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## From Social Improvement to Scientific Racism: The Effects of World War I on the Definition of Racial Hygiene in Germany

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Robyn Lee Hendrick entitled "From Social Improvement to Scientific Racism: The Effects of World War I on the Definition of Racial Hygiene in Germany." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

Vejas G. Liulevicius, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Janis Appier, A. Denise Phillips

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Anne Mayhew  
Vice Chancellor and  
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FROM SOCIAL IMPROVEMENT TO SCIENTIFIC RACISM:  
THE EFFECTS OF WORLD WAR I ON THE DEFINITION OF RACIAL HYGIENE IN  
GERMANY

A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master of Arts  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Robyn Lee Hendrick  
December 2005

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Lee Hendrick and Jody Hendrick, for always believing in me and providing constant encouragement and support.

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## ABSTRACT

During the First World War, there was a decisive change in the focus of the racial hygiene movement in Germany. Prior to the war, the terms "racial hygiene" and "eugenics" were synonymous. In contrast, during and after World War I while eugenics continued to be recognized as a "science" in Germany, as well as in other Western European countries and the United States, the racial hygiene movement was becoming increasingly racist. Although, as the term implies, racial hygiene included racial components, the radically racist overtones did not become prevalent until the Nazis' rise to power. Racial hygienists separated themselves from eugenicists by using the perceived economic, social, and moral crises in Germany during the war to lobby for radical social reforms. As this paper will show, the racial hygiene movement and eugenic thought shifted from having a class-based plan for improving society (in the late nineteenth-century) to "scientific racism" (under the Nazis), with World War I as an important milestone. This paper fills a gap in the historiography of racial hygiene by examining why the racial hygiene movement changed during the war years.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Many people associate the term "racial hygiene" exclusively with Adolf Hitler's attempt to develop and create a Nordic "master race" during the Third Reich.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the "science" of racial hygiene emerged long before Hitler's rise to power in 1933. Prior to World War I, the terms "racial hygiene" and "eugenics" were synonymous. Activists following the ideas of racial hygiene and eugenics tried to improve Germany by rewarding "fit" families for reproducing and curtailing reproduction among "inferior" people. Although, as the term implies, racial hygiene included racial components, the radically racist overtones did not become prevalent until the Nazis' rise to power. The Nazis tried to use racial hygiene to legitimize creating a "master race." As this paper will show, the shift in eugenic thought was from a class-based plan for improving society (in the late nineteenth-century) to "scientific racism" (under the Nazis), with World War I as an important milestone in that development.

Historian Sheila Faith Weiss asserts that the primary goal of racial hygienists and the race hygiene movement from the late nineteenth-century until 1933 was to reconcile the humanitarian-socialist ideal with Social Darwinists' views of a "fit" society.<sup>2</sup> I contend, however, that the primary goal of the racial hygiene movement, and advocates of racial hygiene, was to mold a more "hygienic" population in Germany. When applied to society

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<sup>1</sup> *Rassenhygiene* has been translated by historians as "racial hygiene," "race hygiene," and "eugenic hygiene," depending upon the translator's agenda or emphasis. This paper will use the most common translation: racial hygiene.

<sup>2</sup> Sheila Faith Weiss, "The Race Hygiene Movement in Germany," *Osiris*, 2nd Series, (1987) vol. 3: 208.

the meaning of "hygienic" is similar to "healthy nation." Thus, a "hygienic" society is one in which there are fewer people deemed by racial hygienists to be "unfit." Those declared "unfit" included persons with hereditary disorders, physical deformities, low socio-economic status, criminals, prostitutes, and those with mental problems which were said to prevent them from being "productive" members of society.

In contrast to Weiss' assertion that the movement was monolithic and unchanging, historian Paul Weindling locates a change in eugenic thought during the post-war period, arguing, "Virtually every aspect of eugenic thought and practice -- from 'euthanasia' of the unfit and compulsory sterilization to positive welfare -- was developed during the turmoil of the crucial years between 1918 and 1924."<sup>3</sup> This paper argues, on the contrary, that many eugenic measures were offered both before and during the war, and that the First World War's profound impact on German society led to a decisive shift in the direction of the racial hygiene movement in Germany.

This paper is divided into three parts, each focusing on a major shift in the field of racial hygiene. The first section examines the racial hygiene movement's evolution in Germany and the role of eugenic thought among Germans prior to World War I. It sets the racial hygiene movement in historical context, thereby attempting to prevent any teleological assumptions about racial hygiene steering inevitably toward Nazi hegemony and control. In addition, this section will explore the most pressing social concerns prior to 1914 and eugenicists' proposals to solve the problems. Analyzing the early years of the racial hygiene movement provides readers with background against which they can

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 317.

compare and contrast the role of eugenics and racial hygiene during and after the First World War.

After establishing the backdrop for the racial hygiene movement, this paper examines the movement in Germany during World War I. The second section begins by looking at the way total war changed German society on the home front. "Total War" is a term used to describe a type of modern, industrialized warfare in which all of society is involved (in a total effort) because the home front also becomes a battleground. Many historians believe World War I is the first example of total war in Europe. This section shows the concrete reasons which would lead to growing acceptance among Germans of German racial hygienists' proposals.

In addition to discussing German society and the development of the *Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* (Society for Racial Hygiene) during the war, the second section provides evidence to demonstrate the evolution of racial hygienic thought. The main source used in this paper is the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts- Biologie* (*Archive for Racial and Social Biology*), the longest running journal, also considered the most credible journal (because it was founded by Alfred Ploetz, the leader of the racial hygiene movement, in 1904 and continued to be published until 1940), related to racial hygiene before, during, and after the First World War. This section will also address tensions among colleagues within the movement, focusing specifically on the rival branches of the Society for Racial Hygiene in Berlin and Munich.

Alfred Ploetz's *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts- Biologie* provides evidence of the changes in scientific thought prior to, during, and post-World War I. Alfred Ploetz, often referred to as the "father of racial hygiene," began publishing the *Archiv* in 1904. Due

to the financial strain of growing publishing costs, Julius Lehmann, a fanatically racist medical publisher, took over in 1917. The *Archiv* was the first journal devoted to eugenics in Germany and abroad. From the first issue of the journal in 1904, until its last run in 1944, the concerns and topics discussed in the journal remained the same, even as the emphasis shifted. Topics included genetics, evolution, studies concerned with so-called degenerative phenomena (insanity, alcoholism, homosexuality, etc.), articles discussing the social and economic costs of "protecting the weak", statistical studies pertaining to the need for population growth and the hazards of neo-Malthusianism, and several entries by famous anthropologists. Although the subjects remained the same, the content and tone of the articles changed dramatically from 1913 to 1921. Both the articles in the journal and the contributors reflect the changing attitude of the scientific community throughout the first half of the twentieth century in Germany.

Finally, the paper addresses World War I's impact on the racial hygiene movement in post-war Germany, focusing on the especially troubled years 1919-1922. It looks at the altered definition of racial hygiene seen in print culture; the infiltration of racial hygiene into medical schools and universities; and the emergence of new research centers and universities. It is important for historians to understand the effects of World War I on the racial hygiene movement because some of the ideas spawned during the war were used by the Nazis as scientific evidence of a need for a "master race." The very experience of war changed the scope of racial hygiene and its chances for social acceptance.

Numerous studies on euthanasia and medicine in the Third Reich also discuss racial

hygiene.<sup>4</sup> The subject of racial hygiene began to attract the attention of scholars in the 1980s.

The time lapse between the end of the Second World War and the introduction of the study of racial hygiene may be due to the influence that particular racial hygienists still had in universities after World War II. Because books discussing Nazi racial policies usually attract more attention than books on science in Germany in the twentieth-century, in general, many authors only briefly touch on the origins of the movement. Instead of taking a comprehensive view of origins, they look at the racial hygiene movement teleologically, and emphasize the racist components. By doing so, they do not discuss in full the original goals of racial hygienists. In the latter half of the nineteenth-century the racial hygiene movement was not focused primarily on creating a "pure" Germanic race; rather, it was focused on improving the genetic composition of Germany.

Few authors comprehensively address the racial hygiene movement from its conception in the late 1800s until 1945 and this neglect has important consequences. Those authors who do discuss the movement in-depth do not always agree on the roots of the movement. For example, in his book *Death and Deliverance: Euthanasia in Nazi Germany, 1900-1945*, historian Michael Burleigh connects the Nazis' destruction of "lives not worthy

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<sup>4</sup>W. Weyers, *Death of Medicine in Nazi Germany: Dermatology and Dermatopathology under the Swastika*, Edited by Bernard Ackerman (Maryland: Madison Books, 1998); James Glass, "Life Unworthy of Life": *Racial Phobia and Mass Murder in Hitler's Germany* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Götz Aly, Peter Chroust and Christian Pross, *Cleansing the Fatherland: Nazi Medicine and Racial Hygiene*, Translated by Belinda Cooper (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994); Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance: Euthanasia in Germany 1900-1945* (University of Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Hugh Gregory Gallagher, *By Trust Betrayed: Patients, Physicians, and the License to Kill in the Third Reich* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990); Michael Kater, *Doctors Under Hitler* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Ernst Klee, *Euthanasie im NS-Staat: Die Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1983).

of living" with the medieval "Ships of Fools" described by French philosopher Michel Foucault that sailed around Western Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Foucault addresses the "Ships of Fools" in his book *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in an Age of Reason*. "Ships of Fools" were boats that sailed from city to city collecting madmen ("ballast lives"). These people were a financial burden on port cities.<sup>5</sup> Burleigh uses Foucault's description of the Ships of Fools to argue that Germans in the twentieth century behaved in the same cruel manner towards people they considered "unfit" as Europeans in the Middle Ages. Burleigh sees a continuum of exclusion from pre-modern to modern times.

