

8. The Nazi Connection

Eugenics is not a panacea that will cure human ills, it is rather a dangerous sword that may turn its edge against those who rely on its strength.

Franz Boas

When Francis Galton founded the eugenics movement, he hoped that his new branch of scientific inquiry would someday become an international movement. By the early 1900s his dream was becoming a reality. There were now eugenicists in nations around the world. The movement was particularly popular in the United States and Germany.

Many Americans were intrigued at the notion of a “panacea that will cure human ills.” They found it all too easy to believe that scientists and politicians could work together to solve social problems by mandating racial segregation, sterilizing the “feebleminded,” and closing the nation’s borders to “inferior hordes of degenerate peoples.” After all, they reasoned, such laws were supported by research and endorsed by scholars at leading universities. Critics of eugenics were mostly ignored, as the nation led the world in eugenics research.

Although Germans were also flattered at the idea of belonging to a “superior race,” few expressed interest in the movement until after World War I. Bitter and angry at the nation’s losses, many looked for someone to blame. Some turned against “the Jews” and other “racial enemies.” Others directed their anger toward the “useless eaters” who stayed at home while the nation’s finest young men were murdered on the battlefields. In their efforts to protect the “race” by “breeding the best with the best,” these Germans found inspiration and encouragement in the eugenics movement. By the 1920s German and Americans eugenicists were working side by side on a variety of research projects.

Eugenics also influenced the thinking of political leaders in both nations. Throughout the early 1900s eugenics had the support of American presidents and lawmakers. In Germany, it was central to the programs advocated by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party. When Hitler came to power in 1933, he used eugenic principles to build a “racial state.” Ironically, he applied those principles to German life at a time when scientific discoveries were undercutting both eugenics and racism. Jacob Landsman, an American critic of eugenics, summarized the new insights in the mid-1930s:

It is not true that boiler washers, engine hostlers, miners, janitors, and garbage men, who have large families, are necessarily idiots and morons. . . . It is not true that celebrated individuals

necessarily beget celebrated offspring . . . [or] that idiotic individuals necessarily beget idiotic children. . . . It is not true that, because the color of guinea pigs is transmissible in accordance with the Mendelian theory, therefore human mental traits must also be. . . . It is not true that, by any known scientific test, there is a Nordic race or that the so-called Nordic race is superior to any other race.¹

Landsman might have added that it is also not true that sterilizing the “unfit” will end or even reduce social problems. Yet most people in the United States and Germany were unaware that Landsman and a number of other scientists no longer considered eugenics “scientific.” Although eugenicists were eager to share their views and influence legislation and social policy, few other scientists were willing to speak out on the issues of the day. Their silence had real consequences.

This chapter raises important questions about the relationship between science and society at a time when Hitler was determined to annihilate Jews and other “racial enemies.” In reflecting on that relationship in 1939, U.S. Vice President Henry Wallace asked: “Under what conditions will the scientist deny the truth and pervert his science to serve the slogans of tyranny? Under what conditions are great numbers of men willing to surrender all hope of individual freedom and become ciphers of the State? How can these conditions be prevented from occurring in our country?” Many of the readings in this chapter explore the ways scientists, political leaders, and ordinary citizens answered those questions in the 1930s and 1940s.

¹ Quoted in *In the Name of Eugenics* by Daniel J. Kevles. Harvard University Press, 1985, 1995, p. 164.

Eugenicists, Democrats, and Dictators

Reading 1

The early 1900s were years of unrest throughout the world. Economic dislocations, global war, fears of an international Communist revolution, and by the early 1930s, a worldwide depression threatened stability everywhere. With uncertainty came doubts. Convinced that democracy had failed, some turned to communism. Others were attracted to fascism. Fascists insisted that democracy puts “selfish individual interests” before the needs of the nation. They placed their faith in a leader who stood above politics.

In 1922, Benito Mussolini established the world’s first fascist government in Italy. It would later serve as a model for the one Adolf Hitler set up in Germany. In both nations, the word of the leader or *führer* was law. He was a dictator—a leader who was not dependent on a legislature, courts, or voters. According to Hitler, a *führer* or a *duce* (in Italian) is a leader “in whose name everything is done, who is said to be ‘responsible’ for all, but whose acts can nowhere be called into question,” because “he is the genius or the hero conceived as the man of pure race.”

Both Mussolini and Hitler maintained that only a few men are intelligent enough to rise in the world and that those men have an obligation to rule. In their view, decision making was too important to be left to the people. These ideas were attractive to a number of eugenicists. Throughout the 1920s, many of them traveled to Rome to meet with Mussolini. At one meeting in 1929, Charles Davenport, then president of the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations, and Eugen Fischer, a noted German eugenicist at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics, honored Mussolini. Davenport explained why they did so:

The gravest concern of all eugenicists today is the preservation of human quality. It is a possibility! And in view of the tremendous importance for the future of every nation of this objective, no economic sacrifice can be too great. The sacrifices, however, would not be so very considerable. Here it is only possible to suggest how suitable measures in the sphere of property and income tax, and yet more certainly the inheritance tax can be brought to bear on maintaining families of talent in every social stratum. Such measures, however, should be fitted to the social position of the family, and favor those who have arrived at high position, and require to be so graded to the social rank attained that the best receive the greatest acknowledgement. Such suggestions may seem to sound an anti-social and

anti-democratic note. It must, therefore, be borne in mind that each stratum in turn supplies its quota of those favored individuals who have attained social distinction, and the protection and advantages have to do with the family rather than with the individual—the family giving to the State children from amongst whom future leaders can be chosen. Thus every such attempt is in the truest sense of the word one which concerns “res publica”—in the highest sense democratic. Such administrative and legislative means are without doubt at hand, and can for each country be formulated by those forces in eugenics, in such a way that the legislators can make use of them.¹

CONNECTIONS

Based on what you know about eugenics, why do you think Davenport views a “fall in the birth rate of the upper classes” as “catastrophic”?

Davenport describes himself and his colleagues as “men of science.” How does he seem to view their role in society? In Chapter 7, physicist Leon Lederman was quoted as saying, “We [scientists] give you a powerful engine. You steer the ship.” With what parts of that statement might Davenport agree? How does he define the role of a citizen? Who does he believe should “steer the ship”?

According to Davenport, which of his ideas sound “anti-social” and “anti-democratic”? How does he defend those ideas? What does his defense suggest about the way he views democracy? The way he regards the relationship between science and society? To what extent does his defense explain why he was so eager to win over a dictator like Mussolini?

Just five years before Charles Davenport’s meeting with Mussolini, he and other eugenicists persuaded Congress to strictly limit the number of Italians who could settle in the United States. Why then would Davenport single out Mussolini for praise as a “statesman”?

Draw a diagram showing how power is divided in a democracy. Who holds the power to make laws? Enforce laws? The power to interpret the law? What role do ordinary citizens play? Draw a similar diagram showing the division of power in a fascist state. What role do ordinary citizens play? What part do leaders play? How well does either diagram square with reality?

¹ Quoted in *The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Costs of the New Scientific Racism* by Allan Chase. Alfred A. Knopf, 1977, pp. 346-347.

The American Influence

Reading 2

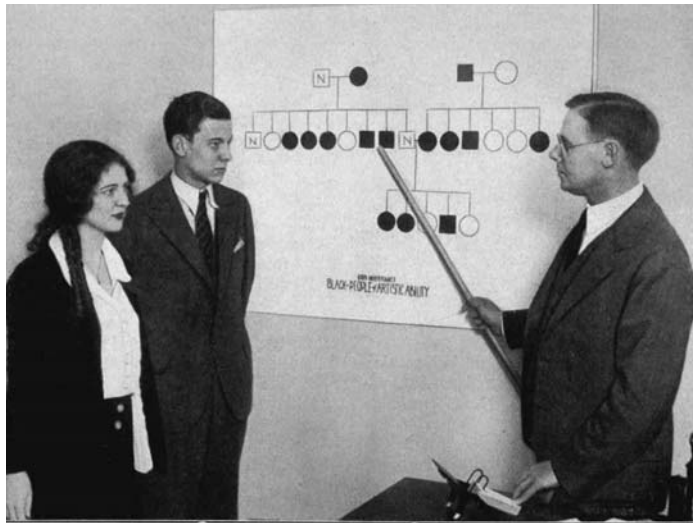
Eugenicists held their first international conference in London in 1912. It was an appropriate place for a meeting devoted to “race improvement.” After all, Britain was the home of Francis Galton and the place where the eugenics movement began. Yet it was the Americans, not the British, who took center stage at the conference.

Delegates from other nations were impressed by the gains the United States had made in “protecting the race.” Between 1907 and 1912, eight states had passed laws authorizing or requiring the sterilization of “certain classes of defectives and degenerates” and several others were considering similar legislation. American eugenicists also boasted of financial backing from private foundations and public agencies. Not surprisingly, in the years that followed the convention, Americans took over the leadership of the International Congress of Eugenics. The first president was an Englishman—Leonard Darwin, the son of Charles Darwin and a cousin of Francis Galton. The group’s second and third presidents were Americans—Henry F. Osborn and Charles Davenport.

Even before the meeting, many European eugenicists were closely following events in the United States. The Germans were particularly interested in the American experience. In Germany, eugenics was known as “racial hygiene.” Alfred Ploetz, the founder of the movement, was a physician who believed that governments were allowing “the least fit” in society to survive at the expense of the “fittest.” To address the problem, he advocated a new kind of hygiene—one that promoted the health not only of the individual but also of the “race.”

Throughout the early 1900s, Ploetz and his followers organized meetings dedicated to “race improvement,” published journals that promoted eugenics, and built formal and informal relationships with like-minded scholars at home and abroad. In 1905, they founded the Society for Racial Hygiene. A few years after the first international conference in London, the Berlin branch of the society distributed a brochure lauding “the dedication with which Americans sponsor research in the field of racial hygiene and with which they translate theoretical knowledge into practice.” The document also praised the nation’s “fantastic” control of immigration through restrictive laws and applauded the American states that had statutes designed to keep “inferior families” from having children. The brochure ended with a question: “Can we have any doubts that the Americans will reach their aim—the stabilization and improvement of the strength of the people?”¹ The unspoken question was: Would Germans do the same?

