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Weimar Eugenics: The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics in Social Context

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Summary

This paper examines relations between eugenics and genetics during the Weimar Republic. Research aims and requests for funding were motivated by a sense that biology could contribute to national reconstruction after the First World War. Geneticists' participation in social policy-making is assessed, as well as the rise of interest in eugenics and racial biology among public health officials. It was important that eugenics be acceptable to the (Roman Catholic) Centre Party, and a sometime Jesuit, Hermann Muckermann, took a leading role as intermediary between the state and human geneticists in the founding of the Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics. Earlier plans to establish a national institute, the organization of the Institute as it actually materialized, and the scope of research are considered. Finally, the dislocation in 1933 is assessed in order to further emphasize how the Institute was deeply embedded in the Weimar social structure.

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During the 1920s, eugenics had a profound influence on social welfare policies in many countries. Developments in the Weimar Republic have been overlooked because of assumed continuities with Nazi racism. Linking the eugenics movement only to Nazi racism obscures the complexity of the relations between hereditarian biology and eugenics, which was itself remarkably diverse. Over the past decade a few historians of ideas have been revising the picture of the intellectual composition of German eugenics. Yet major questions of the links of eugenics with developments in the sciences of human heredity, and with state social policy, remain unanswered. State and institutional archives provide a way of assessing the relative importance of different strands in the eugenics movement.[1] The German eugenics movement can be seen as passing through

[1] P. J. Weindling, 'Die Preussische Medizinalverwaltung und die "Rassenhygiene" 1905–1933', in *Medizin im Faschismus*, edited by A. Thom and H. Spaar (Berlin, 1983), pp. 23–35. Extended version as 'Die Preussische Medizinalverwaltung und die "Rassenhygiene"'. Anmerkungen zur Gesundheitspolitik der Jahre 1905–1933', *Zeitschrift für Sozialreform* (1984), 675–87.

a series of distinct phases, each having a profound impact on German genetics and hereditarian biology. The aim of this paper is to investigate the social interests in the eugenics movement during a phase, from 1927 to 1932, when geneticists assumed leadership and control of the eugenics movement.

1. Eugenics and genetics

By 1933 there was a well-developed science of, and legislative programme for, eugenics. From 1930, state officials, geneticists and doctors were preparing eugenic sterilization legislation. The geneticist Richard Goldschmidt later complained that the Nazis 'took over our entire plan' of eugenic measures. At a meeting of the Prussian Health Council in July 1932 for the drafting of sterilization legislation, leading Weimar geneticists of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes exercised considerable influence. Geneticists like Goldschmidt, Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, Otmar von Verschuer and Fritz von Wettstein regarded biology as having a major role in the social and economic reconstruction of the nation after the massive war casualties, national collapse and ensuing starvation.

Yet to consider Weimar eugenics only in terms of how it constituted a preliminary to Nazi racial policies can obscure the manner in which eugenics had come to permeate Weimer biology, medicine and social policy in quite remarkable ways. The presence of geneticists as advisors on public health committees was not new in 1932, but the result of well established procedures, which were a distinctive feature of Weimar biology. In May 1920 the newly established Prussian Ministry of Public Welfare had established a *Beirat für Rassenhygiene*, and this Council was incorporated into the State Health Council, the *Landesgesundheitsrat*, as the *Ausschuss für Rassenhygiene und Bevölkerungswesen*. The fifteen original members of the Council for Racial Hygiene included the geneticists Baur, Agnes Bluhm, Carl Correns, Goldschmidt and Heinrich Poll, as well as the anthropologists Felix von Luschan, Hans Virchow and Max Westenhöfer. Their role was to evaluate scientifically the racial hygienic legacy of the War, as part of the government programme of social reconstruction.

Before 1914, racial hygiene had been decisively rejected by the Imperial administration as a violation of prevailing ethical codes and of personal liberty. By way of contrast, Weimar administrators hoped that eugenics could solve intractable social problems with its promising combination of genetic, medical, and demographic expertise. The *Ausschuss für Rassenhygiene* was called on to advise on issues like taxation as a factor in marriage age, emigration and rural settlements, abortion, and on the racial biology of the family. Goldschmidt recollected: 'The problems of this council were mostly of a eugenic nature. We were to prepare legislation on such matters as abortion, help for large families, sterilization of defectives, and so forth.'[2] The Committee campaigned for increased funding for research and for the teaching of genetics, the establishing of a national institute of eugenics, and for the recognition of

[2] R. B. Goldschmidt, *In and Out of the Ivory Tower* (Seattle, 1960), p. 231; 'Die Eugenik im Dienste der Volkswohlfahrt', *Veröffentlichungen aus der Gebiet der Medizinalverwaltung*, 38 (1932), 629–740; J. Noakes, 'Nazism and Eugenics: the Background to the Nazi Sterilization Law of 14 July 1933', in *Ideas into Politics. Aspects of European History 1880–1950*, edited by B. J. Bullen, *et al.* (London, 1984), pp. 75–94; A. Gütt, E. Rüdin, and F. Ruttke, *Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses vom 14 Juli 1933* (Munich, 1934). Zentrales Staatsarchiv Potsdam RMdI 15.01 Nr 26248 on sterilization.