In her important article "The Race Hygiene Movement in Germany," Sheila Weiss meticulously outlines the racial hygiene movement from 1871 to 1945, focusing on the changes within the Society for Racial Hygiene. Members of the Society for Racial Hygiene included anyone interested in, or advocating, racial hygiene as a method of "improving" society. Not all racial hygienists were members of the Society, but those who held membership were more influential in steering the course of the movement. Prior to World War I, the Society of Racial Hygiene, and later the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie* were the only professional outlets through which racial hygienists could share ideas. Weiss' study provides necessary groundwork for learning about the structural aspects of the movement. Weiss contends that "all German race hygienists embraced eugenics as a means to create a healthier, more productive, and hence more powerful nation."<sup>6</sup> The radical, racist racial hygienists used the scientific work of leading scientists such as Charles

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<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Translated by Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Weiss, "The Race Hygiene Movement," 195.

Darwin and Wilhelm Johansson merely to propel the racist trends in the movement. This paper will argue that although many racial hygienists did support eugenics as a way to mold society, there was always a small group within the movement whose focus was explicitly racist, obsessed with a postulated Nordic race, but their growing dominance would follow World War I.

The most complete examination of the racial hygiene movement to date is the mammoth work, *Health, Race, and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism 1870-1945* by Paul Weindling. Weindling's work has been crucial background for this research for two reasons: first, it is the only secondary source that examines the changes in the meaning of racial hygiene *during* World War I and the effects of World War I on Germany (Weiss mostly ignores the impact of World War I on German society, instead focusing on the structural development of the Society for Racial Hygiene). Secondly, Weindling draws upon an overwhelming number of primary sources, increasing the credibility of his work. This thesis will seek to extend some insights of Weindling's work by examining racial hygienists' changing definition of eugenics and its goals and the racial hygiene movement during the war years (1914-1918). It will do so by looking at publications from this period that discuss racial hygiene and eugenics during the war and book reviews of those books found in the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts- Biologie*, to observe the discourse in action at a transformative stage.

## II. ORIGINS AND ACTIVITY PRIOR TO 1914

Characteristics of the racial hygiene movement during the First World War can be traced back to the late 1800s and the rise of Social Darwinism. Many historians of Nazi Germany locate the roots of the radical racial hygiene movement almost entirely in social Darwinist thought. Social Darwinism was an aggressive, warped form of Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) scientific theory of "natural selection." Darwin postulated that living organisms adapt and evolve to meet the changing needs of their environment. Although Darwin's postulates were applicable to the human species in general, social Darwinists stretched his theories further by applying them to human races, thereby arguing that some races were superior to others.

Not all racial hygienists were social Darwinists. Some people viewed the racial hygiene movement as a means for lobbying for social reform. However, the ideological tools of social Darwinists promised a scientific solution through racial hygiene to solve social problems. According to the Victorian biologist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), one of the first men to propagate social Darwinism, "this law of organic progress is the law of all progress. Whether it is in the development of the Earth, in the development of Life upon its surface, the development of Society, of Government . . . this same evolution of the simple into the complex, through the process of continuous differentiation, holds throughout."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Herbert Spencer, "Progress: Its Law and Its Cause," *The Westminster Review*, Vol. 67 (April 1857): 447, in Paul Halsall, *Internet Modern History Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/spencer-darwin.html>, 1997.



From this instrumentalization of Darwin's ideas came the notion that one could improve society by eliminating its unwanted elements ("inferior" people).

One of the reasons why Darwin's ideas were popular in Germany in the late 19th century is that the number of those considered "useless" people in society had seemingly been increasing ever since Germany's unification in 1871. After the unification, there was a rapid period of industrialization, which led to more jobs for the lower classes and crowded urbanization. In addition to the growing number of people with low income moving into cities, other social concerns of the late nineteenth century (also common to other European states) that contributed to anxieties linked to eugenics in Germany included the growing radical labor movement, an increase in various types of criminal activity, a rise in prostitution, suicides, alcohol consumption and alcoholism, and a perceived decline in morality in society at large. In response, members of the educated middle- and upper-classes turned to an emerging field of study, eugenics, for answers and solutions.<sup>8</sup>

The term "eugenics" was coined in 1883 by Darwin's cousin Sir Charles Galton and refers to the use of selective breeding to improve a species over a number of generations, specifically regarding hereditary features. Both racial hygienists and eugenicists studied the relationship between genes and hereditary traits, and both sought to "better" society by curtailing the number of people born with hereditary "defects." A eugenicist could be anyone who supported using eugenics to improve society. In contrast, by the post-war period, a racial hygienist was anyone who supported methods of purifying society based on "scientific racism." After World War I, racial hygiene became a pseudo-scientific field through which racial hygienists, predominantly the ones trained in medicine, used science to

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<sup>8</sup> Weiss, "The Race Hygiene Movement," 196.

justify racist policies and social measures. Eugenics, however, remained a respected "science" both in Germany and abroad. According to professor Steven Selden at the University of Maryland, "eugenic ideology was deeply embedded in American popular culture during the 1920s and 1930s. For example, on Saturday night, high school students might go to the cinema to see 'The Black Stork'--a film that supported eugenic sterilization . . . or listen to a sermon selected for an award by the American Eugenics Society (1922-present)--learning that human improvement required marriages of society's 'best' with the 'best.'"<sup>9</sup> It is important that neither racial hygienists nor eugenicists needed to have a background in medicine.

The first German work on eugenics, *Über die drohende körperliche Entartung der Kulturmenschheit (Concerning the Threatening Physical Degeneration of Civilized Humanity)* by Wilhelm Schallmayer, one of the leaders of the racial hygiene movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was published in 1891. Schallmayer believed that, when extended through an entire society, a "hereditary diseased constitution" could cause serious disorders in individual cases: mental illness, feeble-mindedness, criminality, epilepsy, hysteria, and the tendency to tuberculosis. Therefore, he and other like-minded colleagues emphasized the importance of genetics in preventing "hereditary defects" from multiplying.

Throughout his life, Schallmayer never employed the term *Rassenhygiene* (racial hygiene) in his work. Instead, in a subtle distinction, he advocated using the terms *Rassehygiene* (race hygiene), and later *Rassedienst* (racial service), neither of which foregrounded racist connotations. Unlike other racial hygienists and eugenicists,

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<sup>9</sup> Steven Selden, "Eugenics Popularization," Essay Six, <http://www.eugenicsarchive.org>.

Schallmayer did not apply Darwin's theories to human races. His plan of molding and maintaining a pure society was called *Vererbungshygiene* (hereditary hygiene).

Schallmayer believed, throughout his career, that the purpose of eugenics was to improve the fitness of German society among Germans, not to promote an alleged Nordic race above others, as racial hygienist Alfred Ploetz (1860-1940) argued later in life.

According to Schallmayer, governments should view humans as valuable resources and manage them as such.<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, the *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated middle class) represented the most "fit" in society and, as such, needed to be preserved at all costs.<sup>11</sup> Schallmayer believed that Germany should embark on a political program that would encourage the best elements of society to reproduce. His proposed plan sought to ensure that the "best" classes in the social structure, specifically the *Bildungsbürgertum*, would flourish. Eugenicists believed that they were obligated to safeguard the health of the nation.

In contrast to the definition of eugenics, Alfred Ploetz, one of the founders of the racial hygiene movement, coined the term *Rassenhygiene* and defined it in his book, published in 1895, *Die Tüchtigkeit unserer Rasse und der Schutz der Schwachen. Ein Versuch über Rassenhygiene und ihr Verhältnis zu den humanen Idealen, besonders zum Sozialismus* (*The Fitness of Our Race and Protection of the Weak: A Look at the Relationship between Eugenics and Humane Ideals, Particularly Socialism*).<sup>12</sup> In this title,

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<sup>10</sup> Wilhelm Schallmayer, *Vererbung und Auslese im Lebenslauf der Völker: Eine staatswissenschaftliche Studie auf Grund der neueren Biologie* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1903). The treatise went through two revisions (1910 and 1918).

<sup>11</sup> Almost all racial hygienists were from this class. Unsurprisingly, there was common agreement that the *Bildungsbürgertum* was the most exalted class in society.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred Ploetz, *Die Tüchtigkeit unserer Rasse und der Schutz der Schwachen. Ein Versuch über Rassenhygiene und ihr Verhältnis zu den humanen Idealen, besonders zum Socialismus* (Berlin: Gustav

Ploetz is referring to the "German race." However, his use of *Rasse* is much broader than the English rendering "race." In German *Rasse* can equally well imply "human race," or particular groups as in "German race," and "Nordic race." Ploetz's feelings regarding "race" evolved throughout his life, making it difficult to determine his exact argument. This ambiguity turned out to be significant.

To fulfill their obligation to maintain a "fit" society, racial hygienists Alfred Ploetz, Anastasius Nordenholz, and Ernst Rüdin formed the *Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* [Society for Racial Hygiene], in Munich in 1905. Although the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts- Biologie* was not formally a part of the Society, many members of the Society wrote articles published in the journal. The Society's main avowed objective was to study hereditary traits (both mental and physical) and determine which were most useful for maintaining a healthy population. As eugenics and racial hygiene became increasingly prevalent in the international medical community, membership in the Society grew. The Society for Racial Hygiene had 32 members in 1905. Two years later the number had more than tripled. Branches were established in Berlin and Munich (1907), and in Freiburg (1909). In 1910, the first international branch, *Sällskap för Rashygien*, was established in Sweden. With the addition of Sweden, the name of the society changed from *Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* to *Internationale Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* [International Society for Racial Hygiene].<sup>13</sup>

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Fischer, 1895). The work was intended to be the first part of a two-part study entitled *Grundlagen einer Rassenhygiene (Foundations of Race Hygiene)*. The second section was never completed.

