Late eugenics in Argentina and its family stereotype, second half of the twentieth century

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Abstract

This article seeks to outline the main features of the stereotype of family promoted by the emblematic institution of the Argentine eugenics movement, the Argentine Eugenics Society (Sociedad Argentina de Eugenesia), an organization founded in 1945 that remained active in the country until the 1970s. It explores the conduct expected both of the man/husband and of the woman/wife, and shows the principal behaviors required to constitute the ideal family, the outlines of which were based on set of sexual moral with an eminently religious bias.

Keywords: late eugenics; family; Argentina; twentieth century.

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Radings and adaptations of eugenics, the discipline defined in 1881 by Francis Galton in Inquiries into human faculty and its development as the science of improving racial qualities in humans, animals and plants (Álvarez Peláez, 1988, p.79-130), did not create a monolithic discourse. In fact, ever since eugenics was first articulated in the nineteenth century, and even more so during the twentieth century, there were different formulations of it, which were generally linked to the sociocultural features of each country. Historiography usually differentiates Latin eugenics from the Anglo-Saxon variety, explaining the survival of the former through the Cold War period as being due to its relationship with the Catholic church and its opposition to direct interference with the reproductive organs. As a result, Latin eugenics stressed the environmental factor instead of the hard concept of "race" identified with the politics of the Third Reich, which had evolved from the Anglo-Saxon approach to eugenics (Stepan, 1991; Turda, Gillette, 2014, p.240). However, despite their dissimilarities, to a certain extent, both versions of eugenics legitimized government intervention in private life.¹

Latin eugenics emerged in Italy in the early twentieth century. Its leader was Agostino (Edoardo) Gemelli, a physician turned priest who combined the ideas of the burgeoning international eugenics movement with those of the Catholic church.² Gemelli played a crucial role in designing the eugenic demographic policies implemented by Italian fascism; in his presentation at the first Italian Congress on Social Eugenics in Milan (Congresso Italiano di Eugenética Sociale) in 1924, he defined an issue that would become the kernel of a whole school of thought. His presentation on "Eugenics and religion" argued that Catholicism was "also" a eugenic doctrine and that, in a Catholic country like Italy, medical eugenicists should work in collaboration with the church. Such cooperation between religion and eugenics, Gemelli said, showed the fundamental harmony that ought to exist between faith and science (Gemelli, 1924, p.732-733), so that instead of the "ignorance" of those who proposed compulsory sterilization of criminals, a Catholic "social eugenics" could flourish (p.735). In its mission to carry out the "most rational of eugenic actions," the church encouraged chastity for those "who would bring into the world beings fatally affected by a hereditary disease" (p.747-748), and Gemelli concluded that the church, far from being an enemy of eugenics, actually operated as its necessary complement, since the "rules of eugenics will be more efficiently applied if integrated with Catholic morality" (Gemelli, 1924, p.750; Vallejo, Miranda, 2014b). This formed the epistemological basis for the discourses that sought to harmonize eugenics and religion in the twentieth century.³

This Latin strain of Galton's science took off in Catholic countries, and Argentina (thanks to its conservative governing elites) became a beacon for eugenics in the region, as seen in the various intergovernmental and interinstitutional networks it created (Miranda, Vallejo, 2012). If we assume there were various stages in the development of the field, we can call the versions of the discipline that emerged between 1945 and the end of the twentieth century "late eugenics" or "late-stage eugenics" (Miranda, 2007). It is important to note, however, that the adjective "late" can be applied beyond the context of Argentina to include various countries in the region, such as Peru and Bolivia, for example; and it persists and/or was formulated after the Holocaust. This late stage of the movement began with two events that are crucial to eugenics, although in very different

contexts: on the international level, the end of Second World War and the revelation of Nazi horrors, which had been endorsed by a pseudo-science of racial improvement; and on the national level, the vitally important institutional split that led, also in 1945, to the founding of the Argentine Eugenics Society (Sociedad Argentina de Eugenesia), a counterpart to the Argentine Association of Biotypology, Eugenics and Social Medicine (Asociación Argentina de Biotipología, Eugenesia y Medicina Social), created in 1932, which was later absorbed by the government. It is worth stressing that during the period being analyzed here, the Argentine Eugenics Society became important enough to found the only school of eugenics in the world in 1957 (Vallejo, Miranda, 2017).

