their obsession with wheels and machines. The eugenist desires to improve the overall quality of life in the same way that Nietzsche did, simply a bit earlier. Instead of letting the diseased and weak die, the eugenist just ensures that they aren't ever born by preventing those genetically prone to weakness and disease from breeding, which was a staggeringly popular idea.

Indeed, it was the single driving influence in the life of the one person whose effect in our century alone has outweighed Stalin, Lenin, Hitler, Pol Pot and every other dictator we've seen. This person has caused more deaths than all of our enlightened genocides and all of the the Medieval plagues. Combined. Eugenics was the inspiration of that madonna of death, Margaret Sanger. And we think eugenics is a bad joke. In reality, it was a very good joke, an evil joke, but skillful, and we are the punchline, though it turned out to be more indiscriminate than was originally intended.

Perhaps I've read too much Chesterton: I'm acquiring his habits without the skill. Or perhaps I've been up too long. A book review has turned into a tirade against Planned Parenthood. Blame it on whatever you like; I'll rectify it here: the book was magnificent, and I'm going to bed.

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## Russell says

The thing that impressed me most about this book, aside from Chesterton's genius at writing with paradoxes, was how relevant it still is. The problems he wrote about are still here, almost like the modern world got stuck around post WWI and never moved past certain ideas. Chesterton's spiritual vision is piercing, able to see through many arguments and positions to correctly identify the moral dangers and evils behind. He's not just an engaging author and a master of logic, he's a voice for common sense rooted in spiritual truths. After seeing the damage done over the past decades, I cannot see any secular moral framework being worth much compared to Christianity's. Chesterton lays out the evils, shows why and how they are evil, and how they can be overcome by using the light of Christianity to inform decisions and direction. He applies his skills to expose not only the nonsenses of eugenics and social engineering, but also to the dangers of capitalism unfettered by the constraints of the traditions and moral framework of Christianity expressed through the shaping of England.

It's another classic of Chesterton's, well worth reading.

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## Daniel says

Bloody amazing.

I am kicking myself for not having read Chesterton constantly, continually, and so very thoroughly much, much earlier in my career. And I have no plausible excuse. I was quite familiar with the name Chesterton due to the ongoing *friendly rivalry* that he had with George Bernard Shaw. And there was always the indirect Chesterton quote that the very famous personality Michael Palin eventually delivered during the opening segment of the *Ripping Yarns* series. Yet I never picked anything up by Chesterton until about a half-year ago.\*\*

This thing might very well have the best opening paragraph in the history of opening paragraphs:

*The wisest thing in the world is to cry out before you are hurt. It is no good to cry out after you are hurt; especially after you are mortally hurt. People talk about the impatience of the populace; but sound historians know that most tyrannies have been possible because men moved too late. It is often essential to resist a tyranny before it exists. It is no answer to say, with a distant optimism, that the scheme is only in the air. A blow from a hatchet can only be parried while it is in the air.*

You see? I told you. After reading that opening paragraph I'll bet that you want to kick me as well for not having read Chesterton earlier in my career. Well, bring it on, fat ass. After reading *Eugenics and Other Evils* it should be painfully obvious to you that I will parry your kick while it is in the air.

\*\* This is a typo. I read quite a few *Father Brown* stories about ten years ago. I apologize for the inconvenience.

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### **Athens says**

Chesterton is really quite enjoyable to read.

I often disagree with his premises and outcomes of his thinking, but the thinking itself is something to behold. A brilliant man.

Will read more of his.

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### **D.M. Dutcher says**

Don't be fooled by the title or how old this book is. It is an amazing takedown of the entire basis of eugenic thought as well as a profound argument against unregulated capitalism. It not only does those, but highlight problem after problem that you never have even considered before. And it was done *contra mundi*, during a time when eugenics was considered even more respectable than evolution is today.

It doesn't do the book justice to summarize its many arguments, but I'll list a few just to give an idea.

-that it impossible to be a eugenist because while sickness is the same among all men, health is if anything a balance specific to each type. It's easy to diagnose a broken leg, but how can you diagnose a healthy one? Or define it?

-that eugenacists often argue that poverty and the moral dissolution that comes from it are reasons to use eugenics, but they unconsciously believe that the poor's poverty is always fixed and will or even should ever change. He argues damningly that the reasons why the rich embrace this is because their wealth is dependent on keeping other men poor and beaten down so they can accept starvation wages.

-That eugenics and its mindset are negative without positive, and mad. A master tells a slave he may sleep here and no other place, or he will kill him. A eugenist tells a tramp that he cannot sleep in the park or the woods, *but refuses to give him any place to sleep at all*. The master treats his slave harshly, denying him liberty, but at least he treats him as a living being. The eugenist treats him as a mass, or a thing.

It's all done in Chesterton's signature style: clear, lucid, using paradox and example. It's not just attacking eugenics, but the foundations of modern capitalism and law that create the conditions for it, and it's sure to challenge anyone regardless of their political persuasion.

The physical book also adds appendixes that show just how prevalent eugenic thought was. Chesterton was one of the few voices in opposition of it, and you'd be not a little horrified at the abyss we nearly descended into. Whether reading it free or buying the paperback it's well worth it. A timeless treasure that is even more relevant today than then.

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### **Nicole says**

If a gross injustice appeared disguised in scientific lingo and talk of progress, would I recognize it for what it is? That was the question I had in mind as I started this book. I greatly admire Chesterton and his contemporaries for recognizing eugenics for the monster it was, and without the benefit of hindsight.

Few writers can make me feel so utterly uneducated and dimwitted as Chesterton can. But somehow the challenge is rewarding rather than defeating. This book challenged my views on the proper role of government, science, and medicine in society. One example: he argues that to make vagrancy a crime is lunacy-- circumstances conspire to take away a man's home, so we lock him up for the crime of not having one. He also argues that the capitalist/industrial system had taken all the bad parts of socialism without the more positive aspects. Provocative stuff, particularly in today's political climate. I am still processing his arguments and expect to re-read this at some point.

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### **Alex says**

This is a beautifully written book, still relevant today... But it's not a "pro-life" or "pro-choice" book. It's a "plague on both your houses" book.

Yes, he opposed divorce and abortion, probably would be outraged by mere idea of gay pride and homosexual marriage, and would think pretty much the entire notion of social liberalism is an irrelevant red herring...

But he would be equally horrified about the way his "wrong kind of socialism" with inspectors instead of bread and bewildering laws designed to be impossible to comply with unless you're rich became conventional wisdom of a conservative.

He would not want an overturn of Roe v. Wade. A woman viewed as baby-factory "protected" by police from herself and for the benefit of her rich and powerful masters is exactly the dystopian vision he did his best to warn against in his book.

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### **Giedre says**

This is a brilliant book, I don't know how I managed to avoid reading G.K.Chesterton up until now. I wish I'd read this book ages ago, it's easy to read, clear, written with humour and sarcasm at times and it made me think and change my views on things I never really stopped and thought about.

Although there were one or two arguments where I couldn't fully agree with Chesterton (perhaps due to my lack of in depth knowledge or analysis of the subject), this is such a current book despite the fact it was written a hundred years ago.

The book is amazingly prophetic. It's something someone intelligent could write today and you would think 'Damn, why didn't I think of this before, how could I be so blind?'