<sup>13</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 172-177.

Although the *Internationale Gesellschaft* did not propose any specific public policy reforms, in 1910, at a meeting for public hygienists, Ploetz set out a list of practical goals including:

- (a) Opposition to the two-child system, instead fostering "fit" families with large numbers of children, combating luxury, reestablishment of the motherhood ideal, strengthening the commitment to family;
- (b) Establishment of a counterbalance to the protection of the weak by means of isolation, marriage restrictions, etc., designed to prevent the reproduction of the inferior; support of the reproduction of the fit through economic measures designed to make early marriages and large families possible (especially in higher classes);
- (c) Opposition to all germ-plasma poisons, especially syphilis, tuberculosis, and alcohol;
- (d) Protection against inferior immigrants and the settlement of fit population groups in those areas presently occupied by inferior elements -to be accomplished, if need be, through the expropriation laws;
- (e) Preservation and increase of the peasant class;
- (f) Introduction of favorable hygienic conditions for the industrial and urban population;
- (g) Preservation of the military capabilities of the civilized nations;
- (h) Extension of the reigning ideal of brotherly love by an ideal of modern chivalry, which combines the protection of the weak with the elevation of the moral and physical strength and fitness [*Tüchtigkeit*] of the individual.<sup>14</sup>

As can be seen, although these initiatives were part of a utopian dream, it was not so much a dream of creating a master race, but rather a dream for a utopian society.

By 1911, an undercurrent of radical racism appeared within the Society in the form of the "Nordic Ring." Members of the radical faction included Ploetz, Fritz Lenz, and Arthur Wollny. These racial supremacists supported the aims of the Society for Racial Hygiene but in addition "harbored plans for 'Nordic-Germanic race hygiene.'"<sup>15</sup> Membership in the

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<sup>14</sup> Alfred Ploetz, "Ziele und Aufgaben der Rassenhygiene," *Vierteljahresschrift für öffentliche Gesundheitspflege* 8, Heft 1 (1911): 165.

<sup>15</sup> This information was taken from an unpublished pamphlet entitled "Unser Weg" (Our Way) written by members of the Nordic Ring in 1911, quoted in Weiss, "The Race Hygiene Movement:" 203.

radical racial group within the Society for Racial Hygiene remained limited throughout the 1910s. Although the Nordic Ring remained small throughout World War I, the ideas shared by members of the Ring began to permeate German society afterwards. Although there was a proliferation of nationalist sentiment in and after the war, Max Wundt, a professor of philosophy at Jena, traced the ideological roots of German nationalist groups back to the 18th century. Both the older nationalist groups (such as the Nordic Ring) and the newer völkisch movements (whose ideas were later taken up by the Nazis) sought to transcend political systems in order to unite people of common blood and background in Western Europe, during the war.<sup>16</sup>

The patriotic societies were neither new nor unique to Germany. Historian Roger Chickering argues that, "Germans had no monopoly on patriotic societies in the decades prior to the First World War . . . one might define these societies as voluntary associations whose primary purpose was to mobilize the members of a given national group, irrespective of class, rank, or confession, in support of national symbols and what were called 'national causes.'"<sup>17</sup>

Another social phenomenon that Germany shared with other countries prior to World War I was a slowing birthrate. According to historian Ian Ousby, "between 1871 and 1911 the German population increased by more than 50 percent, from 41 million to 65.3 million; during almost the same period, between 1872 and 1911 the French population increased by

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<sup>16</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, 2nd ed. (New York: Howard Fertig, 1964), 218.

<sup>17</sup> Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League 1886-1914* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 23.

only a fraction over 10 percent, from 36 to 39.5 million."<sup>18</sup> Though both countries were experiencing population growth, Germany's growth rate was much higher. Despite the fact that the German population was increasing at a much greater pace, racial hygienists did not compare it with any other countries. Without a comparison, Germany's slowing rate appears worse than it truly was.

Many German eugenicists studied the reasons behind, and solutions to, the slowing birthrate between 1902 and 1914. For example, "in 1914 Professor Max von Gruber warned that between 1876 and 1911 the birthrate had declined from 4.3 births per thousand, to only 3.0 per thousand."<sup>19</sup> He argued that "healthy" German families should be rewarded for the number of children they had. German eugenicists were also concerned with the ratio of "healthy" Germans to other Europeans and other ethnic minorities within Germany. In his book *Die Geburtenfrequenz in den vorwiegend katholischen und den vorwiegend protestantischen Teilen Preussens und ihre Entwicklung (The Birth Frequency in the Predominantly Catholic and the Predominantly Protestant Parts of Prussia and its Development)*, published in 1915, Albert Lemancyk discusses the different birthrates across Prussian territories.<sup>20</sup> He notes that the birthrate was higher in places in Prussia where the dominant religion was Catholicism than in places where there were more Protestants. Although Lemancyk was focused on the correlation between birthrate and religion, his work also showed that the birthrate was higher in the parts of Prussia with a

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<sup>18</sup> Ian Ousby, *The Road to Verdun: World War I's Most Momentous Battle and the Folly of Nationalism* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), 197.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 19.

<sup>20</sup> Albert Lemancyk, *Die Geburtenfrequenz in den vorwiegend katholischen und den vorwiegend protestantischen Teilen Preussens und ihre Entwicklung* (Liepzig and Munich: Duncker und Humblot, 1915).

high Polish population (because Poles were predominantly Catholic), which created anxieties for German nationalists.

Some racial hygienists, such as Alfred Ploetz, believed that Poles were inferior to Germans and thus wanted to keep the birthrate among the Poles lower than that of the "fit" Germans. One of the public policy reforms that Ploetz advocated in 1910 was "Protection against inferior immigrants and the settlement of fit population groups in those areas presently occupied by inferior elements--to be accomplished, if need be, through the expropriation laws."<sup>21</sup> In this quote, the "inferior immigrants" and "inferior elements" that Ploetz refers to are Poles. The "expropriation laws" would force Poles to move out of areas in Prussia thereby decreasing the percentage of "inferior" people in society. Thus, findings such as Albert Lemanczyk's could further racial hygienists' fears of a society in which the majority of the population was "inferior."

For example, Dr. Hermann Siemens, a racial hygienist in the early 1900s, believed that the lower classes were procreating faster than people in the upper classes were. In his article, "The Proletarianization of Our Progeny- a Danger of Non-Racial Hygienic Population Policy," Siemens estimated that the "value" of a man was usually in inverse proportion to the number of his children.<sup>22</sup> Thus, a man with many children tended to be poorer than a man with only a few children.

Racial hygienists sought to find ways to reduce the number of children among members of the lower classes. Dr. Agnes Bluhm (the only known female racial hygienist) suggested eliminating medical care for the lower classes. She argued, "Fewer women die in

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<sup>21</sup> Alfred Ploetz, "Ziele und Aufgaben der Rassenhygiene," *Vierteljahresschrift für öffentliche Gesundheitspflege* 8, Heft 1, (1911): 165.

<sup>22</sup> Hermann Siemens, "Die Proletarisierung unseres Nachwuchses, eine Gefahr unrasenhygienischer Bevölkerungspolitik," *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie* 12, Heft 1 (1916/18): 43-55.



childbirth--but this is precisely the danger, for modern medicine allows women to survive and reproduce who, without the intervention of doctors, would never have been able to give birth."<sup>23</sup> Eliminating medical care for the poor would take human intervention out of whether a person lived or died. Bluhm's proposal suggests her acceptance of Darwin's theory of natural selection. However, significantly, she did not apply the same standards to the upper classes. Though certainly not charitable, Bluhm's solution was not that of social Darwinists, who would have advocated cutting medical care to people deemed unworthy regardless of class origins. Bluhm saw herself as simply trying to better Germany's international standing.

According to British economist Robert Malthus (1766-1834), an increase in fertility would lead to a massive population growth, which, in turn, would eventually outstrip the growth in economic production. Neo-Malthusians saw birth control as a way to eliminate poverty and the social problems associated with it. They believed that the lower classes and people with hereditary disorders were not only having more children, they were also passing their tendencies of having greater numbers of children on to their children, thereby ensuring that Germany's population would become increasingly and exponentially contaminated with proliferating "bad genes". Neo-Malthusians feared that due to "loose" women and a decline in morality, the less desirable members of society would procreate at a much greater pace than the upper and upper-middle classes. A "loose" woman by this definition was one who had sex with multiple partners on a regular basis, increasing the probability that she would bear illegitimate children. Neo-Malthusians saw birth control as a way to eliminate poverty,

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<sup>23</sup> Agnus Bluhm, "Zur Frage der generativen Tüchtigkeit der deutschen Frauen und der rassenhygienischen Bedeutung der ärztlichen Geburtshilfe," *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie* 9, Heft 3 (1912): 343.

but what they failed to take into account or willfully ignored was that members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* would also use birth control.

In addition to using birth control to eliminate poverty, racial hygienists also saw it as a way to control the population among people with hereditary defects. Racial hygienists applied Gregor Mendel's laws of heredity to their research to support their argument that the "inferior" people in society should not reproduce. In the latter years of his life, Mendel (1822-1884) postulated that each parent generation transfers half of its genes onto the next generation. Thus, different offspring of the same parents receive different traits. Racial hygienists contended that since one cannot know which member of the next generation would inherit the defective traits, people with any hereditary disorders should not be allowed to have as many children as more "healthy" people, or perhaps, none at all.