This article will outline the main features of Latin-style late eugenics, focusing in particular on the family stereotype promoted by the emblematic institution of the period, the Argentine Eugenics Society, mentioned earlier. This society was founded thanks to the efforts of the attorney Carlos Bernaldo de Quirós, who lived in Argentina until the early 1970s. It highlighted the behavioral expectations for men/husbands and for women/wives; and revealed the main forms of conduct required, in that Victorian mindset, to constitute the ideal family, based, as one might expect, on the behavior patterns associated with a particular type of sexual morality. These late readings of Galton's "science" became an ideology that functioned to maintain the sexual and reproductive status quo in the family, which was at that point in terminal crisis; they also show the profound interconnections between biology and politics inherent in eugenics.

However, instead of reflecting on the various sociological and anthropological approaches to the concept of family,⁵ I shall use the concept as it was enunciated at the time – in other words, the discourse authorized by late eugenics – in order to focus on features considered central to the formation of the stereotype of family. According to late-stage Latin eugenics, the family was a legal but also moral bond, both monogamous and indissoluble, between a man and a woman who were categorized prior to marriage as "fit" to conceive eugenic descendants. This union was, furthermore, accompanied by a marked reinforcement of traditional gender roles, in which the state and religion worked as coercive forces attempting to prevent the "collapse" of marriage. The eugenic family was thus distanced from the sociological vision of the family as a human group in which bonds are forged for mutual support and procreation. Within eugenics, the family was identified more as a normative concept, whose constitutive legitimacy was substantially upheld by both the human and the divine order.

In an attempt to highlight central aspects of the model family as seen by late-stage Latin eugenics, I shall concentrate on analyzing its discourses on issues like heterosexual unions; the indissolubility of a marital relationship potentially able to generate eugenically suitable individuals; the strengthening of gender roles, and within that context, the encouragement of child-bearing and the parallel ban on contraception.

Eugenic heteronormativity and homosexuality

The core of Galton's thesis was concerned, on principle, with control of the body, and in Latin eugenics this was accompanied by the demand for a legitimate marital relationship

prior to starting a family. Given the inherent stress on reproduction in any eugenic proposal, homosexuality became an incongruence that needed to be resolved by repression. In that context, a somewhat neo-Lamarckian argument arose: the homosexual, merely by his physical presence, aroused homoerotic passions in heterosexual men; this was used to legitimize a ban on homosexuality.

It is worth noting that, shortly before late-stage eugenics began to emerge, an event took place in Argentina that reflected both sides of the question: eugenic heteronormativity on the one hand and the homophobic tradition of the governing elites on the other. The socalled "cadet scandal" in 1942 involved a group of cadets at the National Military School (Colegio Militar de la Nación) who were photographed naked in suggestive poses with other men, in a way that denoted homosexual inclinations. This episode was attributed to the ineffectiveness of the abolitionist system's regulations on prostitution, enacted in 1936. A clear explanation was given: since there were no legalized brothels, the men were seeking pleasure through sexual contact with their peers. In response to this, in 1944 the de facto government of Edelmiro J. Farell modified an earlier law against venereal disease in a decree authorizing the creation of "tolerance houses" (casas de tolerancia). The rationale for this reformulation was basically to provide female entertainment for soldiers based in remote locations, thus avoiding the supposed risk that abstaining from sexual relations with women would cause them to meet their needs with men. This strategy sought to prevent members of the "virile body of the Nation" from falling into sexual perversions, and also to encourage traditional heterosexuality and the institutions of marriage and the family.

This emblematic incident influenced four legal bills presented in 1949 by the Argentine Eugenics Society, which hoped to get eugenic views included in the legislation, or better yet, to legislatively eugenicize the country. While none of these bills ever reached the parliamentary debate stage, they are fundamentally valuable for what they reveal of late eugenics discourse. They clearly show the position of the Argentine Eugenics Society as regards the value of education versus the law; a decade later, it even declared that the law could never substitute for the positive teachings of eugenics, nor safeguard the foundations of childhood, the responsible selection of progenitors or the "human cultivation" of parents, spouses and children, among other things (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1957b).

However, although certain tensions within the field of eugenics in Argentina prevented these initiatives from materializing, the plan to "complete the circle" within which the "struggle to improve the race and the Argentine biotype" (Colombo, 1949, p.915) had the effect of creating a particular climate of ideas, the results of which became evident after the overthrow of Juan Domingo Perón in 1955. At this point, late eugenics emerged in the country in its most strident form.