Géza von Hoffman, an Austrian diplomat based in California in the early 1900s, provided the society with much of its information about the American eugenics movement. During his stay in the United States, he wrote numerous articles and, in 1913, a book on the topic. He was not the only German to look to the United States for lessons on applying eugenics to public policy. In the early 1900s, German medical authorities gathered information about state laws that banned marriages if one partner was alcoholic, “feebleminded,” insane, or suffered from such diseases as tuberculosis or syphilis. The Reich Health Office even kept a special file on such laws. As more states passed “eugenic laws,” the file grew. So did the number of Germans who visited the United States to observe “eugenics in action” and the number of books by American eugenicists that were translated into the German language.



California eugenicist Paul Popenoe explains a pedigree chart, 1930.

By the time World War I began in 1914, Americans had established their leadership in the eugenics movement and laid the foundation for international cooperation. After the war ended, eugenicists on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean were eager to reestablish old ties and forge new links. The war had convinced many Germans of the importance of “racial hygiene.” They feared that the nation had lost its best young men on the battlefield while the “unfit” were protected at home. In Germany, medical care was under government control. Therefore the taxpayers provided the money for the care of the physically and mentally disabled. The economic crises of the 1920s and 1930s in Germany added to many people’s sense of outrage. These Germans insisted that the cost of supporting the “unfit” was a growing burden on the entire nation.

American eugenicists encouraged Germany's interest in finding "biological" solutions to the nation's problems. Charles Davenport led the effort by working to reintegrate the Germans into the international eugenics movement despite resistance from many of Germany's opponents in World War I. At the same time, he promoted joint research with his German counterparts on a variety of projects.

CONNECTIONS

The word *hygiene* refers to practices and conditions that promote health. What then is *racial hygiene*? What words or phrases come to mind when you think of "good hygiene"? "Poor hygiene"? How do you think having a physician like Ploetz link eugenic ideas to health, cleanliness, and physical well-being shaped public opinion about the disabled, the mentally ill, and other "misfits"?

Scholarly organizations play an important part in shaping public opinion. How did such groups encourage the spread of eugenic ideas?

How do you think the labeling of groups as "inferior" or a "burden" on society may have shaped the way individuals saw themselves as "others"? What effect might that kind of labeling have on the way Germans defined their "universe of obligation"?

How were the efforts of the German and American eugenicists to "protect the race" similar? What differences seem most striking?

1. *The Nazi Connection* by Stefan Kuhl. Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 15-16.

“Thinking Biologically”

Reading 3

In 1921, Fritz Lenz, Eugen Fischer, and Erwin Baur published a two-volume work entitled *Outline of Human Genetics and Racial Hygiene*. Reviewers hailed the work as a “masterpiece” in the best traditions of German scholarship. Revised and updated every few years, the work shaped medical thinking in Germany and provided scientific legitimacy for Adolf Hitler’s National Socialist or Nazi party. Indeed the publisher sent Hitler a copy of the 1923 edition. He read it during the year he spent in prison for an attempted overthrow of the German government. Later, in reviewing *Mein Kampf*, Hitler’s own account of his political beliefs about German racial superiority and his dreams of building a new Germany empire, Fritz Lenz noted with pride that Hitler had borrowed many of his own ideas.

Throughout their work, the three authors acknowledge American leadership in the eugenics movement. They repeatedly cite research by such American scholars as Henry Goddard (Chapter 3), Charles Davenport (Chapter 3), Carl Brigham (Chapter 5), and Lewis Terman (Chapter 5). Lenz, in particular, insisted that there were no differences between the positions taken by American and German eugenicists. Both were “accustomed to thinking biologically.”¹ Although Germany lagged behind in the application of eugenics to public policy, he was confident that as eugenic education proceeded in Germany, eugenic laws would follow.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Lenz, Baur, Fischer, and other German eugenicists worked closely with their American counterparts, especially Charles Davenport and Harry Laughlin at the Eugenics Record Office in Cold Spring Harbor, New York, and Paul Popenoe, a leader in the American Eugenics Society in California. A topic of mutual interest was “race crossing” or miscegenation. In 1929, Davenport invited Eugen Fischer to speak on the subject at the Rome meeting of the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations (IFEEO).

Fischer had been active in the German eugenics movement since the early 1900s. Trained as an anthropologist at Freiburg University, he led a research team to what was then the German colony of Southwest Africa, now Namibia. He arrived in 1909, shortly after German soldiers had murdered



From top: Eugen Fischer, Erwin Baur, and Fritz Lenz.

about 75 percent of the Herero people—children, women, and men. Fischer had little interest in this genocide. He focused instead on the offspring of marriages between Dutch men and Herero women—the so-called “Rehoboth Bastards” despite the fact that their parents were legally married. Fischer measured their heads, took blood samples, and then compared the results to similar measurements taken from the surviving Hereros. Claiming that children of so-called “mixed marriages” were of “lesser racial quality,” he insisted that their intellectual achievements were directly related to the amount of “European blood” in their veins. In 1913, he concluded:

Without exception, every European people that has accepted blood from inferior races—and the fact that the Negroes, Hottentots and many others are inferior can be denied only by dreamers—has suffered an intellectual and cultural decline as a result of the acceptance of inferior elements.²

Fischer’s research led to his appointment as the director of a department in the newly established Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Eugenics, and Human Heredity just after the war. It had the backing of the Rockefeller Foundation of New York, which supported a number of other eugenics research institutes in Germany in the 1920s. At the official opening of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, Fischer and his colleagues invited Charles Davenport to speak. Honored by the invitation, Davenport used the occasion to promote further research on the eugenic consequences of miscegenation. In 1928, researchers at Davenport’s Eugenics Record Office in New York and the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin prepared a questionnaire for distribution to one thousand physicians, missionaries, and diplomats around the world. They hoped to gather global data on the effects of “race mixing.” Davenport and Fischer also formed a Committee on Race Crossing within the IFEO. Fritz Lenz chaired the group and urged further research on intermarriages with Jews.

Despite their scholarly achievements, German eugenicists in the 1920s encountered strong religious and social opposition whenever they tried to translate their research into public policy. After the U.S. Congress passed the 1924 National Origins Act (Chapter 7), a Bavarian health inspector wistfully noted, “German racial hygienists should learn from the United States how to restrict the influx of Jews and eastern and southern Europeans.”³ The law also won praise from Adolf Hitler who praised the act for its exclusion of “undesirables” on the basis of hereditary illness and race.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, Lenz hailed him as the first politician “of truly great import, who has taken racial hygiene as a serious element of state policy.”⁴ He and other German eugenicists saw Hitler’s rise as an opportunity to make their nation “the first in world history” to apply “the principles of race,

genetics, and selection to practical politics.” Although Lenz and others initially expressed some reservations about Hitler’s antisemitism, they actively supported the new regime. They wrote essays and books in defense of Nazi policies, took an active role in designing eugenic laws and decrees, and then helped the Nazis implement those measures. In 1938, Theodor Mollison, the director of the Anthropological Institute in Munich, defended their support for Hitler in a letter to Franz Boas, a critic of the eugenics movement in general and the Nazis in particular:

If you think that we scientists do not agree with the cry, “Heil Hitler,” then you are very much mistaken. If you would take a look at today’s Germany, you would see that progress is being made in this Third Reich, progress that never would have come to pass under the previous regime, habituated as it was to idleness and feeding the unemployed instead of giving them work. The claim that scientific thought is not free in Germany is absurd. . . . I assure you that we German scientists know well the things for which we may thank Adolf Hitler, not the least of which is the cleansing of our people from foreign racial elements, whose manner of thinking is not our own. With the exception of those few individuals with ties to Jewish or Masonic groups, we scientists support wholeheartedly the salute “Heil Hitler.”⁵

CONNECTIONS

In 1930, Carl Brigham wrote an article in which he retracted many of the conclusions he had reached in *A Study of American Intelligence*. “Comparative studies of various national and racial groups may not be made with existing tests,” he now argued. He went on to state that one of the most pretentious of these comparative racial studies—the writer’s own—was without foundation.”⁶ (page 174) Why do you think Lenz, Baur, and Fischer ignored Brigham’s retraction when they revised their book in the early 1930s? What does their action suggest about the quality of their research?

In the early 1900s, the Germans committed genocide in Southwest Africa. What does the word *genocide* mean? Record your definition in your journal so that you can revise and expand it as you continue reading.

Fischer saw firsthand the effects of the genocide in Africa. Yet he made no mention of it in his research on a related topic—intermarriages between Dutch men and Herero women. What does his silence suggest about the way he approached his work as a scientist? About the way he defined his universe of obligation?

What opportunities did German eugenicists see in Hitler's rise to power? What advantages do you think Hitler may have seen in their support? For more information, consult Chapters 4 and 5 of *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*.

Davenport worked with Fischer and Lenz long before the Nazis took power in Germany. How do you think their collaboration might have changed once Hitler consolidated his power? What opportunities do such collaborations provide? What are the risks in such collaborations?

In the 1920s, many Germans looked back on their defeat in World War I and tried to explain it away. They came to believe that Jews had betrayed the nation. Initially, antisemitism was not a large part of the German eugenics movement. Now it became a cornerstone of German eugenics.⁷ How do you account for the shift? To what extent was scientific opinion leading a social trend? To what extent was it following a social trend? What does Mollison's letter add to your understanding of the shift?

Franz Boas was a German-born anthropologist who was outspoken in his contempt for the Nazis. He was also a Jew. How do you think he responded to the letter from Mollison? To the idea that he and other Jews were "foreign racial elements" that ought to be cleansed from German society?

1. Quoted in *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* by Robert Proctor. Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 50.

2. Quoted in *The Value of the Human Being: Medicine in Germany 1918-1945* by Christian Pross and Gotz Aly. Arztekammer Berlin, 1999, p. 15.

3. *The Nazi Connection* by Stefan Kuhl. Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 26.

4. Quoted in *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* by Robert Proctor. Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 61.

5. Quoted by Robert Proctor, "From Anthropologie to Rassenkunde" in *Bones, Bodies, Behavior* edited by George W. Stocking, Jr.. University of Wisconsin, Press 1988, p. 166.

6. "Intelligence Tests of Immigrant Groups" by Carl Brigham. *Psychological Review* 37, 1930, p. 165.