In 1914, just before the Great War broke out, Ploetz published a list of proposed reforms in the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie* aimed at halting the declining birthrate among the more desirable people in society. Some of the most important of the proposed reforms were:

an inner colonization (back-to-the-farm) movement with privileges for large families; economic assistance to large families and consideration of the size of public and private employees' families in determining wages; abolition of impediments to early marriage for army officers and government employees; obligatory exchange of health certification before marriage; prizes to artists who glorify the ideal of motherhood, family, and simple life; and attempts to awaken a sense of duty toward the coming generation.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "Leitsätze der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene zur Geburtenfrage," *Archiv für Rassen und Gesellschafts-Biologie* 11, Heft 1 (1914): 134-135.

As can be seen, prior to the war, Ploetz was advocating positive measures to increase the birthrate among the upper and middle classes. What is noticeably missing from his list of reforms is a solution to the perceived problem of increased birthrate among the "inferior" people in society.

Thus, before World War I, racial hygiene and eugenics were more class-based than racially oriented and tended towards so-called "positive eugenics." "Positive eugenics" referred to the idea that the composition of society could be changed through positive measures and inducements such as incentives for "fit" Germans to have more children. Positive eugenics contrasted with negative eugenics, which, instead of trying to increase the birthrate among the "fit" members of society, involved proposals to curtail reproduction among the "unfit." Other methods of positive eugenics included improvements in personal health, less crowded living conditions, exercise programs, and sexual moderation among less desirable individuals. A common theme among the advocates of positive eugenics before the war was to focus on promoting the birthrate among the upper classes, while largely ignoring what was viewed as the excessive reproduction among "inferior" elements of society.

The emphatic negativism that would leave its mark on the science of racial hygiene was not present in the early stages of the movement. It was during the First World War that the racist ideas of racial hygiene, although always present or latent, became more prominent. Mass deaths on the war fronts created great anxieties about the fitness of the surviving population. As living conditions in Germany deteriorated during the course of World War I, the government had to make national changes and choices regarding Germans'

physical and mental health. To do so intelligently, they needed experts. Thus, they turned to medical professionals for advice on how to heal a diseased country.

### III. THE EVOLUTION OF RACIAL HYGIENE DURING WORLD WAR I

Germans, like people from other European Great Powers, entered the First World War with patriotic enthusiasm in August 1914. Many thought that the war would be short and decisive. They assumed that soldiers would be home by Christmastime.<sup>25</sup> When it soon became obvious that this would not be the case, agriculture declined dramatically, the economy dropped, and there were massive shortages throughout Germany. The mass slaughter of millions of "fit" Germans, both of civilians and those in the military, aroused much concern among eugenicists and racial hygienists.

Historian Richard Bessel argues that according to the German Central Record Office for War Casualties and War Cemeteries, "roughly 2 million German soldiers were killed" in World War I.<sup>26</sup> Other countries such as France and Great Britain also lost an entire generation of young, healthy men on the battlefield. Unlike other European Great Powers, who could rely on one another and, after 1917, the United States for financial, military, and moral support during the war, Germany did not have any strong allies to aid them in the war effort.

In addition to the 2 million Germans soldiers killed, the war had also taken a major toll on civilians. Civilians suffered in other European countries as well, but the living conditions in Germany during and immediately following the war were much worse by far. For example, during the "turnip winter" of 1916/1917, in which the harvest was only 50%

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<sup>25</sup> Barbara Tuchmann, *The Guns of August* 2nd ed. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1962), 22.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993): 6.

of what it had been in 1913, daily bread and egg rations were reduced dramatically. By the end of the First World War, civilian deaths triggered by tuberculosis had increased by 72%. Soldiers received the best of the yield and the average body weight of German civilians dropped by 20%. The mortality rate of females and infants was up 50% from pre-war levels. Overall, the civilian mortality rate had increased during the war by 37%.<sup>27</sup> The effects of the "turnip winter" on the German population might have been reduced had it not been for the British hunger blockade.

Britain began the blockade in 1914 to isolate Germany from the rest of the world. In theory the blockade would choke Germany financially (because the Germans could no longer trade overseas), militarily (because they could not build up a navy to rival that of Britain), and physically (because they could not import food). According to historian Holger H. Herwig, the British hunger blockade from 1914-1919 caused the deaths of more than 763,000 Germans.<sup>28</sup> Despite the scarcity of food, the "productive" and "unproductive" members of society received the same rations. In addition to the economic and health problems during World War I, there was allegedly rapid population growth among the "unfit" due, in part, to widespread prostitution. In response to the problems triggered by the war, racial hygienists turned to the press to propagate their ideas for social reform during the war.

Numerous books were published by eugenicists and racial hygienists in the early years of World War I that discuss possible consequences of an explosion of perceived

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<sup>27</sup> Holger H. Herwig, *Hammer and Anvil: Modern Germany 1648-Present* (Lexington, Mass. and Toronto: D.C. Heath and Company: University of Calgary, 1994), 204.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

immorality.<sup>29</sup> Most books written by racial hygienists during the early years of the war offered solutions to the immoral behavior said to be plaguing Germany at the time. The books do not suggest eliminating segments of the population according to race; rather they focus on positive methods of improving society. The main techniques that racial hygienists used to disseminate their ideas into mass society from 1914-1916 were to (1) publish literature pushing for social reform (which made their works available to the public at large) and, (2) to subtly alter the meanings of traditional scientific terms in ways that held underlying racist connotations.

One of racial hygienists' fears was that the increase in the number of illegitimate births would be an economic burden on all Germans. For example, in his book *Die Volkserneuerung und der Krieg (The People's Renewal and the War)*, Dr. Max Rosenthal, a well-known racial hygienist, argued that an increase in the number of children supported by only their mother would result in an increased demand for the state (taxpayers) to provide financial support for single parent households.<sup>30</sup>

Max Rosenthal pointed out the main problems that he believed Germany would face immediately following the war. The central question that Rosenthal posed is, "what is the necessary number and what is the quality of births that will provide for the preservation and possible upward gradient of the total strength of society?"<sup>31</sup> Rosenthal addressed problems relating to the perceived increased immorality among Germans, the disproportionate number of "unfit" men left on the homefront because the "fit" men were serving on the

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<sup>29</sup>J. Flemming, *Das Nachtleben in deutschen Grösstädten. Videant consules!* (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1915); J. Forberger, *Geburtenrückgang und Konfession* (Berlin: Saemanns Verlag, 1914); Dr. Johannes Marr, *Der Krieg und das Geburtenproblem* (n.p.:Verlag Sexualreform, Werder, a.H., 1915); Dr. J. B. Schneider, *Von Liebe und Leben* (n.p.:Verlag Sexualreform, Werder, a. H, 1915).

<sup>30</sup> Max Rosenthal, *Die Volkserneuerung und der Krieg* (Breslau: Selbstverlag des Bundes, 1915).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

battlefield, and what should be done with the overabundance of children born into single parent families. Rosenthal's questions are important because they display what he considers the main problems that will plague German society after the war.

For example, Rosenthal discussed the increasing prevalence of prostitution both among German civilians and in the German army. The main problem that Rosenthal foresaw with prostitution was that it would inhibit the ability of the Germans to "renew themselves" after the war. It would do so for two reasons. First, many racial hygienists considered prostitutes "unfit" members of society. Thus, if an "unfit" person had children, then logically, the offspring would be "unfit." Secondly, prostitutes could not provide stable homes in which to raise children because such households lacked both a mother figure and a father figure. Such circumstances could never provide for a "people's renewal" because, according to Rosenthal, one's "whole physical, mental, and moral development is derived from living conditions."<sup>32</sup> If no one put effort into providing acceptable living conditions, the "quality" of the next generation would diminish.

Rosenthal contended, "Each understanding politician must be mindful not only of the existing welfare service but also mindful of the next generation. He must take precautions that the next generation is sufficient in quantity as well as quality."<sup>33</sup> In addition, Rosenthal argued that for self-preservation, "there is a moral duty to renew and increase the number [of people] that exists in Germany."<sup>34</sup> Rosenthal believed that for self-preservation the next

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 12.



generation of Germans must be cultured. He argued that reforms must be enacted out of love of for Germany as well as to protect the traditional morals held by many Germans.<sup>35</sup>

One way in which Rosenthal proposed that the government should become involved in improving German society was by redistributing rations throughout Germany. He contended that by "increasing rations to adjust or exclude ("inferior" people) completely" the government should "control the number of surplus births in society."<sup>36</sup> If certain cities and areas of countryside were only offered a set amount of rations, then there would be an incentive to keep the birthrate down because each extra mouth to feed meant less food for those already alive. Likewise, the government could provide more nutrition among the segments of society that they wanted to thrive.

Another issue addressed in *Die Volkserneuerung* was the growing difference between eugenics and racial hygiene. According to Rosenthal, the difference between racial hygiene and eugenics in that whereas racial hygienists look for ways to eliminate unwanted elements in society, eugenicists seek to reduce the occurrence among the population.<sup>37</sup> This difference is key to understanding the reason why the traditional meaning of the terms "eugenics" and "racial hygiene" changed during World War I. Prior to the war it was acceptable to maintain the "unwanted elements" of society, because they were only a small fraction of the population at large. However, after World War I, and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of "fit" Germans (a much higher proportion than the death toll of "unfit" Germans) racial hygienists argued that the "undesirable" traits in society would not prevent the number of "inferior" Germans from eventually surpassing the number of "fit" Germans.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 6.