Although the Argentine Eugenics Society waged its battle on homosexuality in terms of sex education – the ultimate environmental variant – the ghost of its genetic underpinnings remained active, as seen in the words of the society's vice-president, Benjamín Spota, in a lecture at the Ibero-American Athenaeum (Ateneo Ibero-Americano) (Spota, 1947). Based on a narrative he attributed to the Francoist psychiatrist Antonio Vallejo Nágera, Spota (1947, p.308) declared that homosexuals were "truly psychologically sick," and that given their "psychopathic personality" they needed treatment, protection and above all

isolation, since "the episode and sexual syndrome is [was] usually the expression of the disintegration of the moral sense and the nucleus of the personality." Thus, homosexuality involved a fundamental synergism between heredity and the environment, in which the two factors complemented one another (Spota, 1947, p.300). It was important, therefore, to try and combat active and passive homosexuality and masturbation as pathological sexual deviations; reproduction needed to be preceded by an education that would inculcate the responsibility to procreate as a supreme value, so that the engendering of offspring was not left to chance or misfortune, but rather the result of conscious love and of behavior intelligently controlled by both partners, so that they would not give birth to "a neglected and unhappy child, the son of a vegetative manifestation of sexual hunger, with biological, social, economic and moral flaws" (Argentina, 1950, p.83). It was clear that, from this perspective, sex was "meant to serve the perpetuation of the species" (Domenech, 1958, p.232).

Eugenic education needed to concentrate, among other things, on counteracting the predisposition of those with parents or grandparents who were "sexually congested" or "chronically aroused," since their environment would provide direct stimuli that would act on their ancestral perversion. Parents played a crucial role as educators, as did the environment, examples, customs, the force of traditions, the quality of social relationships, physiological habits, food, toxins, prostitution and fashion, fancy tea-rooms, movies, television, radio, the theatre and magazines, which amplified unhealthy advertisements (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1960a, p.89).

The Argentine Eugenics Society also affirmed the need for chastity and sexual continence and exalted eugenic marriage, procreation, the family and order, rejecting what it called homosexual "sexopathy" (El homosexualismo..., 1967, p.251). This proclamation was backed up later in the society's main publication, the journal *Estudios Eugenésicos*, by critiques of an American clergyman who was proposing inclusive treatment of homosexuals (Otra vez.., 1968).

Argentine eugenics' homophobic (or rather heterophobic) stance continued to construct a mythical archetype of respect for a type of order like the one messianically proclaimed by Juan Carlos Onganía, leader of the Argentine Revolution, who seized power in 1966. The ideological affinity between the Argentine Eugenics Society and the Onganía dictatorship was glaringly obvious. It was seen in the legal regime of family allowances, which, it claimed, put eugenic theory into practice (La política..., 1969). Along these same lines, the de facto government set out to consolidate the "spiritual and moral values of the Argentine people" in order to strengthen the "spiritual tradition inspired by the ideals of human liberty and dignity" and the heritage of "western Christian" civilization, which was struggling to maintain the "lifestyle and great moral goals" that made up the "essence of nationality" (Objetivos..., 1967).

Monogamy and the indissolubility of marriage between eugenically fit partners

Given the social changes that occurred after the Second World War, the model of indissoluble monogamous marriage started to evolve to include more normative views both about fitness for marriage and about who should marry whom. Thus, premarital counseling

of engaged couples by a doctor or confessor combined legal and political discourses about the status of lawful marriage with Latin eugenics, which was based on the provisions of the encyclical on Chaste Wedlock (*Casti connubii*), issued by Pope Pius XI in December 1930. Premarital counseling operated from then on as a means of social control for preventing the procreation of "degenerates," by discouraging eugenically unfit people from marrying. The Argentine Association of Biotypology, Eugenics and Social Medicine argued that it was essential for the "individual to be conscious of his or her own value as reproducer of the species" (Rossi, 1944, p.155), which reinforced the legitimacy of its proposal for "eugenic selection" of future marital partners (p.132). Based on these "select" unions, and only these, various populationist measures would be enacted in an attempt to "elevate as much as possible the fertility of healthy stock with intense demographic propaganda" (p.121).

Benjamín Spota (1947, p.306), for example, proposed making an official eugenic registry listing various physical, psychological and social qualities of residents, so as to make certain couples understand the "inadvisability of mating" given their dysgenetic qualities, or the danger of recessive traits resurfacing. Bernaldo de Quirós (1957b, p.128), meanwhile, objected to the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, which he considered a soulless, theoretical document devoid of eugenic principles, since it did not include among "fundamental rights" neither the right to "conscious, informed and eugenically responsible choice" of a marriage partner nor the right to "eugenic birth of a child" as a direct consequence of "eugenic breeding."