7. "Eugenics Among the Social Sciences: Hereditarian Thought in Germany and the United States" by Robert Proctor in *The Estate of Social Knowledge* ed. by J. Brown and D. K. Van Keuren. John Hopkins University Press, 1991, p. 89.

Ideas Have Consequences

Reading 4

Adolf Hitler believed that “the race question” is the key to world history and world culture. He insisted that society is based on the struggle of the “lower races” against the “higher races.” Who were the “lower races”? To Hitler, the answer was clear: they were Eastern Europeans, Africans, “Gypsies,” and Jews. These ideas about the superiority of the “Aryan” or “Nordic” race were not new. They were taught in German schools and universities long before Hitler came to power. Hitler was the first, however, to take German scientists and other scholars at their word. From the start, he declared that he would protect the purity of the “Aryan” race from its “racial enemies” by turning Germany into a “racial state.” That decision affected virtually every institution in the country and eventually became part of the Nazis’ rationale for the Holocaust—the mass murder of millions of Jews, “Gypsies,” and other “inferior peoples.” The timeline below details Hitler’s efforts to build a “racial state”—step by step, law by law, decree by decree.

BUILDING A RACIAL STATE: A TIMELINE

1933

January: The Nazi party takes power in Germany. Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor.

February: Nazis “temporarily” suspend civil liberties. They were never restored.

March: The Nazis set up the first concentration camp at Dachau. The first inmates are 200 Communists.

April: The Nazis announce a one-day boycott of Jewish businesses. The Nazis enact the Civil Service Law, requiring proof of Aryan ancestry and political reliability to hold a government job.

July: The Nazis pass the “Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring,” allowing for the compulsory sterilization for “eugenic reasons” of the “feebleminded,” schizophrenics, alcoholics, and other carriers of supposedly single-gene traits.

1934

The government offers special loans to “racially sound” married men

whose wives agree to give up jobs outside the home. For each child the government forgives 25 percent of the principal owed on the loan.

August: Hitler combines the positions of chancellor and president to become Fuhrer.

November: The "Law against Dangerous Career Criminals" permits the detention and castration of sex offenders and others guilty of "racial-biological" crimes.

1935

June: The "Law for the Alteration of the Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring" sanctions compulsory abortion, up to and including the sixth month of pregnancy, for women categorized as "hereditarily ill."

September: The "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor" bars marriage and sexual relations between Aryans and Jews, "Gypsies," Africans, and their offspring.

The "Citizenship Law" distinguishes between citizens and "inhabitants." Jews and other non-Aryans are defined as "inhabitants" and deprived of citizenship rights.

October: The "Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People" requires the registration and exclusion of "alien" races and the "racially less valuable" from the "national community."

Before a marriage can take place, public health officials have to issue a "certificate of fitness to marry."

1936

March: German soldiers occupy the Rhineland, a buffer zone between Germany and France and Belgium established after World War I.

1938

January: The government withdraws the licenses of all Jewish physicians.

March: German troops annex Austria.

April: Jews are banned from almost every profession in Germany and

Austria. Jews are required to carry special papers identifying them as Jews.

November: On Kristallnacht, the night of the 10th-11th, Nazis gangs attack Jews throughout Germany and Austria, looting and then burning homes, synagogues, and businesses. They kill over 90 Jews and send over 30,000 others to concentration camps.

Jews are ordered to pay damages from the events of Kristallnacht.

Jews are barred from theaters, concerts, circuses, and other public places, including schools.

1939

March: Germany takes over Czechoslovakia

September: Germany invades Poland. World War II begins in Europe. Hitler secretly orders the systematic murder of the mentally and physically disabled in Germany and Austria.

December: Polish Jews are forced to relocate. They are also required to wear armbands or yellow stars.

1940

January: German physicians begin gassing mental patients, using carbon monoxide gas in fake showers in a psychiatric hospital near Berlin. The program is carried out under the code name T4 (the abbreviated address of the head of Hitler's "euthenasia program"). By September, over 70,000 were dead.

Spring: Approximately 30,000 people are killed at Hartheim, a mental hospital in Austria.

Nazis begin deporting German Jews to Poland.

Jews are forced into ghettos.

June: The Nazis begin gassing Jews. The first 200 are from a mental institution.

Germany conquers much of Western Europe.

1941

German psychiatrists train the SS, the Nazis' elite troops, on mass murder techniques learned from experimentation on mental patients.

The Reich Interior Minister orders the killing of Jews in German mental hospitals. Roving bands of T4 commissions select those too ill to work as well as Jews and “Gypsies” in concentration camps and send them to gas chambers at psychiatric hospitals.

June: Germany invades the Soviet Union.

Jews throughout Europe are forced into ghettos and internment camps.

Mobile killing units begin the systematic slaughter of Jews. In two days, one unit murders 33,771 Ukrainian Jews at Babi Yar—the largest single massacre of the Holocaust.

The first death camp at Chelmno in Poland begins operations.

December: After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the United States enters World War II by declaring war on both Japan and its main ally, Germany.

1942

January: At the Wannsee Conference, Nazi officials turn over the “Final Solution”—their plan to kill all European Jews—to the bureaucracy.

Five death camps begin operation in Poland: Majdanek, Sobibor, Treblinka, Belzec, and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

December: The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union acknowledge that Germans are systematically murdering the Jews of Europe.

1944

March: Hitler’s troops occupy Hungary.

June: The Germans deport 12,000 Hungarian Jews a day to Auschwitz.

1945

January: As the Soviet army pushes east, the Nazis evacuate the death camps.

May: World War II ends in Europe with Hitler’s defeat. Hitler’s racial state is dismantled. About one-third of all Europe’s Jews are dead and most of the survivors are homeless.

CONNECTIONS

Throughout the 1930s, Hitler advanced his plans to turn Germany into a racial state. When an action against an individual, group, or even a nation resulted in opposition, he quickly backed down. If he encountered little or no opposition, he was a little bolder the next time. Yet after Hitler's defeat, many people expressed surprise that he did exactly what he had promised to do. How do you account for their surprise? Why do you think they didn't try to stop him during his first years in power?

Many historians have noted that by the time many people were aware of the danger the Nazis posed, they were isolated and alone. What events on the timeline support that view? Notice the names given to the various laws included in the timeline. What do the titles reveal? What do they conceal? How might these laws be used to turn neighbor against neighbor?

Which laws listed would be particularly attractive to eugenicists in other countries? At what point do you think many of them might feel uneasy about their support for Hitler's policies? Record your ideas in your journal and review them as you examine the next few readings.

Under the Cover of Law

Reading 5

Just six months after Adolf Hitler took office, Germany enacted its first eugenic measure—the “Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring.” The *Eugenical News*, which was published by the Eugenics Record Office, proudly printed a translation of the law. It states in part:

Paragraph 1.

(1) Whoever is afflicted with a hereditary disease can be sterilized by a surgical operation, if—according to the experience of medical science—there is a great probability that his descendants will suffer from serious bodily or mental defects.

(2) Hereditary diseases under this law are 1. Hereditary feeble-mindedness, 2. Schizophrenia, 3. Manic-depressive insanity, 4. Hereditary epilepsy, 5. Huntington’s Chorea, 6. Hereditary blindness, 7. Hereditary deafness, 8. Serious hereditary bodily deformities.

(3) Furthermore those suffering from Alcoholism can be sterilized.

Paragraph 2.

(1) Petition can be made by the subject to be sterilized. If this individual is incompetent, mentally deficient or has not yet completed his eighteenth year, a legal representative has the right to make application; the consent of the court of guardianship is required. In cases of limited competency the petition has to be approved by the legal representative. If the subject is of age and in charge of a caretaker, his consent is required.

(2) The petition is to be accompanied by a certificate from a physician recognized in the German Reich, testifying that the person nominated for sterilization has been enlightened on the nature and consequence of sterilization.

(3) The petition can be withdrawn.

Paragraph 3.

Sterilization can be requested by (1) the public health physician, (2) the superintendent, for the inmates of a hospital, custodial institution or a penitentiary.

Paragraph 4.

Petition is to be in writing or recorded with the District

Eugenical Court. The facts upon which the petition is made should be supported by a medical certificate or confirmed in some other way. The district court has to notify the public health physician.

Paragraph 5.

Decision rests with the Eugenical Court of the district to which the person nominated for sterilization belongs.

Paragraph 6.

(1) The Eugenical Court is to be part of a Tribunal. It consists of a judge, acting as chairman, a public health physician and another physician approved by the German Reich and particularly versed in Eugenics. An alternate is to be appointed for each member.

(2) As chairman must be excluded: one who has decided upon a petition from the court of guardianship according to Paragraph 2, item 1. If the public health physician has made the petition, he is excluded from the decision.

Paragraph 7.

(1) The proceedings of the Eugenical Court are not public.

(2) The Eugenical Court has to make the necessary investigations. It can hear witnesses and experts and order the personal appearance as well as a medical examination of the person to be sterilized, who can be summoned in case of unexcused absence. . . . Physicians who have been questioned as witnesses or experts are obliged to testify, regardless of medical ethics. Legal authorities as well as institutions have to give information to the Eugenical Court upon request.

Paragraph 8.

The court has to decide according to its free conviction, after considering the entire results of the procedure and testimony. The decision is based upon a majority of votes after verbal consultation. The court decision should be stated in writing and signed by the members acting as judges. The reasons for ordering or suspending sterilization must be indicated. . . .

Paragraph 9.

Persons designated in Paragraph 8, sentence 7, can take an appeal from the decision within a peremptory term of one month from the date of serving such notice. This appeal has a postponing effect.

The Supreme Eugenic Court decides upon this complaint. . . .

Paragraph 10.

(1) The Supreme Eugenic Court is part of the Supreme Court of the country and comprises its district. It consists of one member of the Supreme Court, one public health physician and one additional physician, approved by the German Reich, who is especially versed in Eugenics. . . . The judgment of the Supreme Eugenic Court is final.

Paragraph 11.

(1) The surgical operation necessary for sterilization should be performed only at a hospital and by a physician approved by the German Reich. This surgeon can perform the operation only when the order for sterilization has been made final. . . .

(2) The surgeon performing the operation has to submit a written report on the sterilization with a statement regarding the applied technique to the physician in charge.

Paragraph 12.