Rosenthal maintained that currently there was a "tendency of a decreased birthrate which produces degradation regarding the quality of children produced," because "the weaker men are the ones who stay at home with the family."<sup>38</sup> Rosenthal quoted racial hygienist Wilhelm Schallmayer's findings that "while the soldiers are located in the field, those who remain at home because they are unfit to serve in the war are favored doubly with reproduction."<sup>39</sup> According to Schallmayer, because there was a substantial reduction in the number of children born into families in which the father served in the military, increased procreation among "inferior" individuals led to an increase in the number of children with physical and mental defects.

Another concern among racial hygienists studying the alleged increase of immoral behavior during the war (compared with that of traditional prewar German society) was addressed in 1915 by racial hygienist Felix Theilhaber in his book, *Das Dirnenwesen in den Heeren und seine Bekämpfung. Eine geschichtliche Studie (Prostitution in the Armies and the Struggle against It: A Historical Study)*.<sup>40</sup> In the book, Theilhaber described similarities between contemporary Germany society and German society during and after the Franco-Prussian War (1870/71), noting that during both times prostitution increased tremendously because many young men were away from home, and young women saw it as an opportunity to make money during economic hard times. In addition, Theilhaber lobbied for the government to support reform measures. According to Theilhaber, if the police became involved in a coordinated, energetic effort to reduce prostitution, the number of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>39</sup> Wilhelm Schallmayer, *Vererbung und Auslese* (Jena: 1910), 261 in Rosenthal, *Die Volkserneuerung*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> W. Haberling, review of *Das Dirnenwesen in den Heeren und seine Bekämpfung. Eine geschichtliche Studie* (Leipzig: Barth) by Felix A. Theilhaber, *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie* 12, Heft 1 (1916/1918): 97.

illegitimate births would decline. As a desirable side effect, a reduced population among the "unfit," the economy would grow.

In his review of Dr. Otto Krohne's 1914 book, *Die Beurteilung des Geburtenrücksganges vom volkshygienische, sittlichen und nationalen Standpunkt* (*An Evaluation of the Decline in the Birthrate from a Racial Hygienic, Moral, and National Point of View or Perspective*), Felix Theilhaber was supportive of Krohne's argument that the government should make it clear to people that an increase in the number of illegitimate children creates dangerous problems that affect everyone in Germany.<sup>41</sup> According to Theilhaber, Krohne argued that Germans must be made aware of "the precarious consequences [that] threaten us and our descendants from the rapid decline in the birthrate."<sup>42</sup> The declining birthrate posed an even greater problem to Germans during, and after, World War I because the birthrate was decreasing most dramatically among the more "fit" Germans. This purported phenomenon was due in part to the First World War itself, in which hundreds of thousands of "fit" German men died on the battlefield. Krohne argued further that marriage and the family should be returned to a better moral and religious basis and that more attention should be directed towards teaching healthy German married couples the importance of having numerous healthy descendants. Krohne believed that if prostitutes knew that the repercussions of their actions affected all of German society, they would curtail their immoral behavior. Another problem plaguing Germany during the war was the deterioration of government mental institutions and asylums.

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<sup>41</sup> Dr. Otto Krohne, *Die Beurteilung des Geburtenrücksganges vom volkshygienische, sittlichen und Nationalen Standpunkt* (Leipzig: Dietrichs, 1914).

<sup>42</sup> Felix A. Theilhaber, review of *Die Beurteilung des Geburtenrücksganges vom volkshygienische, sittlichen und nationalen Standpunkt*, by O. Krohne, *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie* 12, Heft 1 (1916/1918): 100.

Due to institutional expansion between the 1880s and 1913 over 100 asylums in Germany were forced to close. The number of patients treated in institutions increased dramatically between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In 1880 47,228 patients were treated in Germany; by 1913 the number had swelled to 239, 583.<sup>43</sup> During the war, "patients in mental hospitals and in homes for the elderly and infirm suffered an exceptionally high death rate, due in part to starvation and neglect."<sup>44</sup>

In the First World War, many doctors and nurses from mental hospitals and asylums were called into military service. Historian Götz Aly quoted institution director Hans Hefelmann's summation of the situation regarding the absence of physicians and nurses post-World War I: "Food and pharmaceuticals had become scarce leading to a great increase in the mortality rate, because what was available had to be distributed equally among the curable and the incurable." According to Aly, "tens of thousands of institutionalized patients starved to death during the First World War."<sup>45</sup>

The major shift in the racial hygiene movement, from being centered on social improvement to focusing on purification through elimination of "unworthy" people and those of other races, came during the war, in 1917, when medical publisher Julius Friedrich Lehmann (1863-1935) became publisher of the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie*. Prior to 1917, Lehmann did not publicize his radical racist agenda. However, when he became publisher of the *Archiv*, Lehmann took the opportunity to publish articles by the more radical racial hygienists.

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<sup>43</sup>Hans-Ludwig Siemen, *Menschen bleiben auf der Strecke . . . Psychiatrie zwischen Reform und Nationalsozialismus* (Gütersloh 1987), 33, quoted in Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 25.

<sup>44</sup>Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 289.

<sup>45</sup> Aly, *Cleansing the Fatherland*, 158.

It is important that Lehmann did not personally have a scientific background of any kind; rather he simply used racial hygiene to propagate his anti-Semitic, radical racism, supporting the molding of a "master race." In addition to the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts- Biologie*, Lehmann published four other medical journals, including the *Zeitschrift für Rassenphysiologie*, the *Archiv für Rassenkunde*, the *Monatsschrift für Kriminalbiologie und Strafrechtsreform*, and *Die Gesundheitsführung*. Lehmann strongly believed in expansionist policies and, after World War I, worked to unite the Pan-German League and the Thule Society, which were both radical racist groups, to form the German-Volkish League of Defense and Defiance (*Deutsch-völkische Schutz- und Trutz- Bund*). In addition, during the war Lehmann was active in mobilizing the Fatherland Party (*Vaterlandspartei*), and afterwards the Free Corps (*Freikorps*) paramilitary groupings, which included many veterans of World War I. Lehmann personally contributed to a fusion between eugenics and right wing nationalism combining them into a nationalistic crusade whose purpose was to preserve the "pure" German race.<sup>46</sup>

Beginning in 1917, as Lehmann became increasingly active in controlling the content of the *Archiv*, the definitions of some key words shifted. In his article "Biologische Terminologie und Rassenhygienische Propaganda" ("Biological Terminology and Racial Hygiene Propaganda"), Dr. Herman Werner Siemens discussed the origin and evolution of several scientific terms associated with biology, specifically with heredity.<sup>47</sup> Siemens argued that the younger generation of "scholars insert similar or matching terms into biological literature, changing common expressions postulated by prominent scientists such

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<sup>46</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 303.

<sup>47</sup> Herman Siemens, "Biologische Terminologie und Rassenhygienische Propaganda," *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts- Biologie* 12, Heft 1 (1916/18): 257-267.

as: *Fluke- Mutation* (Charles Darwin), *Mutation* (Hugo de Vries), *Heterogenesis* (Frank Korschinsky), and *Mutation* (Erwin Baur).<sup>48</sup>

Siemens began the article by tracing the roots of eugenic thought. He starts with Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) "Pangenes hypothesis." In Siemens' interpretation, Darwin postulated in the "Pangenes hypothesis" that "gemules flow from each individual part of the body to the reproductive organs, where they create the basis of individuals."<sup>49</sup> The Pangenes hypothesis was an elementary way of explaining heredity. Siemens then listed other leaders in biological research and their contribution to the field, seeing them in a proper traditional line of development. Siemens mentioned English scientist and anthropologist Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), Darwin's cousin and the founder of eugenics, who began teaching the "Pangenes hypothesis" in 1875. He also noted Carl Naegeli (1817-1891), a Swiss-German botanist, who discovered "*Idioplastmas*" (the place in a cell in which hereditary transmission takes place) in 1884; and Dutch botanist William Johannsen's (1857-1927) distinction between genotype (the genetic composition of an organism) and phenotype (the physical characteristics of an organism). The background that Siemens provides is important because it sets a backdrop against which to compare the newer terminology.

Siemens found Johannsen's use of genotype and phenotype alarming because he felt that it misrepresented the true meaning of biology, which was to study inherited biological traits in individuals and help reduce the number of genetic disorders. In contrast, Johannsen

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 257.

focused on perceived "negative" effects on society in general. Siemens also objected to other contemporary works by biologists.

For example, Dutch botanist Hugo de Vries (1848-1935) was one of the innovators in the new form of biology. De Vries expanded Darwin's theory of "fluke mutation," arguing that sudden changes in germ cells result in various changes in heredity. In addition to de Vries' variance from Darwin's theory, German racial hygienist Erwin Baur (1875-1933) took Darwin's theory of "fluke mutation" and elucidated the terms "mutation" (hereditary traits) and "modification" (changes resulting from the surrounding environment). Thus, by borrowing Darwin's terminology, Baur and de Vries were able to claim that they furthered Darwin's theories.