"Undesirable" unions, which Quirós attributed to a "failed system for human family training" (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1957b, p.73), should be resisted by creating schools for human training offering courses on eugenic human organization. Quirosian eugenics was based on the principle that all human life is dependent on both sexes being healthy, free, educated, aware and responsible about their genetic function; and on the importance of accepting and encouraging those with a healthy biotype to make a conscious, responsible choice of a future mate with similar characteristics. This required training young people, active involvement by schools (both public and private) and intelligent collaboration between institutions founded for the purpose. Only thus it would be possible to counteract "irresponsible and uncivil love, children born out of wedlock, the result of chance and dysgenic coupling, debauchery in all its forms, the selfish interest in contraception, and monotechnophilia, or only children (Bernaldo de Quirós, s.f., p.333-334).

Even in the 1970s, Quirós insisted on the need to prepare future spouses, fathers and mothers for marriage. He came up with a particular set of precepts that he called the "Premarital Ten Commandments" and the "Preconception Ten Commandments." Among the curious rules he devised is the requirement that both the man and the woman be certified as eugenically fit for marriage. He also took financial and family factors into consideration, and suggested that for a marriage to be successful it was vital for future spouses to get to know each other well. He stresses that neither partner should have "moral failings," be "socially disreputable" or display "bad conduct" (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1972, p.135-137).

Among the factors Quirós considered favorable in marriage were physical, physiological, psychological and moral fitness, kindness, knowing and understanding one another,

the ability to be cordial and tolerant, having a vocation for married life, child-rearing and the family, helpfulness, cohabitation, faithfulness, rigid gender separation of tasks, maturity, seriousness and balance (which, according to Quirós, were acquired by the bride at 22 or 23 and the groom at 25 or 27), a matching sense of the meaning and goals of life, "homogeneous" education and religiosity, and "equal" or "compensatory" social and economic status. He saw as unfavorable, however, "instincts" prevailing over humanogogic training, seeing marriage as an end (and not a means) for self-perpetuation and perfection; basing it on a "myth" like innocence, the "personality," family or influence; moral fatigue, repression or tension in one or both parties; a marked tendency to criticize and belittle the other person, cruel and unjustified authoritarianism, verbal or physical abuse or aggressiveness, a lack of tolerance and love, laziness or apathy in one partner that impacted the other morally or materially; an excessive work ethic in one partner that compromised or prevented normal life and the performance of other duties; or if one person's vices made a life together impossible (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1972, p.124-125).

Thus premarital counseling, which was set up to complement the mandatory medical certificate legally required in the country since the 1930s for men and extended to women in the 1960s, sought to detect the partners' ability to live together and reproduce eugenically. Marriage was framed as irrevocable and indissoluble, and its emotional stability was thought to lie in a body and psyche that allowed the subject to fulfil in a satisfactory way his or her main social function, that of reproduction.¹⁰

However, one significant issue remained unresolved. In effect, the scientific framework used to stress the biological need to preserve the traditional family structure harbored a substantial flaw: the latent contradiction between Latin eugenic theories (whose Catholic pedigree, as we saw earlier, led them to support the indissolubility of marriage) and the chance of acquiring a dysgenic disease within a valid union. We should bear in mind that the church had been opposing divorce for a long time, as seen in a text published in 1932 by the Catholic politician Arturo Bas (1932, p.248), who called on his readers to rally to a "crusade of Argentinity, putting all your resources against passing a divorce law in the country," since he considered it would destroy the "fundamental bases of our society: family and property."¹¹

There was an attempt to overcome this clash between eugenic theory and ecclesiastic doctrine via the legal measure of "separation for eugenic reasons." This social control mechanism was presented as a public health measure; it authorized non-compliance with the rights-obligations of conjugal duty and cohabitation, and allowed the state to intervene in the private sphere. To be set in motion, it was envisaged that a spouse might be found to have a potentially dysgenic disease, which, had it manifested earlier, would have prevented the wedding; this would oblige the state to intervene. Rather than blatantly contradicting the church's position, this was in line with statements by Cardenal Gomá in Spain (1943, p.198), who also proposed as a cause of temporary divorce "grave dangers to the soul or body," including "a contagious disease like leprosy."

