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HUXLEY LABORATORIES



Directors' Note

It has been a desire for several years for Lung Ha's Theatre Company and Grid Iron to work together. We wanted to create a piece that would have real meaning for both companies, on a subject that is of great concern for all. We have chosen to work with the spirit of the medieval theatre tradition of buffon, so that the Naturals in the play are not victims but rather powerful adversaries who celebrate all the aspects of life that are being selected out – different physical shapes, the pain and glory of childbirth, the mess of human life. In workshops for the piece during which the entire company contributed to the script, we explored the idea of the 'burden of perfection' – as we have worked in rehearsal it became clear that the 'perfected' lab world of taut bodies, limitless sex and drug-induced calm was suffocating and that to step out onto the roof, even to the place of exile, in the cold and the wind, was a liberation. The diversity of the performance company itself is perhaps the greatest argument for resisting the eugenic impulse, which is always dressed up in the most positive way by its proponents. The *23andme* website, through which you can send off for your own genetic profile, (all you need is spit and \$500) is full of spookily perfected images of humans, which have informed some of the visuals in the show. But for us, it is the vivacity and complexity of the whole range of human emotions, physicalities and feelings which is worth celebrating, in life as well as in theatre, opposed absolutely to the blandness and terror of 'The Huxley Way'.

Ben Harrison & Maria Oller

Will the Future Bring About a Super Race?

Written by Dr. Calum MacKellar, Scottish Council on Human Bioethics

The idea of creating a genetically superior society in which persons are selected on the basis of their biological quality has had a long history.

Even Sir Winston Churchill was openly disappointed when, because of civil liberties, Britain resisted a programme that would prevent certain people from procreating. In 1910, he wrote to Prime Minister Herbert Asquith to express his support for a Bill that proposed the introduction of a compulsory sterilisation programme indicating that: 'The unnatural and increasingly rapid growth of the feeble-minded and insane classes, coupled as it is with a steady restriction among the ... superior stocks, constitutes a national and race danger which it is impossible to exaggerate ... I feel that the source from which the stream of madness is fed should be cut off and sealed up before another year has passed.'

This discipline that promotes the propagation of desirable traits in society while seeking to eliminate the undesirable is known as eugenics. Eugenics literally means, "well born". It involves the active selection of human beings who possess particular genetic characteristics that are considered to be superior.

But in contrast to what many think, eugenics is not just a thing of the past. It has quietly crept its way back into present day reality. Indeed, many experts are starting to show a hopeful interest in the yet untapped potential of a human race transformed by exciting new genetic technologies.

In a world where the possibilities for these advances often seem limitless, this is an issue which demands thoughtful consideration. In fact, some of the key questions that are beginning to be asked emphasise the universal relevance of the eugenics debate: Should society create the perfect human race? Is this already happening? These questions become especially relevant when the abortion of fetuses with certain non-life-threatening disabilities begins to break record levels in the UK. For example, in the South-West of England the *Daily Mail* reported that 117 babies with club feet, cleft palates, or webbed or extra fingers and toes were aborted between 2002 and 2005.