In addition to the increasing use of the terms genotype and phenotype, Siemens believed that the split between the biological terms *Idio* (unique to an individual) and *Para* (deviant from the norm) was "the starting point of the popularization of general biology and thus the starting point of race-hygienic propaganda."<sup>50</sup> He thought that the split between *Idio* and *Para* was useful for clarifying what one is referring to. According to Siemens, in order to preserve the true meaning of biology, biologists must contrast the terms *Idio* and *Para*, and "fight against confusion with the weapons of terminology."<sup>51</sup> Siemens traces the root word *Id* (*Idea, Eidos, and Idion*) back to the "Platonic ideal" formulated by Plato (427-347 BC) in Athens, Greece. Siemens contends that, "Although the Greek terms are not the same as the German expressions, it is still useful for spreading biological knowledge and a certain meaning and is thereby justified." Furthermore, it is "particularly important that the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 257.

threads of biology and racial hygiene can be tied to the old-Hellenic culture and philosophy, particularly with the teachings of Plato because "it is through that great intellectual culture that progress can be made."<sup>52</sup>

Siemens also discusses the difference between positive selection and negative selection among individuals in a species. He argues that negative selection weeds out the "less-adapted *Idiovarianten*" (individuals) in society and that positive selection promotes fertility among the "particularly well-adapted *Idiovarianten*." Siemens asserts that positive selection is a crucial driving force of the *phylogenetic* (physical appearance) high development of a species. In addition, Siemens argues that "Selection is an indispensable component of statesmanship" and that "the popularization of biology is an absolute requirement. Certain general-biological basic facts must become common property of all cultured conditions."<sup>53</sup>

According to Siemens, "Only three kinds of outside influences affect all living nature: parakinesis, idiokinesis, and selection."<sup>54</sup> Racial hygiene is parakenetic because it focuses on physical appearance. Racial hygiene is idiokenetic in that it is part of the evolving terminology. Racial hygiene and selection share the strongest bond because racial hygiene is based on the principles of selection.

Siemens was not the only person who noticed the infiltration of racist terminology into scientific discourse. He mentions that "Already [Dr. Wilhelm] Schallmayer deplores it bitterly (a stance that stirred debate among racial hygienists) and notes that "it is almost impossible for even highly gifted people to make clear the different meaning of biological

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 264.



and cultural development."<sup>55</sup> In fact, people who understood the scientific discourse could determine the extent of a racial hygienist's racism through the vocabulary used in his writing. An excellent example of how terminology was indicative of a racial hygienist's views on the use of racist terminology can be found in Dr. Wilhelm Schallmayer's works.

In his review of Dr. Schallmayer's work, "Sozialhygiene und Eugenik," Fritz Lenz argued that Schallmayer felt that the terms should be made distinct, but "unless the expression genotype means the same thing as idioplasma, then the word genotype should be used." However, as an aside, Lenz noted that he is "of the opinion that Naegli's word "idioplasma is a quite neutral and indifferent expression for the carrier of heredity," and contended that he saw "no reason to give up the word idiokenesis."<sup>56</sup> Essentially, Lenz was arguing that there was no reason to distinguish between different terms because idiokenesis can have several meanings. Lenz wanted to continue using the older terminology to base racial hygienic ideas in science.

In addition to reporting Schallmayer's distaste for the new biological terms, Lenz noted that Schallmayer was concerned with the use of the term eugenics. Lenz argues that Schallmayer never used the term *Rassenhygiene* because, "While the term *Rassenhygiene* is directed, like all hygiene, only towards preventing illness," the term "*Eugenik* studies the illnesses within 'normal humans.' On the other hand, *Eugenik* means only a qualitative, not also a quantitative regulation of reproduction." Thus, according to Lenz, Schallmayer concluded that, instead of using *Rassenhygiene*," the designation *Rassedienst* (racial

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>56</sup> Fritz Lenz, review of "Sozialhygiene und Eugenik," *Sozialwissenschaft*, vol. 5, by Wilhelm Schallmayer, in *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie* 13, Heft 2 (1916/18): 107-108.

service) would be completely perfect "for a discussion of improving the 'quality' of society."<sup>57</sup>

In contrast to Schallmayer's definition of eugenics as a form of personal hygiene, according to racial hygienist W. Weinberg, who reviewed the second edition of Dr. Alfred Grotjahn's book *Sozial Pathologie (Social Pathology)*, Grotjahn, one of the leaders of the Berlin branch of the Society for Racial Hygiene, argued that eugenics was a form of social hygiene.<sup>58</sup> He did not contend that the word *Rassenhygiene* should be abolished; rather, he believed it "should be used to evaluate changes in population growth, mixed-marriage, and migration patterns among different ethnic groups."<sup>59</sup> Like Schallmayer, Grotjahn feared that the terms eugenics and racial hygiene would continue to be used interchangeably, despite the fact that racial hygiene was taking on more racist connotations. Weinberg, who advocated a more radical form of racial hygiene, found Grotjahn's argument that the words were not interchangeable disturbing and irrational.

Interestingly, neither Lenz nor Weinberg criticized Schallmayer or Grotjahn for the findings of their work. Instead, they focused on Schallmayer and Grotjahn's beliefs concerning the purpose of racial hygiene. Lenz and Weinberg represented the changing tone both within the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts- Biologie* and within the racial hygiene movement as a whole. Instead of dissipating during the war, the tensions among eugenicists and racial hygienists prior to the war--over nationalism and developing a "pure" German *Volk*--increased and evolved into conflicts between welfare programs for the state and health policies meant to ensure that Germans remained "fit."

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 108. Although Lenz took this quote from Schallmayer's work, he did not provide a page citation.

<sup>58</sup> Dr. Alfred Grotjahn, *Sozial Pathologie. Zweite neubearbeitete Auflage* (Berlin: A. Hirschwald, 1912).

<sup>59</sup> W. Weinberg, review of *Sozial Pathologie. Zweite neubearbeitete Auflage* by Dr. Alfred Grotjahn, *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts- Biologie* 12, Heft 1 (1916/18): 106.

#### IV. RACIAL HYGIENE, 1919-1922

After World War I, many Germans realized that the various methods offered by racial hygienists during the war to solve social problems were idealistic. The fundamental reason why the ideas for reforms offered between 1914 and 1916 were inadequate is that the racial hygienists did not anticipate the overwhelming economic toll that the First World War would take on Germany. Massive inflation, combined with countrywide food shortages, prevented the government from funding extensive welfare programs.

In addition to economic problems, many more "unfit" Germans had survived the war than did "fit" Germans because only "healthy" Germans could fight on the battlefield. According to Richard Bessel, approximately one-fifth of the German population experienced military service during the war.<sup>60</sup> He notes that "roughly 13.2 million (or about 85 per cent) of the 15.6 million males eligible for military service were mobilized at some stage during the War. From the beginning of 1915, between about one-quarter and one-half of the men in this age-range were serving in the armed forces at any one time."<sup>61</sup> Another problem facing Germany after the war was the allegedly rapid population growth among the "unfit" due, in part, to widespread prostitution.

Table 1 displays the number of illegitimate children born in Germany from 1914-1920. Although these numbers are only representative of the war years, one can see that the percentage of illegitimate births grew dramatically, especially between 1917 and 1918.

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<sup>60</sup> Bessel, *Germany After the First World War*, 6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

**Table 1. Legitimate and Illegitimate Births in Germany, 1914-1920**

YEAR	LEGITIMATE	ILLEGITIMATE	ILLEGITIMATE BIRTHS AS A % OF TOTAL BIRTHS
1914	1,650,328	180,564	9.86
1915	1,239,525	156,384	11.20
1916	925,208	115,001	11.06
1917	831,605	108,333	11.53
1918	830,998	125,253	13.10
1919	1,154,101	145,303	11.18
1920	1,463,543	188,050	11.39

*Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* (1924/25): 30-31.

Instead of declining, the number of illegitimate births peaked in 1918. It is important to note that all of the illegitimate births in Germany added to the number of "unfit" people in society. In Germany the loss of the nation's best and brightest young men, combined with the already dangerously low birth rate of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, led to new, more radical methods of controlling population growth among the less "fit" members of society.

In the early 1920s, the printing press would serve as an invaluable part of the dissemination of radical ideas. In his 1921 article "Oskar Hertwig's Angriff gegen den 'Darwinismus' und die Rassenhygiene" ("Oskar Hertwig's Attack against 'Darwinism' and Racial Hygiene") published in the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts- Biologie*, Fritz Lenz criticizes biologist Oskar Hertwig's theory that chromosomes form the basis of inheritance as well as Hertwig's anti-Darwinist stance.<sup>62</sup> According to Lenz, Hertwig's book *Zur Abwehr des ethischen, des sozialen, des politischen Darwinismus* (*Refutation of Ethical,*

<sup>62</sup>Fritz Lenz, "Oskar Hertwig's Angriff gegen den 'Darwinismus' und die Rassenhygiene," *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts- Biologie* 13, Heft 2 (1921): 194-203.

*Social, and Political Darwinism*) is divided into two chapters, "one arguing against ethical and social, and one arguing against political Darwinism."<sup>63</sup> In contrast, Lenz argued that if Hertwig was correct in saying that "Darwin's teachings in the manuals for physiology, anatomy, and the history of development, and those on the fabric of cells are not all valid ... it fortunately does not apply to all of the books in those areas." In other words, Lenz was suggesting that even if Hertwig's theories (which he strongly disagreed with) are correct, they should still not be taught in all textbooks. Lenz continued his criticism of Hertwig: "if [Hertwig's theories] apply mainly to biology, then he speaks only of theory," because, "one cannot explain Herbert Spencer's survival of the fittest."<sup>64</sup> By arguing that no one can explain Spencer's postulation, Lenz was implying that Hertwig was fundamentally wrong in his argument against Darwinism. Hertwig also argued that human society is a "natural product, or, in a more religious manner of speaking, reveals God."<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Hertwig contended that racial hygienists such as Alfred Ploetz believed in a "race-hygienic utopia."