This approach can to be used to interpret the position of the Argentine jurist Enrique Díaz de Guijarro (1944, p.19-28), in the First Peruvian Conference on Eugenics (Primera Jornada Peruana de Eugenesia) (Lima, 1939). He suggested making divorce legal when a

chronic, contagious or hereditary disease was revealed or acquired, and reiterated this position in the Second Peruvian Conference on Eugenics (Segunda Jornada Peruana de Eugenesia) (Lima, 1943) and in the Second National Conference of Law Faculties (Segundo Congreso Nacional de Facultades de Derecho) (Potosí, 1940).

Similarly, one of the legal bills presented by the Argentine Eugenics Society in 1949 established as cause for divorce (obviously with no dissolution of the marital relationship, or ability to re-marry) the "revelation, acquisition or transmission of venereal diseases, leprosy and alcoholism" (Argentina, 1950, p.41). These ideas were emphasized by the Eugenics Society, which encouraged the "temporary separation of the spouses" until a definitive cure or "until the risk of contagion" was gone, even recommending "eugenic abortion" in cases where "before separation took place," the woman had become pregnant and the "health of the future being" was in danger (Colombo, 1949, p.921). The Eugenics Society also insisted on separation or mandatory isolation for married people if one contracted a disease that would have constituted a eugenic impediment to marriage (Colombo, 1956b, p.699).

However, late eugenic proposals required a great deal of publicity. As well as insuring abundant coverage on the radio and television and public billboards, the Argentine Eugenics Society held various events (Vallejo, 2009; Vallejo, Miranda, 2005), among them a course taught by Quirós in 1968 promoting eugenics in marriage and the family (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1968b). This allowed him to expound his ideas on the subject of (eugenic) matrimony as the unavoidable basis for creating a family (also on eugenic principles). In the course, Quirós, the founder of the Eugenics Society, openly described the criticism he had been leveling against a project to create Family Tribunals. He argued that judges on family tribunals, legal advisors and practicing attorneys should all be trained in the School of Eugenics, which was under the aegis of the Argentine Social Museum (Museo Social Argentino) (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1966, p.176).

Woman as "motherwife" (only)

Late eugenicists in Argentina believed that the institution of the family urgently needed to strengthen the role of women, which they saw as only that of "motherwife," in the context of a matrimonial union (either real or potential) that would last "until death do [them] part" (Miranda, 2014). However, to explain the persistence of certain model characteristics that were being called into question in society by that time, we need to remember, once again, the role of various traditional actors in the biopolitical sphere, and also the symbolic capital of a medico-legal discourse based on legislation that offered a discretional demarcation of what was legitimate and illegitimate. Within that setting, rigid, hierarchical, differentiated gender roles involved the imposition in scientific guise of behaviors compatible with the sexual morality being upheld.

The paradigmatic fissures presented by those archaic imperatives grew exponentially after hormonal contraception for women became available with the advent of what became known as "the pill,"¹³ and the growth of recognition for the sexual and reproductive rights of women (Gutiérrez, 2009). During the time-period analyzed here, despite the fact that

the hermetic conception of gender roles was starting to weaken as the image of female sexuality was disconnected from the reproductive process, the growing local late eugenics movement re-evaluated the central role of the environmental variable, claiming it had significant effects both on individuals and groups.

The centrality of the environment was addressed by calls for mandatory sex education with eugenic objectives.¹⁴ This offered various strategies for training people to "safeguard the home, boost the prestige of the family and prepare young people for their ultimate genetic role in matrimony; and to fight against immorality and vice" (Argentina, 1950, p.81-84).

Premarital chastity was also considered a supreme value and the prolific child-bearing encouraged in the eugenic model of marriage was paralleled by exaltation of the virtues of pre-marital sexual abstinence. Late eugenicists argued that public regulations should safeguard "habits of moral and environmental health" in young people, for whom chastity would yield great benefits, including biological advantages in terms of "the semen stored in the vesicles" (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1960a, p.97-98). These ideas were accompanied by a drive to raise the birthrate, couched in a discourse that tended to impose a sexual morality, an obvious "patriotic task" to populate the country. There was a great deal of eugenic literature along these lines, aimed at fighting contraception for women, which it described as "pregenocidal" (Nasio, 1966, p.213). In response to publicity about contraceptive methods and the exercise of reproductive freedom, late eugenics insisted on the role of the "housewife" or "respectable woman," who was seen only as a mother, and whose pre-established destiny was to be confined to the home or to activities seen as women's work. These included early childhood education, nursing or social work (Miranda, Bargas, 2011), thus reinforcing the recommended female subalternity from childhood on (Seoane, 2006). Women's lives were to be limited to their function as "producers" of citizens and to obeying their masculine counterparts in marriage on issues such as sexual pleasure, the availability of their own bodies, and decision-making around procreation. Thus, late eugenicists underlined the physical and psychological differences they claimed existed between women and men (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1960b, p.319).

