

## **The Genesis of Something Good?**

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*Originally published in the September 2000 issue of Perspectives.*

Clearly, it is no small achievement that humanity has taken only a decade of concerted effort, with the Human Genome Project, to unlock the genetic mysteries that took millions of years to develop. Based on a version of evolution, the development of complex lifeforms such as human beings was sparked by several genetic changes over eons. What is perhaps surprising is that humanity went through various stages of development to become what it is today. But our new discoveries may bring about a new "race" in human affairs.

Last summer, a documentary on the Discovery Channel explained the current version of the "evolutionary history of mankind." What intrigued me about it was the notion expressed that at one point in human history, there were several-not just one-human species. As is perhaps common knowledge for science students, Homo Erectus was a human species that predated the Neanderthals and our species, Homo Sapiens. The theory is that at one period in history, all three species lived at the same time. The question of how Homo Sapiens managed to outlive the other species was answered with the dramatic idea that we fought for dominance, by killing off the other species directly or indirectly, or by eroding their genetic traits to extinction.

With the development of human genetic manipulation, the potential danger increases for new divisions and intra-species conflicts. Conflicts between the "genetically modified" and the "organically-pure" could rise, as many science-fiction writers have envisaged. But what is perhaps most dangerous and most insidious is the use of genetic manipulation for prejudiced ends. Countries following archaic/insular/fascist policies could easily make all children born in their country conform to certain sociobiological "standards." If you extend the pro-choice abortion argument -that the fetus is only a potential human being, without the rights of a post-birth human being-what is there to prevent prejudiced actions against the unborn child? After all, "freedom from genetic manipulation" is not something you can easily add to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All this may sound implausible to many, but less than 100 years ago concerted human genocide was just as implausible.