Lenz, on the other hand, believed that racial hygiene was a necessary part of science because rarely was a "particularly favorable combination of hereditary factors found in families with few children," and that in this situation "selective racial hygiene [can] help."<sup>66</sup> Selective racial hygiene is the idea that one can create a "pure" society. Lenz did not however, offer any suggestions on how to accomplish it. According to Lenz, it is the task of the twentieth century to "cause a reconciliation of the two spheres of ethics and biology." Lenz explained, "Nineteenth century individualism produced and was overcome by an

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<sup>63</sup> Oskar Hertwig, *Zur Abwehr des ethischen, des sozialen, des politischen Darwinismus* (Jena: Fischer, 1918).

<sup>64</sup> Fritz Lenz, "Oskar Hertwig's Angriff," 198.

<sup>65</sup> Hertwig, *Zur Abwehr des ethischen*, 38, quoted in Lenz, "Oskar Hertwig's Angriff," 195.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

organic world-view. The biology of the twentieth century will not be able to fulfill their [biologists'] goals; however, it will give the means to a reorganization and training in the organic basis of all culture, the race."<sup>67</sup> Lenz's statement implied that although the racist elements of biology introduced into biology in the first part of the twentieth century would grow in importance through the twentieth century, one could not entirely neglect the background. However, Lenz sought to intertwine a new, more radical form of racial hygiene with ethics. Julius Lehmann strongly supported Lenz's racist arguments. He published many of Lenz's articles and findings. As Table 2 shows, Lehmann played a large role in molding the direction of the racial hygiene movement.

**Table 2. Journals Devoted to Racial Hygiene and Similar Fields Prior to 1930**

<b>JOURNAL</b>	<b>PERIOD OF PUBLICATION</b>
<i>Archiv der Julius Klaus-Stiftung für Vererbungswissenschaft, Sozialanthropologie und Rassenhygiene</i>	1925- ?
<i>Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie*</i>	1904-1944
<i>Das Kommende Geschlecht</i>	1920-1934
<i>Mitteilungen an die Mitglieder der Berliner Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene*</i>	1917- ?
<i>Monatsschrift für Kriminalbiologie und Strafrechtsreform*</i>	1904-1938
<i>Politisch-anthropologische Revue</i>	1902-1922
<i>Verhandlungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Rassenforschung</i>	1926-1944
<i>Volk und Rasse</i>	1926-1944
<i>Zeitschrift für Psychische Hygiene</i>	1928-1944
<i>Zeitschrift für Rassenphysiologie*</i>	1928-1943

Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 39. (\* Journals published by Lehmann)

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 203.

Immediately following the war racial hygienists suggested different ways to rebuild Germany, both physically and mentally, after World War I. Their books offered solutions different from those prior to the war. In the early 1900s, the focus had been on increasing the birthrate among the upper classes and more desirable people in society. After the war, and the loss of millions of "fit" Germans, the focus turned towards eliminating the lower classes and unwanted members of society because the percentage of people in the "inferior" groups of society was allegedly beginning to challenge that of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. In a time of radically reduced economic resources, negative measures took precedence over "positive."

Lehmann also played a large role in disseminating racial propaganda through literature. To give his racist ideas further credibility, Lehmann needed the support of racial hygienists who had a background in science to substantiate his claims. Lehmann asked several racial hygienists, including Fritz Lenz, to help legitimate his claims of racial superiority by writing a book on racial hygiene. Although Lenz rejected the offer, in 1920 Hans F.K. Günther (1891-1968), a prolific racist writer whose work was later especially popular during the Third Reich, submitted a manuscript entitled, *Ritter, Tod, und Teufel: Der Heldische Gedanke (The Knight, Death, and the Devil: An Account of the Nordic Man)*, in which he advocated using infusing nationalist sentiments into political campaigns. The book appeared in 1920.<sup>68</sup> Günther agreed to write another text for Lehmann and in 1920; Günther's work *Kleine Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes (Small Racial Guide to the*

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<sup>68</sup> Hans F.K. Günther, *Ritter, Tod, und Teufel: Der Heldische Gedanke* (Munich: J.F. Lehmann, 1920).

*German Volk*) was published.<sup>69</sup> Over 30,000 copies of Günther's book were sold before 1932.<sup>70</sup>

Immediately after the war, Alfred Hoche (1865-1943), a psychiatry professor at Freiburg, and Karl Binding (1841-1920), a leading figure in criminal and constitutional law, offered another method of reaching a "healthy and fit" German nation. During the war, Binding served as law professor and later a judge in Leipzig and Hoche taught psychiatry in Freiburg. Neither Binding nor Hoche played a large role in the racial hygiene movement apart from proposing a solution to the problems plaguing Germany after the war. In fact, Binding died before their book was published.

In 1920 Binding and Hoche's book *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens. Ihr Mass und ihre Form (Authorization for the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life. Its Magnitude and its Form)*, was published.<sup>71</sup> The book was divided into two sections, the first written by Binding and entitled "Rechtliche Ausführung" ("Lawful Execution"), the second part, written by Hoche, is entitled "Ärztliche Bemerkungen" ("Medical Remarks"). Binding and Hoche's main premise was that in order for defeated Germany to progress internationally in economic and social standing, Germans needed to limit the amount of government funding (and food) that was poured into public institutions. *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens* highlighted three categories of people deemed ready for elimination. The first group consisted of people who were either terminally ill or mortally wounded and wanted to die. The second group included 'incurable idiots' (people held in institutions and asylums). The third group, with special reference to

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<sup>69</sup> Hans F.K. Günther, *Kleine Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (Munich: J.F. Lehmann, 1923).

<sup>70</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 311-312.

<sup>71</sup> Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche, *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens: Ihr Mass und Ihre Form* (Leipzig: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1920).



the concluded war, included men who had been injured in battle and who, if they were able to understand their situation, would not want to continue living. The problem with this proposed plan was that, especially in the case of the third category (mainly those with serious head injuries who could not function in society), was that the caregiver was responsible for determining whether the person in question should live or die. Because there were no specific guidelines in determining the fate of the person it was impossible to enforce nationwide standards regarding whether or not someone would want to continue living.

For Binding and Hoche's proposal to be implemented, Germans had to be thoroughly convinced of the plan's viability. To reach a larger proportion of the population through the ideas expressed in *Die Freigabe*, Binding and Hoche's sections of the book addressed different groups in society. Binding addressed ordinary Germans (those who were not aware of the debates within the scientific community) in the first section of the book. He likened the killing of 'life unworthy of life' in German institutions to Germany's experience in World War I. He manipulated the emotions of Germans recovering from a devastating loss in the war:

If one thinks of a battlefield covered with thousands of our dead youth . . . and contrasts this with our institutions for the feeble-minded [*Idioteninstitute*] with their solicitude for their living patients -- then one would be deeply shocked by the glaring disjunction between the sacrifice of the most valuable possession of humanity on one side and on the other the greatest care of beings who are not only worthless but even manifest negative value.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 27.

The phrase "manifest negative value" probably referred to the alleged disproportionate number of "unfit" Germans, compared with "fit" Germans, who survived the war, and their demands on national resources.

In the second section of the book, Alfred Hoche tailored his argument to suit the medical community. Because he was a professor of psychiatry, Hoche had more credibility than Binding among scientists and physicians. Hoche painted a bleak picture of the future of medicine in Germany. He described it as "a distressing idea that an entire generations of nurses shall vegetate next to empty human shells [*leeren Menschenhülsen*]." <sup>73</sup> Hoche replied to accusations about the possibility of error in his and Binding's work, saying "what is good and reasonable must happen despite every risk of error . . . humanity loses so many of its members on account of error that one more or less hardly counts in the balance." <sup>74</sup> When taken in context, after millions of Europeans died in the war, Hoche's retort does not seem as outlandish, but is suggestive of a certain change in ethical priorities.

In an attempt to skirt the morality issue, Hoche instead turned to questions of cost and included some disturbing economic statistics. Hoche claimed that he had contacted every German asylum and, after careful analysis, determined that the cost to keep a mentally ill person in an asylum for a year was 1,300RM. He argued further that those 20-30 "idiots" in an asylum with a life expectancy of fifty represented "a massive capital in the form of foodstuffs, clothing and heating, which is being subtracted from the national product for entirely unproductive purposes." <sup>75</sup> This statistic displays the harsh reality of the reduced value of human life in Germany after World War I. Hoche's statistics would later be used

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 54.

by radical racists for developing what they considered cost-efficient methods of medical care.

In addition to *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens*, several other books discussing the advantages of negative eugenics appeared in the early 1920s. In 1921 Dr.'s Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz published *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitlehre und Rassenhygiene (Outline of Human Genetics and Racial Hygiene)* a two-volume scientific textbook for medical schools used both in Germany and abroad.<sup>76</sup> In 1931, the book was translated into English.<sup>77</sup> It is important to note that the publisher of English version did not include the term racial hygiene in their translation of the title. The title of the English textbook is *Human Heredity*. The change in the title suggests that racial hygiene was not as accepted in English-speaking as it was in Germany. The strongest supporters of the introduction of racial hygiene into public education were racial hygienists and professors in medical schools.

As Table 3 shows, courses specifically devoted to racial hygiene began in 1918 and increased rapidly until 1920. These findings confirm the increasing influence of racial hygiene, with a particular stress on public health and chronic diseases, on medicine. Indirectly, this suggests that all medical professionals in the 1930s had some background in racial hygiene.

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<sup>76</sup> Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitlehre und Rassenhygiene* (Munich: J.F. Lehmann, 1921).