Although late eugenicists admitted that women enjoyed the same rights as men, they also noted that in women's free time – which they calculated to be a third of the day – a woman was "mentally occupied by dabbling in fashion, street life, movies and sports," thereby "withering" her "eugenic biology and moral co-leadership of the people" (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1960b, p.321).

This framework matched the ideas of Alfredo Saavedra, who founded the Mexican Eugenics Society (Sociedad Eugénica Mexicana) in 1931, and who maintained close ties to Argentine eugenicists such as Carlos Bernaldo de Quirós, Enrique Díaz de Guijarro, Alfredo Fernández Verano and Lázaro Sirlin. Saavedra writes that his institution did "educational work based on the moral concept of procreational responsibility," claiming that they had achieved "a climate of health and moral cleanliness by constantly influencing the minds of parents, especially of Mexican women, doctors, teachers, educators, nurses and social workers, on thousands of occasions" (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1957a, p.156). The Mexican Eugenics Society remained influential in Mexico until the 1960s (Suárez y López Guazo, 1999, 2005, p.114-115; Stern, 2003), and it was in contact with its Argentine counterpart.

This is shown in a letter by Saavedra that was reprinted on a full page of the journal of the Argentine Eugenics Society. In it, Saavedra deals with a topic that was crucial to Latin eugenic theory: marriage. His "Eugenic letter to a daughter getting married" can also be seen as an example of the conceptual viscosity of eugenics (Miranda, 2013). In fact, the word "eugenics" contains a reference to the future, implied in the reproductive process that, by definition, should be managed by the powerful. It can be inferred, then, that the legimitizing power of eugenics was so significant that it was invoked in situations not related to procreation, whether present or future, as the letter demonstrates. In it, a loving father (perhaps Saavedra himself?) writes a supposedly "eugenic" missive to his daughter that skips predictable advice on reproduction to concentrate rather on endorsing outdated gender roles (Saavedra, 1967).

Two years later, the same late eugenics journal in Argentina republished an exhortation to "(intelligent) young women," also written by Saavedra, listing the precautions to be taken by girls old enough to be courting (Sociedad..., 1969). The advice doled out by Saavedra and subsequently reprinted and promoted by Argentine eugenicists reveal his curious responses to the (concerning) fact that some women were remaining single, a state of affairs he attributed to startling factors, from being too pretty, proud, flirtatious, meek or clingy to "because the mother-in-law praises them or the mother-in-law scares them off;" while other women managed to get married because they knew how to inspire hope as well as respect, could intuit their suitors' preferences, spoke little and said a great deal (Saavedra, 1970).

These and other gender commands, endorsed for eugenic reasons, were taken up again in an article published by Quirós in 1967, in which he told wives to refrain from working outside the home in all but a few circumstances. His proposal is based on the inadvisability of any physical, psychic, spiritual or moral separation between spouses; the wife, therefore, should not be "ordered about by third parties, not take an interest in anything outside her home" (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1967).

Final considerations

During the Cold War years, fears of a future expansion of communism in the West heightened the Catholic church's concerns about the breakdown of the family, for which it blamed liberalism and totalitarianism. Foreseeing a weakening of the traditional family structure due to dangers inherent in the growing disassociation of sexuality from reproduction that would come with the contraceptive revolution (Segalen, 2013), in 1949 – the same year when Bernaldo de Quirós presented his eugenics bills – the organization Argentine Catholic Action (Acción Católica Argentina) held the Fourth National Week for Social Studies (Cuarta Semana Nacional de Estudios Sociales), with the suggestive topic of "Social restoration of the Argentine family" (Valsecchi et al., 1950).

The reflections aired in the conference show the underlying link between the church's command to have a family and Latin eugenics; however, the speakers rejected "homiculture or the cultivation of mankind as totally unreconcilable with human dignity" (Casiello, 1950, p.86). If we remember that homiculture was promoted in the USA in order to

establish mechanisms for controlling immigration using genetic and somatic data (Álvarez Peláez, García González, 1999), it might well have been read from a Latin perspective as belonging to the Anglo-Saxon branch of eugenics. To counter this, Argentine Catholic Action insisted on a kind of voluntary eugenics, which required eugenic education for optimal implementation (Casiello, 1950, p.87).