(1) When the court has finally decided upon the sterilization, the operation has to be performed even against the will of the subject to be sterilized, insofar as he has not made the petition alone. The public health physician has to attend to the necessary measures with the police authorities. . . .

(2) When circumstances arise requiring another trial of the case, the Eugenic Court has to resume the proceedings and temporarily suspend the sterilization. If this appeal has been rejected, resumption of proceeding is admissible only if new facts that have come to light justify the sterilization.

Paragraph 13.

(1) The costs of the court proceeding should be covered by the State funds.

(2) The cost of the surgical operation should be covered by the sick fund in the case of persons insured, and by the charity organization in the case of needy persons. In other cases the costs, up to the minimum doctors' fee and the average hospital fee of public hospitals should be paid by the State funds, beyond that by the sterilized individual.

Paragraph 14.

A sterilization not carried out according to the rules of this law [is] only permissible if performed by a skilled physician and for the avoidance of a serious danger to the life or health of the person on whom and with whose consent the operation has been performed.

Paragraph 15.

(1) Persons involved in the procedure or in the performance of the surgical operation are pledged to secrecy.

(2) Whoever acts against this ethical rule of silence shall be punished with imprisonment up to one year or fined.¹

In a report on the new law funded by the Carnegie Foundations, the American Neurological Association noted: "It is fair to state that the Sterilization Act is not a product of Hitler's regime in that its main tenets were proposed and considered several years earlier before the Nazi regime took possession of Germany. There is no doubt that the Act conforms closely with present knowledge of medical eugenics."² Harry Laughlin of the Eugenics Record Office agreed. He praised the law in the *Eugenical News*:

Doubtless the legislative and court history of the experimental sterilization laws in the 27 states of the American union provided the experience which Germany used in writing her new sterilization statute. To one versed in the history of eugenical sterilization in America, the text of the German statute reads almost like the "American model sterilization law."³

Laughlin and others believed that the German law was an improvement on American sterilization laws. In the United States, sterilization laws varied from state to state and enforcement was often inconsistent. The German measure, on the other hand, applied to the entire nation and promised to be uniformly enforced.

Before long, American eugencists were traveling to Germany to observe "eugenics in action." They visited "eugenic courts" and met with Nazi leaders as well as scholars and scientists. After his visit, Frederick Osborn, then secretary of the American Eugenics Society, hailed "recent developments in Germany" as "perhaps the most important experiment which has ever been tried."

Just a few months after the new law went into effect, Hitler called for the sterilization of "dangerous habitual criminals." Under cover of that law, the government sterilized individuals who had no physical or mental disability. These children, women, and men were targeted simply because they were "Gypsies,"



A 1934 exhibition in Pasadena, CA describes the role of eugenics in the “New Germany.”

Germans of African descent, or Jews. For example, in 1937, the Nazis used the law to secretly sterilize all “German colored children.” They were the offspring of German women and the African soldiers who occupied Germany after World War I.

By 1937, the Nazis had sterilized nearly 225,000 individuals—about 10 times the number sterilized in the United States over a 30-year period—partly because Nazi journals openly advised the “eugenical courts” not to be “over scrupulous” in their decisions.⁴ They argued that it was better to make mistakes than jeopardize the “future” of the German people. So thousands of schizophrenics were sterilized, even though the classification of schizophrenia as a “hereditary disorder” was “no more than a working hypothesis,” according to Hans Luxemberger, Germany’s leading geneticist. He supported continued sterilization on the grounds that it might be too late when “final proof was established.”⁵ Despite signs that the Germans were sterilizing individuals with no “hereditary defects,” American eugenicists remained convinced that Germany’s sterilization law would never become an “instrument of tyranny.”

CONNECTIONS

A euphemism is an inoffensive term used in place of a more explicit one. In Nazi Germany, euphemisms were used to disguise events, dehumanize “racial

enemies,” and diffuse responsibility for specific actions. Thus the Nazis did not speak of throwing their enemies into jail but of taking them into “protective custody.” To what extent is the title of the new law a euphemism? What does it disguise or conceal? How does it regard the targets of the law? How does it diffuse responsibility for sterilization?

What is the role of a physician in the process outlined in the statute? Whom does the physician serve—the patient or the State? Why do you think the procedures of the eugenical courts were to be kept “secret”? Whose rights does a “secret proceeding” protect? Whose rights may such a proceeding threaten?

After visiting a hospital that performed sterilizations, Gregor Ziemer, an American educator, asked his SS guide who decides which women are to be sterilized. He was told, “We have courts. It is all done very legally, rest assured. We have law and order.”⁶ What does it mean to act “under the cover of the law”? What purposes do laws serve in a society? Are they a way of keeping order? Ensuring justice? Protecting rights?

What was the purpose of the sterilization law? How did it seem to alter traditional relationships in German society?

Compare Germany’s “Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring” with Harry Laughlin’s model sterilization law (Chapter 6). What similarities do you notice in the objectives of the two laws and the ways they are to be enforced? Which differences are most striking? Why do you think the American Neurological Association insisted that Germany’s sterilization law was not a product of Hitler’s regime?

1. *Eugenical News*, September-October, 1933.

2. Quoted in *By Trust Betrayed* by Hugh Gregory Gallagher. Holt, 1990, p. 93.

3. “Eugenical Sterilization in Germany,” *Eugenical News*, September-October, 1933.

4. Quoted in *Hitler’s Justice* by Ingo Müller. Trans. by Deborah Lucas Schneider. Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 122.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Education for Death* by Gregor Ziemer. Oxford University Press, 1941, p. 28.

Citizenship and “Racial Enemies”

Reading 6

On September 15, 1935, the Nazis took another step toward protecting “Aryan blood” from “contamination.” This time, they moved against the nation’s Jews and other “racial enemies.” It was not the Nazis’ first anti-Jewish measure. They proclaimed 42 such laws in 1933 and 19 more in 1934. The new laws, which Hitler announced at a party rally in Nuremberg, provided the rationale for the earlier legislation. The first of these laws defined citizenship:

Article 1

1. An inhabitant of the State is a person who belongs to the protective union of the German Reich, and who therefore has particular obligations towards the Reich.
2. The status of inhabitant is acquired in accordance with the provisions of the Reich and State Law of Citizenship.

Article 2

1. A citizen of the Reich is that inhabitant only who is of German or kindred blood and who, through his conduct, shows that he is both desirous and fit to serve the German people and Reich faithfully.
2. The right to citizenship is acquired by the granting of Reich citizenship papers.
3. Only the citizen of the Reich enjoys full political rights in accordance with the provision of the laws.

Article 3

The Reich Minister of the Interior in conjunction with the Deputy of the Führer will issue the necessary legal and administrative decrees for carrying out and supplementing this law.¹

The second statute was the “Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor.”

Section 1

1. Marriages between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are forbidden. Marriages concluded in defiance of this law are void, even if, for the purpose of evading this law, they were concluded abroad.
2. Proceedings for annulment may be initiated only by the Public Prosecutor.

Section 2

Sexual relations outside marriage between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood are forbidden.

Section 3

Jews will not be permitted to employ female citizens of German or kindred blood as domestic servants.

Section 4

1. Jews are forbidden to display the Reich and national flag or the national colors.
2. On the other hand they are permitted to display the Jewish colors. The exercise of this right is protected by the State.

Section 5

1. A person who acts contrary to the prohibition of Section 1 will be punished with hard labor.
2. A person who acts contrary to the prohibition of Section 2 will be punished with imprisonment or with hard labor.
3. A person who acts contrary to the provisions of Sections 3 or 4 will be punished with imprisonment up to a year and with a fine, or with one of these penalties.

Section 6

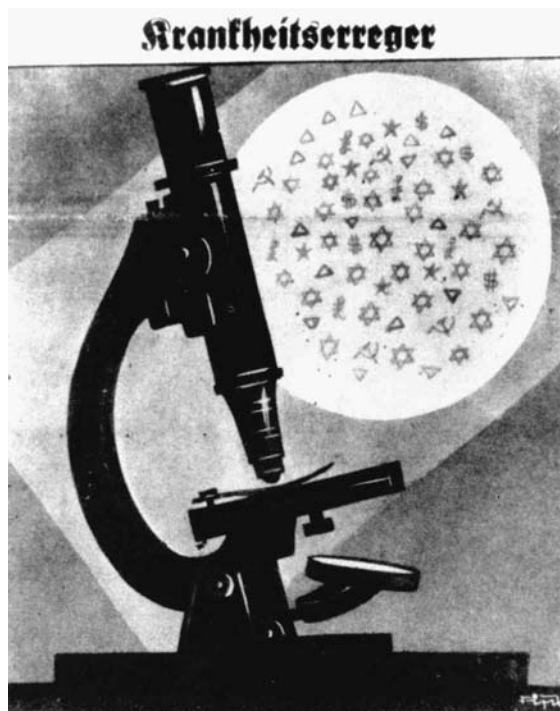
The Reich Minister of the Interior in agreement with the Deputy Fuhrer and the Reich Minister of Justice will issue the legal and administrative regulations required for the enforcement and supplementing of this law. ²

The laws raised an important question: Who is a Jew? In November, the Nazis defined a Jew as a person with two Jewish parents or three Jewish grandparents. Children with one Jewish parent were Jews if they practiced Judaism or married a Jew. A child of intermarriage who was not a Jew was a *Mischling*—a person of “mixed race.” By isolating Jews from other Germans and forbidding mixing of races, the Nazis hoped that *Mischlings* would eventually disappear. The Nazis regarded these laws as public health measures. German medical journals often described miscegenation as a “public health hazard.”

Regardless of their intent, the new laws and other antisemitic measures were successful. By the end of the year, at least a quarter of the Jews in Germany “had been deprived of their professional livelihood by boycott, decree, or local pressure,” writes historian Martin Gilbert.

More than 10,000 public health and social workers had been driven out of their posts, 4,000 lawyers were without the right to practice, 2,000 doctors had been expelled from hospitals and clinics, 2,000 actors, singers, and musicians had been driven from their orchestras, clubs and cafes. A further 1,200 editors and journalists had been dismissed, as had 800 university professors and lecturers and eight hundred elementary and secondary school teachers.

