

IN THE NAME OF EUGENICS

Daniel J. Kevles



Daniel Kevles traces the study and practice of eugenics — the science of “improving” the human species by exploiting theories of heredity — from its inception in the late nineteenth century to its most recent manifestation within the field of genetic engineering. He examines, at every stage of the development of eugenics, the contrast between people’s utopian expectations—dreams of controlling the makeup of the species — and the reality faced: possessing a relatively minor amount of human genetic knowledge, and an even lesser amount to actually manipulate. Kevles delineates how distorted theories of human heredity have been used as weapons of race and class prejudice; how the science has drawn adherents politically from both the right and the left; how, in the early decades of this century, eugenics was concerned in large part with assuring that men and, more particularly, women would accommodate themselves to changing standards and technologies of sexual and reproductive behavior. *In the Name of Eugenics* provides a historical perspective on a science that for almost a century has been, and continues to be, the cause and the center of a widespread and volatile debate.



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