<sup>77</sup> Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz, *Human Heredity*, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931).

**Table 3. University Lectures in Racial Hygiene, 1918-1920**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY</b>	<b>PROFESSOR</b>	<b>TITLE OF LECTURE</b>
1918	Göttingen	Rosenthal	National health care (social and racial hygiene)
	Berlin	Grotjahn	Racial hygiene and Eugenics
1919	Freiburg	Fischer	Social anthropology
	Freiburg	Nissle	Social hygiene, including racial hygiene
	Halle	Drigalski	Social hygiene, politics, Biology
	Heidelberg	Dresel	Social hygiene including racial hygiene
	Leipzig	Döllken	Racial hygiene and criminal psychology
	Munich	Lenz	Social hygiene and racial hygiene
	Tübingen	P. Kuhn	Racial hygiene
1920	Dresden	P. Kuhn	Sexual, racial, and social hygiene
	Giessen	Huntemüller	Heredity and racial hygiene
	Halle	Anton	Racial welfare and heredity
	Kiel	Kisskalt	racial hygiene
	Cologne	Müller	Hygiene, including heredity
	Rostock	Reiter	Population policy, including race
	Tübingen	Basler	Racial physiology

Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 339.

The instructors' enthusiasm spread to students, and in 1922, the *Verband Deutscher Medizinerschaften* (Medical Students' League) argued that racial hygiene was vital to the future of the race and nation. University courses and a national institute had been long-standing demands of all racial hygiene societies in Germany from their beginnings in the early twentieth century. Racial hygienists lobbied for Baur, Fischer, and Lenz's textbook to be used in all schools, both in medical schools and in universities. In addition, they demanded that racial hygiene become a compulsory subject in all German medical schools. University presidents acted upon their demands.<sup>78</sup>

Albert Grotjahn's, (1869-1931) one of the leaders of the Berlin branch of the Society for Racial Hygiene, appointment to head the medical department at the University of Berlin after the war (where he had been teaching on social hygiene since 1914), is a concrete example of one of the ways eugenics was infiltrated into the medical curriculum. His course on social hygiene was divided into two sections. The first part discussed the influence of tuberculosis, alcoholism, and nutrition on German society; the second part, on the social hygiene of mother and child, addressed the declining birth rate and eugenic solutions to the problem. Grotjahn's lectures would later be complemented by courses on inheritance by Heinrich Poll, whom the medical faculty supported for a teaching post in heredity. This was not surprising given that conservatives were campaigning for chairs of genetics. In 1921 and 1922, he lectured on heredity and eugenics, and in 1923 on the biology of genius, talent, and feeble-mindedness.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 322.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 337-339.

In contrast to their more conservative colleagues in Berlin, eugenicists at the University of Munich tended towards extreme racism. For example, racial hygienist Fritz Lenz was very active in a new department for racial hygiene established in Munich. In 1933, Lenz would become department head. Munich was a very fitting place for the first chair of race hygiene because it had been a hotbed for the Nordic Ring of the Society for Racial Hygiene for years. Lecture topics in Munich included: human heredity and genetics, psychiatry, family research, racial, social, and sexual hygiene, European and German racial studies, and demography. As can be seen even through the course titles, the racist part of racial hygiene was emphasized much more strongly in Munich than in Berlin.<sup>80</sup>

Two of the main places where this radical racism proliferated were the German Psychiatric Institute and the Institute of Hygiene. The Institute of Hygiene was headed by Max von Gruber, a strong advocate of positive eugenics. Fritz Lenz held a high post, giving lectures on reproductive hygiene, elementary health (based on gymnastics, games, sport, and school health), and medical statistics, in which he emphasized the contribution of genetics in the development of social problems. In addition to Lenz's work, Kaup studied toxicology and emphasized the correlation between socio-economics and hygiene. Although the two were very similar, Lenz's research tended towards heredity and genetics, whereas Kaup's interest lay in economics. The divergent interests of Lenz and Kaup demonstrate that even the extreme racial hygienists in Germany did not take a monolithic approach to research. Kraepelin established the German Psychiatric Research Institute in 1919. Like their counterparts in Berlin, researchers at the Institute studied social welfare

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 339.

issues. However, racial hygienists at the German Psychiatric Research Institute stressed the importance of racial hygiene in maintaining a "fit" Nordic race.<sup>81</sup>

The impact of World War I significantly affected research trends in Germany. In addition to the German Psychiatric Institute and the Institute of Hygiene, five more institutes were established in the 1920s. They included: the Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Anthropologie, Menschliche, Erblehre und Eugenik in Berlin (1927); Rassenbiologisches Institut der Universität in Hamburg (1924); Institut für Rassen- und Völkerkunde der Universität in Leipzig (1927); Institut für Erbiologie und Rassenhygiene der Universität in Munich (1923); and the Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Genealogie und Demographie, in Munich (1919). During the Third Reich, thirty-four similar institutes were established.<sup>82</sup> As courses on racial hygiene became mandatory, and physicians began to have internships in the institutes, an entire generation of medical professionals was indoctrinated with racial hygienic ideas.

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<sup>81</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 45

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 327-29.

## V. CONCLUSION

Nothing happens in a vacuum, and the racial hygiene movement in Germany is no exception. Initially, racial hygienists, such as Wilhelm Schallmayer and Alfred Ploetz, sought to better conditions for all of German society. They suggested numerous ways to increase the birthrate among the *Bildungsbürgertum*, build the economy, and eliminate poverty. Prior to the war, the focus of racial hygiene was more class-based than racially based. The declining birthrate in Germany was the overarching problem racial hygienists saw in Germany. Advocates of racial hygiene feared that the birthrates among the "unfit" members of society would surpass those of the "healthy" Germans. They worried that overpopulation would destroy Germany socially and economically. At the same time racial hygienists wanted to increase the birthrate of Germany overall, because they saw other countries as a threat. These were trends also to be seen in other European countries.

But the war caused numerous social problems such as deaths from food shortages, worsening living conditions, the loss of hundreds of thousands of Germany's most "fit" young men in battle, and perceived immorality. Some of the more radical racial hygienists such as Fritz Lenz and Julius Lehmann then began to look for more efficient methods of dealing with the population increase among the less "fit" members of society. They used Germans' fears of the chaotic society to argue that because of the destruction caused by World War I, drastic social reforms were needed to restore order to society. They relied heavily on the scientific work of Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, and



Gregor Mendel to support their reasons for curtailing reproduction among some members of society.

Thus, by the aftermath of the war racial hygiene in its purest form had been transformed. Eugenicists would play an important role in policy-making under the Weimar government. The increasingly radical racial hygienists would use "science" as a basis for their work on sterilization and preventing births among the "useless" members of society. The work of Lenz, Fischer, and others would later be used by the National Socialists to justify racist health measures.

The racial hygiene movement itself was not unique to Germany. The idea of a German volk united by history and culture was definitely present long before World War I. Nevertheless, the idea of improving society through elimination of the unfit did not originate in Germany and thus could be found in other countries as well. In fact, the United States was at times perceived as being in the forefront. For example, in 1907 Indiana passed a law requiring sterilization of criminals and people in asylums. Following the Indiana law, 28 other states passed similar legislation. By 1939, 30,000 Americans had been involuntarily sterilized.<sup>83</sup>

After the war, Germany was not alone in losing an entire generation of men on the battlefield. However, the racial hygiene movement in Germany became more radical than in other countries during the war. There are several possible contributing factors to the change. First, the more conservative leaders of the racial hygiene movement such as Schallmayer and Grotjahn were much older than radical racists such as Fritz Lenz and Eugen Fischer. By the time that the terminology and focus of racial hygiene had

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<sup>83</sup> Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 97.

changed, they were too old to argue against it. Another reason why the German racial hygiene movement did not follow the same trends as eugenics was the toll that World War I took on the population. Unlike other countries with similar movements, Germany had lost the war and was forced to take responsibility for starting it. Lastly, racial hygienists argued that due to deterioration of living conditions, the deaths of hundreds of thousands of "fit" German men while the "unfit" stayed on the home front, and prostitution during the war, the birthrate among the "inferior" people of society would continue to increase at a faster pace than the "fit" and eventually outnumber the "fit" Germans. Although other countries such as the United States and Great Britain had eugenics movements, the infiltration of radical racism was peculiar to Germany.

Historian Daniel Pick argues in his book *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, 1848-1918*, published in 1989, that Europeans treat Germany as though it were "simply aberrant or degenerate, a kind of cancer in the healthy body of the Continent." It is important that Pick's book was published in 1989 because while he was writing it, the Berlin Wall still separated East Germany from West Germany. Although Pick's analysis of the way in which Westerners think of Germany today may be outdated, his contention that "Assumptions of social organic degeneration," are still present and, "inflect politics and culture, even if the explicit theories of racial, biological, criminal and psychiatric degeneration are now buried or repressed in Western mainstream debate," may still be true.<sup>84</sup> For example, in 2005 a judge in the United States ruled that the feeding tube of Terry Schiavo be removed even though it was her only source of life. The ruling

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<sup>84</sup> Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c.1948-c. 1918* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 240.

suggests that feelings of degeneration and the declining value of human life expressed by racial hygienists during and immediately following World War I may still be present in 2005.

In conclusion, the destruction created by the First World War in Germany prompted racial hygienists to publish books in which they attempted to gather support for widespread social reforms. Theoretically, the reforms would restore Germany from deteriorated living conditions and perceived immorality. At the same time, scientific terminology changed to include more racist elements. Because racial hygienists argued that their ideas were based in science, the racial hygiene movement in Germany post-World War I can best be described as adhering to "scientific racism."

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