The search for Jews, and for converted Jews, to be driven out of their jobs was continuous. On September 5, 1935 the SS newspaper published the names of eight half-Jews and converted Jews, all of the Evangelical-Lutheran faith, who had been "dismissed without notice" and deprived of any further opportunity "of acting as organists in Christian churches." From these dismissals, the newspaper commented, "It can be seen that the Reich Chamber of Music is taking steps to protect the church from pernicious influence."³



The illustration title reads "Infectious Germs." Under the microscope are symbols for Jews, communists, and homosexuals, along with symbols for the British pound and American dollar.

Little by little, antisemitism became a government policy. Jews and other “racial enemies” were singled out and then segregated and isolated. The next step would be annihilation. In time these same laws would be applied to “Gypsies” and Germans of African descent as well as Jews.

CONNECTIONS

What is the difference between an “inhabitant” and a “citizen”? How did that difference affect the way Germany defined its “universe of obligation”—the circle of individuals and groups toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends. What factors determined membership? Who was excluded? What were the consequences of being beyond the nation’s “universe of obligation”?

The Nazis tried to find a racial definition of a Jew only to fail. As a result, they used religious practices to determine who was and was not a Jew. Earlier chapters detailed efforts in the United States to define an African American. Those efforts also failed. What questions might these failures have raised about the meaning of the term *race*? About its relevance to society?

As early as the 1910s, the Germans were aware of American anti-miscegenation laws. In the late 1930s, the Nazis noted that in many states in the United States, an individual with 1/32nd African ancestry was legally black. By contrast, individuals in Germany who were 1/8 Jewish were legally Aryans. What point were the Nazis trying to make? How valid was their argument?

Compare the “Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor” with Virginia’s anti-miscegenation law (Chapter 6). What are the similarities? What differences do you notice?

1. *Documents on Nazism 1919-1945* ed. by Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham. Schocken Books, 1983, 1984, pp. 463-467.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 463.

3. *The Holocaust* by Martin Gilbert. Holt, 1985, p. 47.

Eugenics and American Public Policy

Reading 7

In the summer of 1935, eugenicists, anthropologists, population scientists, and geneticists from all over the world traveled to Berlin, Germany, to take part in the International Congress for Population Science. Two Americans served as vice presidents of the conference: Harry Laughlin and Clarence Campbell. Although Laughlin was unable to attend, he wrote a paper for the conference and sent an exhibit consisting of 12 charts and publications that illustrated how the United States applied biological principles to its immigration policies.¹ Campbell not only attended but also publicly praised Nazi racial policies. He told delegates:

The leader of the German nation, Adolf Hitler, ably supported by . . . the nation's anthropologists, eugenicists and social philosophers, has been able to construct a comprehensive racial policy of population development and improvement that promises to be epochal in racial history. It sets a pattern which other nations and other racial groups must follow if they do not wish to fall behind in their racial quality, in their racial accomplishments and in their prospects for survival. It is [true] that these ideas have met stout opposition in the . . . social philosophy which . . . bases its . . . whole social and political theory upon the patent fallacy of human equality. . . . But . . . human thought has not stood entirely still since the eighteenth century. [There is] a decided tendency . . . in enlightened minds no longer to place implicit faith in rhetorical principles which have no foundation in facts and to explore the realities of nature.

Any patriotism worthy of the name carries with it a willingness on the part of individuals not only to cooperate in the common interest but to sacrifice individualistic aims and submit themselves to discipline in the ultimate interest of the group.

A population group which is racially [uniform] and which has no racially alien elements which serve to confuse, obstruct and defeat its racial objectives will always tend to be unified in its racial objectives as well as have a high survival value and prospects.²

On his return to the United States, Campbell complained that the “anti-Nazi propaganda with which all countries have been flooded[has] gone far to obscure correct understanding and the great importance of the German race policy.”³ Like a number of other American eugenicists, Campbell dismissed reports of brutality toward the Jews as “Jewish propaganda”⁴ at a time when the Nazis’ campaign against the Jews was intensifying.

Even as Campbell defended the Nazis, thousands of Jews were trying desperately to leave the country. Some found sanctuary in various European countries. Others were unable to find a place to live. Everywhere they turned, they encountered barriers—not from Germany but from other nations. Adolf Hitler was eager to have Jews leave the country as long as they left their money behind. Few countries, however, were willing to accept thousands of penniless Jewish refugees. The barriers to entering the United States were especially high. In 1929, Congress amended the National Origins Act of 1924 to limit the number of immigrants who could enter the nation in a single year to 153,774. Each had to be in good health and of good character. Immigrants also had to prove that they were not likely to become “a public charge.” Initially, American officials interpreted this to mean that families had enough money to tide them over until the adults found work—about \$100, a considerable sum in the 1930s.

Every country had a number based on two percent of the total number of immigrants from that country living in the United States in 1890. As a result, 83,575 places were set aside for immigrants from Britain and Ireland. Germany had about 26,000 places; Poland, 6,000; Italy, 5,500; France, 3,000; and Romania, 300.

In 1930, in the midst of the Great Depression, President Herbert Hoover instructed the state department to issue visas only to applicants who were unlikely to ever become a public charge. Government officials interpreted the order to mean that a family had to have at least \$10,000. As a result, immigration dropped sharply. Nearly 242,000 immigrants entered the United States in 1930. The number fell to 97,139 in 1931 and to 35,576 in 1932, the year before Hitler came to power. Of the 63,000 Jews who fled Germany between 1933 and 1934, only 6,514 were able to enter the United States. In contrast, France, a much smaller nation that was also in the midst of the Great Depression, accepted 30,000 Jewish refugees.

Even as the United States was raising the amount of money an immigrant needed to enter the nation, the Nazis were decreasing the amount Jews could take out of Germany. In January 1933, a Jew was allowed to take out as much as \$10,000 in cash. The amount was reduced to \$6,000, next to \$4,000, then to \$800, and finally in October of 1934 to \$4 per immigrant.

In the early 1930s, as violence against Jews and other “racial enemies” increased in Germany, some Americans urged Congress to ease restrictions on immigration. They immediately encountered opposition led by John B. Trevor, the New York attorney who proposed the quota system in 1924. As head of the American Coalition of Patriotic, Civic and Fraternal Society, he asked Harry Laughlin to prepare a report on the effects of easing restrictions. In his report, Laughlin urged Congress to “offer no exceptional admission for Jewish refugees from Germany” and no admission to anyone without “a definite country to which he

may be deported, if occasion demands,” and anyone whose ancestors were not “all members of the white or Caucasian race.”

Laughlin suggested that Congress “look upon the incoming immigrants, not essentially as in offering asylum nor in securing cheap labor,” but primarily as “sons-in-law to marry their own daughters.” In his view, “immigrants are essentially breeding stock.” Lawmakers agreed.

CONNECTIONS

Campbell refers to the idea of human equality as a “patent fallacy.” What ideas does he consider more important than equality? How do those ideas shape his definition of the word *patriotism*? The choices he made?

Not everyone at the conference applauded Campbell’s speech. Two American scientists walked out of the conference. Another resigned from the Eugenics Research Association after returning to the United States. Why do you think some American eugenicists were now uncomfortable with Hitler’s policies? How might Campbell’s speech have contributed to their discomfort?

In the 1930s, how did American eugenicists like Laughlin define their universe of obligation? In their view who belonged? Who did not? How did the United States define its universe of obligation?

What are the consequences of an expanded universe of obligation? Of a very small universe of obligation? Who decides in a democracy where the lines will be drawn? Who decides in a dictatorship like Nazi Germany?

How did Laughlin view immigrants? Why did he seem to fear the newcomers?

Historian A. J. P. Taylor once wrote that Hitler took the Germans at their word. He made them “live up to their professions, or down to them--much to their regret.” To what extent did Hitler also take American eugenicists at their word?

1. *The Nazi Connection* by Stefan Kühl. Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 34.

2. Quoted in *The New York Times*, August 29, 1935.

3. Quoted in *The Nazi Connection* by Stefan Kühl. Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 35.

4. Quoted in *While Six Million Died* by Arthur D. Morse. Random House, 1967, p. 116.

Honorary Degrees and Propaganda

Reading 8

The Nazis rewarded American eugenicists whose work they admired. In 1936, Harry Laughlin of the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) received the following invitation from Carl Schneider, a professor of racial hygiene:

The Faculty of Medicine of the University of Heidelberg intends to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Medicine [by reason of honor] on the occasion of the 550-year Jubilee (27th to 30th of June 1936). I should be grateful to you if you could inform me whether you are ready to accept the honorary doctor's degree and, if so, whether you would be able to come to Heidelberg to attend the ceremony of honorary promotion and to personally receive your diploma.

The letter ended with a list of Laughlin's publications:

- A decade of progress in Eugenics. 1934
- Laughlin, A Report of the Special Committee on Immigr., 1934.
- " The Legal Status of Eugenic Sterilization,
- " Eugenic Sterilization in the United States, 1922.
- " Europe as an Immigrant-Exporting Cont., 1924.
- " Analysis of (the) America's Mod. Melting Pot, 1923.
- " Biological Aspects of Immigration, 1927.
- " Eugenic Aspects of Deportation, 1928.
- " Am. History in Terms of Human Migration, 1928
- " 21 Reprints.¹

Laughlin promptly responded to the invitation:

I stand ready to accept this very high honor. Its bestowal will give me particular gratification, coming as it will from a university deep rooted in the life history of the German people, and a university which has been both a reservoir and a fountain of learning for more than half a millennium. To me this honor will be doubly valued because it will come from a nation which for many centuries nurtured the human seed-stock which later founded my own country and thus gave basic character to our present lives and institutions.

I regret more than I can say that the shortness of time before the jubilee date makes it impossible for me to arrange to leave my duties

at Cold Spring Harbor to visit Heidelberg to participate in the ceremony and to receive this highly honored diploma in person.²

Laughlin received his honorary degree at the German consulate in New York City. No one knows exactly why he decided not to travel to Germany to accept it. He may have been wary of an attack in the American press. *The New York Times* and other newspapers charged that Americans who traveled to Germany for such honors were being used as propaganda tools. Laughlin may have also feared that the effects of that kind of criticism on his relationship with the Carnegie Foundation, which was becoming more and more skeptical of his work.

Despite the criticism and worries about funding, Laughlin's belief in immigration restriction and the value of the Nazis' eugenics policies remained unshaken. Two years after he received his honorary degree, there was once again a move to allow Jewish refugees to enter the country. This time, the move was prompted by the violence that swept Germany and Austria on the night of November 10-11, 1938—*Kristallnacht* or the "Night of the Broken Glass" as it was later known. That night gangs of Nazis smashed, looted, and burned Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues.