The opposition to binding divorce and to equal legal status for legitimate and illegitimate children constituted other fundamental pillars in the argument for preventing a crisis in the Argentine family. Meanwhile, another direct invention in the family was being advocated. Upholding an ideal model based on Christian values, it encouraged family members to avoid looming hypothetical moral degradation. In 1951, the Episcopate founded two lay organizations, the Fathers' League (Liga de Padres) and the Mothers' League (Liga de Madres) (Vázquez Lorda, 2012), whose activities and goals matched those of Argentine late eugenics, which had undergone an irreversible shift towards symbiosis with Catholicism.

Thus, as the twentieth century advanced, the principles upheld by Argentine eugenics increasingly merged with Catholic doctrine; the prototype of a eugenic family became indistinguishable from the religious family. A perfect example of this can be found in the topics covered during the three successive Conferences on Comprehensive Eugenics (Jornadas Sobre Eugenesia Integral), held between 1955 and 1970 by the Argentine Eugenics Society under Bernaldo de Quirós. They were attended by well-known eugenicists from Argentina and abroad. Among the different topics dealt with at the First Conference, in November 1955, priority was given to discussions of the relationship between eugenics and religion. Theodolindo Castiglione, from Brazil, argued that while eugenics did not have the same goals as religion, it encouraged the development of a religious mind, because, he claimed, physical, intellectual and moral improvement was the best way to bring human beings closer to God. The Argentine speaker Mercedes Rodríguez de Ginocchio agreed that the "scientific" concerns of Argentine eugenics shared a common basis with various religions, especially Christianity. Endorsing these ideas, her compatriot Gerardo Ruiz Moreno stressed the close contact between comprehensive positive eugenics and Catholic doctrine in Argentina. He declared that in the future, "moralists will bear in mind, when referring to eugenics, that ours is completely against any negative procedures (be they euthanasia, sterilization, abortion etc.);" the concept of eugenics adopted by the Argentine Eugenics Society in 1945 was presented as the antithesis of the kind "condemned as negative by the church" (Colombo, 1956a, p.95).

A few years later, in July 1961, the Second Conference was held. One of the topics covered was the creation of premarital parenting schools to provide future spouses with a solid training in eugenics. Classes would be taught by humanist counselors who had graduated from the School of Eugenics (Segundas Jornadas..., 1961).

On a practical level, the Eugenics Society under Bernaldo de Quirós called for official intervention against the miniskirt (La contra-audacia..., 1969, p.20); the Church also inveighed against it in the pages of *Criterio* (Fevre, 1968). Seeing a need to carry out a public "moralization" campaign for citizens, the Eugenics Society adopted the goals of the Human Behavior League (Liga Pro Comportamiento Humano) founded in 1960 by Francisco Antonio Rizzutto. Argentine late eugenics sought to rid the mass media of

"improper language, harmful irony, aggressive judgments and low-quality humor" as well as suggestive images and phrases in commercial advertising (Por el..., 1968).

Eugenics and ecclesiastic doctrine became more closely allied in the late 1960s. *Estudios Eugenésicos* stressed that any use of artificial birth control was forbidden, as proclaimed in the encyclical written by Pope Paul VI (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1968a).

In August 1970, the Third Conference on Comprehensive Eugenic Humanism (Tercera Jornada de Humanismo Eugenésico Integral) advocated vehemently, and in vain, for a return to the "patriotic" duty of restoring the family. The conference was the last major one to be held by the Argentine Eugenics Society, the emblematic institution of late eugenics in Argentina. Among the participants was Paul Popenoe, who spoke about the problems associated with changes in the family (Tercera Jornada..., 1971).¹⁵

Thus, local late eugenic ideology merged with that of various power and advocacy groups in the country in the closing decades of the twentieth century. There are well-known affinities and intertextualities between the Argentine Eugenics Society and the Argentine Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property (Sociedad Argentina de Defensa de la Tradición, Familia y Propiedad), a far-right group founded in 1967. 16 This anticommunist organization grew up in Argentina thanks to a group of people who began publishing the magazine Cruzada (Crusade) in 1956, under the editorship of Cosme Beccar Varela (junior) (Scirica, 2014). Its supporters hosted the founder of the international movement, Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, from Brazil, when he visited Argentina in 1964 to give a series of lectures sponsored by the Argentine Federation of Democratic Anticommunist Entities (Federación Argentina de Entidades Democráticas Anticomunistas, known as FAEDA) (TFP-Argentina, 1990, p.8). It is worth noting that during the period under analysis here, Francisco Antonio Rizzutto (junior) was both the vice-president of FAEDA and at the same time president of the League for Human Behavior (which was so closely aligned with Quirós's views). The League for Human Behavior was founded by Rizzutto's father, who died in 1965 (Bohoslavsky, 2015).

