

Eugenics offers a warning about the perils of scientists chasing a brighter future at the 'cost of innocent individual lives'

We tend to associate eugenics with Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, but it was in fact developed in London. Its founder was Francis Galton, who established a laboratory at UCL in 1904.

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Yet as our critical gaze falls on Galton, are we losing sight of just how popular his idea was among so many Britons? In the early 20th century, a surprisingly broad roster of public figures aligned themselves with Galton's vision. It attracted people on the left and right, prominent writers and intellectuals, leading scientists and politicians. Virginia Woolf, TS Eliot, DH Lawrence, Julian Huxley, [Winston Churchill](#), Marie Stopes – all held eugenic views.

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From our 21st-century vantage point, what do we do with this knowledge? Whom do we keep and whom do we condemn? The moral boundaries may feel clear. A eugenicist is a eugenicist. A racist is a racist. But if Galton is out, where does that leave everyone else?

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The sad saga of eugenics teaches us not only that scientists can be wrong, but that the promise of a better, brighter future at the cost of innocent individual lives can be all too tempting to many.

**Read full, original post:** [In the twisted story of eugenics, the bad guy is all of us](#)