A month later, Laughlin reported on current projects to Wickliffe Preston Draper, a millionaire who had recently established the Pioneer Fund to fund eugenics outreach:

You will be interested to know that the moving picture film "Eugenics in Germany" has proven very popular with senior high school students. Up to date the film has been loaned 28 times. Just now one copy is being used by the Society for Prevention of Blindness in New York, and the other is in the hands of George Smith. . . . where his advanced students in high school biology found it very interesting. Last spring Mr. Smith used the film with one set of students, and this year a second lot is profiting from it. . . . Most of the high schools now have projection apparatus so that films of this sort fit well into their program.³

Eugenics in Germany was a version of a Nazi propaganda film entitled "*Erbkrank*," or "The Genetically Diseased." After showing the entire movie at the Carnegie Institution in Washington, Laughlin secured funding from Draper's Pioneer Fund to distribute an edited version to the general public. Although the film depicts Jews as particularly susceptible to "hereditary degeneracy," Laughlin told readers of the *Eugenic News* that it contained "no racial propaganda of any sort."

The film was shown 28 times between 1937 and 1938, but plans to distribute it nationally fell through. Still the Nazis proclaimed the effort a great success. According to one German newspaper, the film made “an exceptionally strong impression” on American eugenicists.

CONNECTIONS

Why do you think the Nazis highlighted Laughlin’s *Report of the Special Committee on Immigration*, 1934 in listing his major publications? Look carefully at the list of Laughlin’s other publications. What appeal might they have for the Nazis?

Laughlin claimed that his degree would “be doubly valued because it will come from a nation which for many centuries nurtured the human seed—stock which later founded my own country and thus gave basic character to our present lives and institutions.” What connection does he see between Germany and the United States? Who is part of that connection? Who is excluded?

Use the timeline on pages 251-254 to determine what Laughlin knew about Nazi Germany by 1936. To what extent did that knowledge influence his decision to accept the honorary degree? To what extent should that knowledge have influenced his decision? What did he know by the end of 1938? Why do you think his position remained unchanged despite the violence of *Kristallnacht*?

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1. Schneider to Laughlin, May 16, 1936. Harry H. Laughlin Papers, Pickler Memorial Library, Truman State University, Kirksville, Missouri.
 2. Laughlin to Schneider, May 28, 1936. Harry H. Laughlin Papers, Pickler Memorial Library, Truman State University, Kirksville, Missouri.
 3. Courtesy of the Harry H. Laughlin Papers, Pickler Memorial Library, Truman State University, Kirksville, Missouri.

Protesting Eugenic Policies

Reading 9

By the mid-1930s, Germany was a totalitarian state. The nation's courts, legislature, and other institutions were under Hitler's control. Individuals who spoke out against his regime were quickly silenced. Yet even in the United States, where the right to speak was protected by the Constitution, very few scientists were willing to take a stand. One of the few to do so was Franz Boas (Chapter 3).

Although he was 75 years old when the Nazis came to power in 1933, Boas, who once described a scientist as someone for whom the very essence of life is "the service of truth," argued that he and his colleagues were obligated to speak out as a community against race science, eugenics, and what he called "Nordic nonsense." Even though many American scientists privately agreed with his views, they were unwilling to take a public stand. When Boas asked Livingston Farrand, the president of Cornell University, to prepare a petition critical of German racism, Farrand refused. He argued that taking a public stand "as a rule does no good in a time of inflamed opinion and often delays understanding rather than aids it." Raymond Pearl, a former eugenicist, told Boas that scientists should not make statements on "political questions." In his view, petitions risked "harm to the scientific men who sign them and through these men to science itself." It was up to the German scientists, Pearl concluded, to take a stand, since Hitler was their leader.¹

Harvard anthropologist E. A. Hooton was the only scientist willing to aid Boas, but not because he was opposed to eugenics. On the contrary, he had been a featured speaker at Charles Davenport's National Conference on Race Betterment. Still he rejected Nazi racism. At Boas's request, Hooton prepared a petition stating that there is no such thing as an "Aryan" or "Nordic race." "The so-called Nordic race is a hybrid . . . of several strains present in Europe during the post-glacial period," wrote Hooton. He also added that there is no scientific proof that some races are superior to others. Hooton sent the statement to seven anthropologists and asked that they join him in signing the document. Only one signed the petition.

Disillusioned but persistent, Boas continued to speak out against Nazi policies. Often, antisemitism hindered his efforts. At one point, he was nearly excluded from an important conference because the organizers feared that a Jew might be biased on questions of race. Yet those same organizers expressed no concerns about bias when they issued invitations to German scientists who actively supported Nazi policies.

In 1938, Boas and a few other like-minded scientists drafted yet another

statement that challenged Nazi racial theories. By then, U.S. public opinion was beginning to turn against the Nazis. This time, about 50 leading scientists signed the document and others quickly followed suit. By October 1938, over one thousand scientists from across the United States had put their names on the statement. Even as Boas was gathering signatures, the Nazis were accelerating their campaign against the Jews. On November 10-11 came *Kristallnacht*, the “Night of Broken Glass.” Although the violence directed against Jews that night did not alter Harry Laughlin’s views, it had an enormous impact on other American scholars. By December 10, 1938, about 1,300 had signed Boas’s statement. Later that month, the American Anthropological Association passed a resolution drafted by Hooton and introduced by Boas. The resolution read as follows:

Whereas, the prime requisites of science are the honest and unbiased search for truth and the freedom to proclaim such truth when discovered and known, and

Whereas, anthropology in many countries is being conscripted and its data distorted and misinterpreted to serve the cause of an unscientific racialism rather than the cause of truth:

Be it resolved, that the American Anthropological Association repudiates such racialism and adheres to the following statement of facts:

1. Race involves the inheritance of similar physical variations by large groups of mankind, but its psychological and cultural connotations, if they exist, have not been ascertained by science.
2. The terms Aryan and Semitic have no racial significance whatsoever. They simply denote linguistic families.
3. Anthropology provides no scientific basis for discrimination against any people on the ground of racial inferiority, religious affiliation, or linguistic heritage.²

The following year, at the Seventh International Genetics Congress in Edinburgh, Scotland, a group of scientists prepared what became known as the Geneticists’ Manifesto. It called for “the removal of race prejudices and of the unscientific doctrine that good or bad genes are the monopoly of particular peoples or persons with features of a given kind.”³

Most scientists, however, were slow to challenge eugenicists. Scientist Jonathan Marks writes:

Only well after the [eugenics] movement had been widely criticized by people outside of genetics and biology did the biologists begin to fall away from the movement. Possibly they were late to do

so because the eugenics movement was advancing the cause of genetics and biology in the America—which brought greater attention to the work biologists were doing and greater funding potential If biologists did in fact widely see the abuse to which genetic knowledge was being put, but refused to criticize it out of self-interest, they paid dearly for it. As historians of genetics have noted, the eugenics movement ultimately cast human genetics in such a disreputable light that its legitimate development was retarded for decades.⁴

CONNECTIONS

Compare and contrast the way Boas viewed the role of a scientist in society with the way Charles Davenport, Harry Laughlin, and other eugenicists viewed that role. What similarities do you notice? How important are the differences?

Why was Boas vulnerable to charges of bias? What other individuals or groups feel similarly vulnerable when they try to challenge prejudice? What justifications did Farrand and Pearl give for refusing to support Boas? How would you respond to the argument that speaking out when public opinion is “inflamed” does no good? To the idea that scientists should not become involved in “political questions”?

How courageous was Boas’s stand? Why do you think so many other scientists and scholars were reluctant to join him in challenging Nazi ideas, even though in the United States they could do so in safety? If they had protested, would their words have had any effect in Nazi Germany? On American public opinion?

1. “Mobilizing Scientists Against Nazi Racism, 1933-1939” by Elazar Barkan in *Bones, Bodies, Behavior*, ed. by George Stocking, University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 186.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

3. Quoted in *The Legacy of Malthus* by Allan Chase. Alfred A. Knopf, 1977, p. 614.

4. *Human Biodiversity: Genes, Race, and History* by Jonathan Marks. Aldine De Gruyter, 1995, p. 93.

New Discoveries

Reading 10

A number of American scientists told Franz Boas that there was no need to speak out against eugenics because scientific discoveries were undercutting both eugenics and racism. In 1913, A. H. Sturtevant, a student of Thomas Hunt Morgan (Chapter 3), produced the first gene map. It showed that genes are located in a specific order on a chromosome. Gregor Mendel was mistaken in thinking that hereditary particles (genes) are always randomly arranged during reproduction. If Mendel had looked at traits associated with genes on the same chromosome, he might have discovered that his ratios of dominant to recessive traits do not work. Heredity is more complicated than he realized. Herman Muller, another student of Morgan's, found that X-rays can cause mutations in fruit flies. By showing that the physical environment can alter genes, it undercut the eugenic notion that genes are immune to outside influences.

Geneticists were also learning that repeated breeding within a so-called "pure" line does not lead to better specimens, as eugenicists predicted. Instead, it results in a general decline in health and hardiness. Because inbred strains lack genetic variation, they experience more hereditary defects. On the other hand, crossing strains leads to what scientists call "hybrid vigor." Such discoveries contradicted eugenic beliefs about "purity" and "superiority."

Logic also undermined eugenics. British geneticist Reginald Punnett questioned Henry Goddard's claim that sterilization would reduce feeble-mindedness in the general population. Even if a recessive gene caused feeble-mindedness (and it does not), Punnett noted that sterilization was unlikely to solve the problem. After all, a person can carry that gene without being feeble-minded. How then would you decide whom to sterilize? Punnett concluded that "even under the unrealistic assumption that all the feeble-minded could be prevented from breeding, it would take more than 8,000 years before their numbers were reduced to 1 in 100,000, given Goddard's estimate that about 3 in 1,000 Americans were genetically feeble-minded."¹

Partly in response to a growing skepticism about the value of eugenics as well to concerns about Hitler's "racial state," the Carnegie Foundation, which had long funded the Eugenics Record Office (ERO), asked a group of independent scholars to evaluate its work. In 1935, they described the ERO's research as "unsatisfactory for the study of genetics" and recommended that the group "cease from engaging in all forms of propaganda and the urging or sponsoring of programs for social reform or race betterment such as sterilization, birth control, inculcation of race or national consciousness, restriction of immigration, etc."² Even before the report was issued, the directors of the Carnegie Foundation persuaded

Charles Davenport to retire. In 1939, at their request, Harry Laughlin also resigned his post. Soon after, the ERO closed its doors.