The focus on attaining certain goals allows us to locate preconsiliar discourse and active anticommunism on the same continuum of ideas as late eugenic doctrine, which, as we have seen, was moving away from its initial liberal bent and concentrating more on imposing a particular Catholic form of morality on the whole population. In 1971, Beccar Varela agreed with statements being made by Bernaldo de Quirós, who described hot pants as immoral; he likewise stressed the indissolubility of monogamous marriage and the role of women as ineluctably tied to the home (Los rugidos..., 14 jun. 1971).

Thus, thanks to the Argentine Eugenics Society, and with the support (whether requested or not) of extremely reactionary organizations, the local late eugenics movement became a vehicle for publicizing eugenic principles from a Catholic perspective, aimed at embodying a heteronormative, monogamous, permanent prototype of the family, with clear separation and hierarchization of roles, and exclusively dedicated to procreation. These assumptions lingered even after the society itself died out, since they were useful to the biopolitical mandate of constituting a "Western Christian" family. It is worth pointing out that the residual effects of eugenics' cultural connections to the local elites outlasted the institutional life of the society founded by Quirós, and permitted the military regime that seized power

in 1976 to institute a policy of extermination that was inherently racialist with a eugenic slant (Miranda, 2015). This fact clearly rules out any characterization of Latin late eugenics as a milder version of Galton's thesis.

NOTES

- ¹ For examples, see the cases discussed in Bashford, Levine (2010).
- ² His real name was Edoardo, but he changed it to Agostino (in honor of Saint Augustine) when he took his vows as a Franciscan friar. On Gemelli, see the following texts: Comacini (2005), Bocci (2005) and Foschi, Giannone, Fiuliani (2013). A recent article relativizes Gemelli's support for fascism, claiming that his main goal was to "protect the interests of the Vatican" (Pasqualini, 2016).
- ³ On this topic, see: Vallejo, Miranda (2014a, 2014b).
- ⁴ Carlos Hermenegildo Bernaldo de Quirós y Ferreyra was born in Gualeguay (Province of Entre Ríos) in 1895 and died in Buenos Aires in 1973. He was a criminal trials judge in the city of La Rioja and magistrate on the Supreme Court of Justice for the province; legal advisor to the Banco Hipotecario Nacional, founding member of the Argentine Association of Biotypology, Eugencis and Social Medicine; on the advisory board of the Argentine Social Museum and numerary member of the Buenos Aires Academy of Science, the Bolivian Eugenics Society and the Mexican Eugenics Society.
- ⁵ On the characteristics of family in the West, especially from the eighteenth century on, one work must be mentioned: Donzelot (1977).
- ⁶ See the bills presented by the Argentine Eugenics Society and the rationale for them in: Argentina (1950).
- ⁷ On Vallejo Nágera, see: Huertas (2002, 2012). For a discussion of the role of heredity/environment in the Spanish-speaking world, see: Cleminson (2008) and Cleminson, Vázquez García (2007).
- ⁸ The concept of individuals' procreational responsibility in Spain to prevent venereal diseases and the eugenic component has been discussed in: Castejón Bolea (2011).
- ⁹ Spota continued to play a role in the field of eugenics in Argentina for some time. He reaffirmed his conservative position on the family and sexuality well into the 1960s, when delivering a eulogy on Bernaldo de Quirós (Discurso..., 1966).
- ¹⁰ For a study of this perspective as regards Spain, see: Pérez López (1993, p.458).
- ¹¹ This book contains a prologue by Gustavo Martínez Zubiría, a well-known anti-Semitic writer.
- ¹² Concept taken from: Lagarde y de los Ríos (2005).
- ¹³ On this topic, see: McLaren (1993), and, for Argentina: Felitti (2012); Cosse, Felitti, Manzano (2010). For Spain, see the following recent book: Ignaciuk, Ortíz Gómez (2016).
- ¹⁴ Comprehensive Eugenics was presented as environmentally-focused and an improvement on Galton's thesis (Bernaldo de Quirós, 1957b, p.37).
- ¹⁵ Paul Popenoe was an American biologist (1888-1979) who subscribed to Anglo-Saxon eugenics and defended sterilization policies. Later in the twentieth century, he turned to marital counseling and his worked was referred to by Argentine eugenicists.
- ¹⁶ The first branch of this society was founded in Brazil in 1960. It then spread to Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela.

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