At about the same time, many established scientists resigned from such eugenic organizations as the Galton Society and the American Eugenics Society. By the time the United States entered World War II in 1941, American eugenicists had broken all ties with the Nazis. Their organizations suspended most of their activities for the duration of the war. Yet the values and beliefs about difference that defined the movement did not disappear. They continued to appeal to many Americans long after the world confronted the consequences of Nazi eugenic racism.

Ironically, a project funded by the Carnegie Corporation in the mid-1930s reshaped discussions of race in the years after the war. It was a scientific study of race relations in the United States similar to the one Franz Boas asked Andrew Carnegie to fund in 1905. (See pages 87-88.) The new study was headed by Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish sociologist who spent seven years gathering information about race in the United States. In 1944, just as the war was coming to a close, he published his findings in a book entitled *The American Dilemma*. Frederick Keppel, president of the Carnegie Corporation, wrote the foreword. It says in part:

When the Trustees of the Carnegie Corporation asked for the preparation of this report in 1937, no one (except possibly Adolf Hitler) could have foreseen that it would be made public at a day when the place of the Negro in our American life would be the subject of greatly heightened interest in the United States. . . . The eyes of men of all races the world over are turned upon us to see how the power of the most powerful of the United Nations [is] dealing at home with a major problem of race relations.³

In the introduction to his book, Myrdal defined the “American dilemma”:

Though our study includes economic, social, and political race relations at the bottom our problem is the moral dilemma of the American—the conflict between his moral valuations on various levels of consciousness and generality. The “American Dilemma,” . . . is the ever-raging conflict between, on the one hand, the valuations preserved on the general plane which we shall call the “American Creed,” . . . and, on the other hand, the valuations on specific planes of individuals and groups living where personal and local interest, economic, social, and sexual jealousies [exist].⁴

CONNECTIONS

What scientific developments undermined the claims of eugenics? How did each, step by step, finding by finding, alter the way scientists viewed eugenics? Why do you think that few of these breakthroughs were publicized? What does your answer suggest about the way the media viewed the role of scientists in society?

According to Myrdal, what is the “American dilemma”? How would you define it? Does it still exist today? How is the nation trying to resolve it? How successful has the nation been? What does Myrdal’s definition of the “American dilemma” suggest about the way he defines the nation’s “universe of obligation”? Whom does he seem to include in the nation? To exclude?

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1. “The Hidden Science of Eugenics” by Dianne Paul and Hamish Spencer. *Nature*, vol. 374, March 1995, p. 302.
 2. “The Eugenic Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor, 1910-1940: An Essay in Institutional History” by Garland Allen. *Osiris*, 2nd series, 1986, vol. 2, p. 252.
 3. “Foreword” by Frederick Keppel in *The American Dilemma: The Negro and Modern Democracy* by Gunnar Myrdal. Harper & Brothers, 1944.
 4. *The American Dilemma: The Negro and Modern Democracy* by Gunnar Myrdal. Harper & Brothers, 1944, Introduction.

"Where Is this Path Taking Us?"

Reading 11

In the 1930s, Nazi policies forced not only scientists but also ordinary citizens to make choices. The Nazis did not turn Germany into a "racial state" all at once. The change took place step by step, decree by decree. Each new policy went a little further than those enacted earlier. At each step, the German people had to make decisions. Yet even as they compromised and rationalized, few dared to ask, "Where is this path taking us?"

In the fall of 1933, a few months after the sterilization law took effect, Germany's Minister of Justice proposed a law that would allow "mercy killing" or euthanasia. Like the sterilization law, it was widely discussed in not only Germany but also the United States. *The New York Times* ran a front-page story about the proposal. It quoted a Nazi official who claimed the law would allow physicians "to end the tortures of incurable patients, upon request, in the interests of true humanity." The courts would decide who was incurable in much the way they determined who would be sterilized.¹ Although few people objected to the sterilization law, Catholic and Lutheran religious leaders were outraged at the idea of a "euthanasia" law. As a result, the proposal was quietly tabled.

Adolf Hitler did not give up on the idea, however. Throughout the 1930s, he



The poster shows how much the Prussian government provides annually for the following (left to right): a normal schoolchild, a slow learner, the educable mentally ill, and a blind or deaf-born schoolchild.

used propaganda to build support for the program by describing as “marginal human beings” epileptics, alcoholics, and individuals with birth defects, hearing losses, mental illnesses, and personality disorders, as well as those who were visually impaired or suffered from certain orthopedic problems. In 1936, the Nazis honored not only Harry Laughlin with an honorary degree but also Foster Kennedy, an American psychiatrist who proposed that “defective children” be “relieved of the agony of living.”²

In the spring of 1939, as Germany prepared for war, Hitler set up a committee of physicians to prepare for the murder of disabled and “retarded” children. Known as the “Reich Committee for the Scientific Treatment of Severe Hereditary and Congenital Diseases,” the group was told to keep its mission secret. Two weeks before the invasion of Poland in September of 1939, members asked physicians and midwives to fill out a questionnaire for every child born with a deformity or disability. The committee claimed that the data would be used “to clarify certain scientific questions.” In fact, it was used to determine the fate of each child.

The committee never examined a single child, consulted with any youngster’s physician, or spoke to relatives. Instead members used questionnaires to decide who would live and who would die. Once the decision was made, the child’s parents were told only that the youngster was being placed in a special hospital to “improve” treatment. Their death came quickly. The program was later expanded to include not only young children but also teenagers and adults. One “euthanasia expert” justified the murders by arguing, “The idea is unbearable to me that the best, the flower of our youth, must lose its life at the front, in order that feeble-minded and asocial elements can have a secure existence in the asylum.” Another suggested that a doctor has a duty to rescue the “fit” for the future by weeding out the “unfit.”

Although the program was kept secret, many Germans were aware of the killings. In some places, hundreds of individuals were murdered in a matter of days. Mobile gas vans carried out some of the killings. By June 1940, the vans were being replaced with “showers” that sprayed gas. Between 1939 and 1941 at least 70,000 persons were killed. A number of experts place the figure higher, claiming that at least 250,000 were murdered.

In November of 1940, Else von Löwis, a long-time supporter of Hitler and the Nazi party, wrote to a friend, the wife of the chief justice of the Nazi supreme court:

Undoubtedly you know about the measure now used by us to dispose of incurable insane persons; still, perhaps you do not fully realize the manner and scope of this, nor the horror it creates in

people's minds! Here, in Württemberg, the tragedy takes place in Grafeneck, on the Alb. . . . In the beginning one instinctively refused to believe the tale, or in any case considered the rumors to be extremely exaggerated. On the occasion of our last business meeting at the Gau School in Stuttgart, about the middle of October, I was still told by a "well-informed" person that this involved only idiots, strictly speaking, and that application of "euthanasia" applied only to cases which have been thoroughly tested. It is entirely impossible now to make anybody believe that version, and individual cases established with absolute certainty spring up like mushrooms. One might deduct perhaps 20 percent but if one tried to deduct 50 percent this would not help. . . .

I am of the opinion that the people have the right to know about the law, just as they knew of the sterilization law. The most awful thing in the present case is "the public secret" which creates a feeling of uneasiness. . . . Those who are responsible for those measures, have no concept of the measure of confidence they have thereby destroyed. Everybody must at once ask: What then can still be believed? Where is this path taking us and where should the boundary line be established? . . . ³

The judge passed the letter on to Heinrich Himmler who ordered the closing of the facility near von Löwis's home. He did not stop the program, however. It continued until May 1941, when the Reich Committee for the Scientific Treatment of Severe Hereditary and Congenital Diseases began sending questionnaires to homes for the elderly. A few months later, Clemens Graf von Galen, the Catholic bishop of Munster, asked his congregation, "Do you or I have the right to live only as long as we are productive?" If so, he argued, "Then someone has only to order a secret decree that the measures tried out on the mentally ill be extended to other 'nonproductive' people, that it can be used on those incurably ill with a lung disease, on those weakened by aging, on those disabled at work, on severely wounded soldiers. Then not a one of us is sure anymore of his life."⁴ The sermon was secretly reproduced and distributed throughout Germany.

Three weeks later, Hitler signed an order officially ending the program. In fact, it continued secretly throughout the war and may have claimed 100,000 more lives. And the mobile vans and showers that released gas instead of water were later used at Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps as part of the Holocaust—Hitler's plan to murder all of Europe's Jews.

CONNECTIONS

Although most Nazi activities against the “other” were loudly proclaimed, the “euthanasia” program was kept secret. Why do you think the Nazis did this? Why do you think they waited until the nation was at war to implement the program?

A Nazi eugenics manual referred to physicians as “alert biological soldiers.” What does the name mean? How does it redefine the role of a physician? Physicians are bound by the Hippocratic oath—a vow to help the sick and abstain from any act that may be harmful to the patient. What is the relationship of such a physician to his or her patients? How did the sterilization act alter that relationship? What changes did the “euthanasia program” bring to that relationship?

To what prejudices do the posters included in this reading appeal? How do they justify killings without ever mentioning them? How are they like the posters used at eugenics fairs? (Chapter 5) What differences seem most striking?

Why weren't Else von Löwis and her neighbors outraged at the discovery that the mentally ill were being murdered? How did she seem to define her “universe of obligation”? Who belongs and who does not? Where did she draw the line? Why was she uncomfortable with the idea of a “public secret”? Can something that everyone knows be a secret?

In 1944, rumors of the mass murder of Jews reached Berlin. There, too, people had to decide how to respond, where to draw the line. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, a journalist who belonged to a resistance group, wrote in her diary:

“They are forced to dig their own graves,” people whisper. “Their clothing, shoes, shirts are taken from them. They are sent naked to their deaths.” The horror is so incredible that the imagination refuses to accept its reality. Something fails to click. Some conclusion is not drawn. . . . We don't permit our power of imagination to connect the two, even remotely. . . . Is it cowardice that lets us think this way? Maybe! But then such cowardice belongs to the primeval instincts of man. If we could visualize death, life as it exists would be impossible. . . . Such indifference alone makes continued existence possible. Realizations such as these are bitter, shameful and bitter.⁵

Why does Andreas-Friedrich believe that “indifference alone makes continued existence possible”? Why does she describe that realization as “bitter” and “shameful”? Among the few Germans willing to act on the rumors were Hans

Scholl and his younger sister Sophie. Read their story in Chapter 8 of *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*. What does their story teach us about the consequences of indifference? How might they answer the question Andreas-Friedrich raises? How would you answer it?

In July 1942, the *American Journal of Psychiatry* published two articles, one in favor of killing severely retarded children and the other opposed to the idea. Foster Kennedy wrote the article in favor of the murder of “defective children.” The editors expressed the opinion that in due time, euthanasia like sterilization would become an accepted practice in the United States. They even suggested a public education campaign to overcome resistance. It is very likely that Kennedy and the editors knew about the German program. A few years earlier, journalist William L. Shirer described much of it in his best-selling book, *Berlin Diary*. The portion of the book that dealt with the murder of the disabled was republished in the June 1941 issue of *Reader’s Digest*, then the most widely read magazine in the nation. How do the editors and Foster Kennedy define their moral community or “universe of obligation”? Who belongs and who does not? Where do they seem to “draw the line”? The article in favor of killing retarded children did not result in a public outcry. For the most part, the essay was ignored. Why do you think few Americans expressed outrage at the idea?

After World War II finally ended, the Allies accused a small group of German racial hygienists of participating in government-sponsored massacres. In their defense, they pointed to the United States as proof that elimination of “inferior elements” was not unique to Germany. Karl Brandt, the head of the Nazi program for the killing of the mentally disabled, told the court that the Nazi program for the sterilization and elimination of “life not worthy of living” was based on ideas and experiences in the United States. How would you respond to that argument? Does it absolve Brandt and the others of wrongdoing?

1. Quoted in *By Trust Betrayed* by Hugh Gregory Gallagher. Holt, 1990, pp. 93-94.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

4. Quoted in *Nazism: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts, 1919-1945*, vol. 2, ed. by J. Noakes and G. Pridham. Schocken Books, 1988, p. 1038.

5. *Berlin Underground* by Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Trans. by Barrows Mussey. Holt, 1947, pp. 116-117.

Confronting a "Twisted Science"

Reading 12

Henry Wallace, the vice president of the United States from 1941 to 1945, was one of the few American politicians to challenge both Nazi racism and American eugenics. Like Harry Laughlin, Wallace came from Iowa. Like Laughlin, he studied agriculture and genetics in college. But Wallace's vision of science and his view of humanity were very different from Laughlin's. When Wallace served as secretary of agriculture in 1933, he brought not only scientific knowledge and skills to his work but also a compassion for the poor.

In 1939, Wallace spoke to a group of scientists in New York at a dinner to celebrate Abraham Lincoln's birthday. He dedicated his speech to anthropologist Franz Boas for his work in "marshaling the moral forces of science" in the defense of democratic freedom.

The cause of liberty and the cause of true science must always be one and the same. For science cannot flourish except in an atmosphere of freedom, and freedom cannot survive unless there is a honest facing of facts. The immediate reason for this meeting is the profound shock you have had, and the deep feeling of protest that stirs in you, as you think of the treatment some of your fellow scientists are receiving in other countries. Men who have made great contributions to human knowledge and culture have been deprived of their positions and their homes, put into concentration camps, driven out of their native lands. Their life work has been reviled.

In those same countries, other men, who call themselves scientists, have been willing to play the game of the dictators by twisting science into a mumbo-jumbo of dangerous nonsense. These men are furnishing pseudo-scientific support for the exaltation of one race and one nation as conquerors.

These things run counter to your whole tradition as scientists. You are not only amazed and shocked and moved to protest against the fate of your fellow scientists abroad. You shudder with the realization that these things have happened in scientifically advanced countries in the modern world—and that they might happen here.

Claims to racial superiority are not new in the world. Even in such a democratic country as ours, there are some who would claim that the American people are superior to all others. But never before in the world's history has such a conscious and systematic effort been made to inculcate the youth of a nation with ideas of racial

superiority as are being made in Germany today.

Just what are these ideas? Let me quote from a translation of the Official Handbook for the Schooling of the Hitler Youth, the organization which includes some seventy percent of all the boys and girls in Germany of eligible age.

The handbook discusses the various races found in Germany and other parts of Europe. Concerning what it calls the Nordic race, it says: "Now what distinguishes the Nordic race from all others? It is uncommonly gifted mentally. It is outstanding for truth and energy. Nordic men for the most part possess, even in regard to themselves, a great power of judgment. They incline to be taciturn and cautious. They feel instantly that too loud talking is undignified. They are persistent and stick to a purpose when once they have set themselves to it. Their energy is displayed not only in warfare but also in technology and scientific research. They are predisposed to leadership by nature."

But here is what the handbook says concerning what it calls the "Western race," found principally in England and France:

"Compared to the Nordic race there are great differences in soul-qualities. The men of the Western race are . . . loquacious. In comparison with the Nordic . . . men they have much less patience. They act more by feeling than by reason. . . . They are excitable, even passionate. The Western race with all its mental excitability lacks creative power. This race has produced only a few outstanding men."

Thus the dictatorial regime in Germany, masquerading its propaganda in pseudo-scientific terms, is teaching the German boys and girls to believe that their race and their nation are superior to all others, and by implication that that nation and that race have a right to dominate all others.

When I was a small boy, George Carver, a Negro who is now a chemist at Tuskegee Institute, was a good friend of my father's at the Iowa State College. Carver at that time was specializing in botany, and he would take me along on some of his botanizing trips. It was he who first introduced me to the mysteries of botany and plant fertilization. Later on I was to have an intimate acquaintance with plants myself, because I spent a good many years breeding corn. Perhaps that was partly because this scientist, who belonged to another race, had deepened my appreciation of plants in a way I could never forget.

Carver was born in slavery, and to this day he does not definitely know his own age. In his work as a chemist in the South,

he correctly sensed the coming interest in the industrial use of the products of the farm—a field of research which our government is now pushing. I mention Carver simply because he is one example of a truth of which we who meet here today are deeply convinced. Superior ability is not the exclusive possession of any one race or any one class. It may arise anywhere, provided men are given the right opportunities.

It is the fashion in certain quarters to sneer at those so-called “poor whites,” who suffer from poor education and bad diet, and who live in tumble-down cabins without mattresses. And yet I wonder if any scientist would care to claim that 100,000 children taken at birth from these families would rank any lower in inborn ability than 100,000 children taken at birth from the wealthiest one percent of the parents of the United States. If both groups were given the same food, housing, education and cultural traditions, would they not turn out to have about equal mental and moral traits on the average? If 100,000 German babies were raised under the same conditions as 100,000 Hindu babies or 100,000 Jewish babies, would there be any particular difference? No such experiments have been made or are likely to be made and so no absolutely scientific answer can be given. But when I raise such a question, I mean to imply that every race, every nation, and people from every economic group of society are a great genetic mixture. There is far greater variability among the heredity of individuals within the groups than among the groups. There may be a certain amount of stability of type with regard to skin and eyes and hair, but with regard to mental and emotional characteristics there is very little evidence of genetic uniformity for any race or nation. There may be a great deal of uniformity with respect to traditions but not with respect to complex hereditary characters.

On the whole, it seems probable that nowhere in the world in the next couple of centuries will a genuinely scientific attempt, in the sense understood by the plant or animal breeder, be made to breed for superior types of human beings. The different races and nations will continue to be conglomerates with a vast variability of mental and emotional qualities and the other abilities which make for leadership and genius.

Under what conditions will the scientist deny the truth and pervert his science to serve the slogans of tyranny? Under what conditions are great numbers of men willing to surrender all hope of individual freedom and become ciphers of the State? How can these conditions be prevented from occurring in our country?

Seeking to answer all such questions honestly, we shall inevitably come upon certain truths that are not flattering to us. We shall find in our own country some of the conditions that have made possible what we see abroad. It is not enough simply to hope that these conditions will not reach such extremes here as they have in some other countries. We must see to it that they do not. When a political system fails to give large numbers of men the freedom it has promised, then they are willing to hand over their destiny to another political system. When the existing machinery of peace fails to give them any hope of national prosperity or national dignity, they are ready to try the hazard of war. When education fails to teach them the true nature of things, they will believe fantastic tales of devils and magic. When their normal life fails to give them anything but monotony and drabness, they are easily led to express themselves in unhealthy or cruel ways, as by mob violence. And when science fails to furnish effective leadership, men will exalt demagogues, and science will have to bow down to them or keep silent.

These are the conditions that made possible what we are now witnessing in certain large areas of the world. They are the seeds of danger to democracy. Given a healthy, vigorous, educated people, dignified by work, sharing the resources of a rich country, and sure that their political and economical system is amply meeting their needs—given this, I think we can laugh at any threat to American democracy. But democracy must continue to deliver the goods.

Let us dedicate ourselves anew to the belief that there are extraordinary possibilities in both man and nature which have not yet been realized, and which can be made manifest only if the individualistic yet co-operative genius of democratic institutions is preserved. Let us dedicate ourselves anew to making it possible for those who are gifted in art, science and religion to approach the unknown with true reverence, and not under the compulsion of producing immediate results for the glorification of one man, or group, one race or one nation.¹

CONNECTIONS

Why do you think Wallace believes that the “cause of liberty and true science” must always be “one and the same”? What do they have in common?

Why does Wallace discuss the African American scientist George Washington Carver in his speech? How does his doing so undercut the notion of racial and biological determinism?

What are the “seeds of danger” in American democracy, according to Wallace? What role does he believe that scientists should play in the maintenance of democratic freedoms? Why does he see those who support dictators as “twisting science?” How does Wallace’s vision of democracy differ from the one Charles Davenport describes in *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*? How are they alike? How might Wallace respond to Davenport’s statement?

Wallace quotes from a handbook for Hitler Youth. What is he suggesting about the power of education in general and textbooks in particular in “twisting science”? In promoting hatred?

1. Henry A. Wallace Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.