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heredity as a major factor in public health, education and social policy.[3] Genetics can be seen as claiming a vital social role in the Weimar experiment in republican democracy.

A crucial instance of the new assertive claims by geneticists can be seen in the foundation and activities of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics. It was established in 1927 and was a response to the demand, which dated back to 1921. for a national eugenics institute. The Institute was later portrayed as a precursor of Nazi eugenic policies during the Third Reich. This was how in 1936 its Director, Eugen Fischer, depicted its genesis.[4] But the origins and obligations of the Institute cannot be explained without reference to distinctive features of Weimar genetics, and of the newly defined social role of science after 1918. The Institute must be understood in relation to other scientific institutes of the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft, as well as with regard to the hopes for a new spirit of national co-ordination to dictate the development of science.

The foundation of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology therefore offers a means of testing current theories of the origins and growth of German eugenics. Historians have been divided over whether, as Loren Graham has suggested, among the eugenicists of the 1920s 'humane socialist principles predominated'; or whether eugenics during the 1920s already contained intended sterilization, euthanasia, and genocide, for which the change in political control in 1933 permitted full implementation. Graham has compared Weimar and Soviet eugenics.[5] A further indication of compatibility between German and Soviet eugenics was the joint Institute for Racial Biology initiated by German scientists like Ludwig Aschoff and Oscar Vogt visiting Moscow, and lasting from 1931 to 1938.[6] Comparisons need to be made of eugenics in Germany with eugenics in Britain, Scandinavia, and the United States as these all contained socially progressive elements attempting to disengage eugenics from ideologies of racial purity.[7] In order to assess the social composition of the German eugenics movement it is necessary to analyse the collective biographies of various German eugenic groupings, the political and religious profiles of eugenics lobbies, and to look at the institutional records of scientific, medical and welfare institutions.

[3] P. J. Weindling (footnote 1). Bundesarchiv Koblenz R 86/Nr 2374, *Unfruchtbarmachung* for debates on sterilization in the early 1920s. ZSTA Merseburg, Rep. 76 viii B Nr 2072 Beirat für Rassenhygiene, 1920–1921. Goldschimidt (footnote 2), pp. 230–1.

[4] E. Fischer in *25 Jahre Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften*, 3 vols (Berlin, 1936), II, 349, 355–6. Compare E. Fischer, 'Das Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik', *Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie* (1927), 147–52. On Weimar genetics, see J. Harwood, 'The Reception of Morgan's Chromosome Theory in Germany: Inter-War Debate over Cytoplasmic Inheritance', *Medizinhistorisches Journal*, 19 (1984), 3–32.

[5] L. R. Graham, 'Science and Values: the Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s', *American Historical Review*, 82 (1977), 1133–64 (pp. 1136, 1137). Compare L. R. Graham, *Between Science and Values* (New York, 1981), pp. 221–23.

[6] Bundesarchiv Koblenz R 73 Nr 210 Russisch-Deutsches Institut für Rassensforschung. Also R 73/Nr 225–227.

[7] For recent debates on British eugenics, see G. Searle, *Eugenics and Politics in Britain* (Leyden, 1976); C. Webster, editor, *Biology, Medicine and Society 1840–1940* (Cambridge, 1981); M. Freeden, 'Eugenics and Progressive Thought: a Study in Ideological Affinity', *The Historical Journal*, 22 (1979), 645–71; G. Jones, 'Eugenics and Social Policy Between the Wars', *The Historical Journal*, 13 (1982), 717–28; M. Freeden, 'Eugenics and Ideology', *The Historical Journal*, 26 (1923), 959–62. On Scandinavian eugenics, see N. Roll-Hansen, 'Eugenics before World War II. The Case of Norway', *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 2 (1981), 269–98. On U.S. eugenics, see D. Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Nashville, 1968); G. E. Allen, 'The Misuse of Biological Hierarchies: The American Eugenics Movement, 1900–1940', *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 5 (1983), 105–28; D. Kevles, 'Annals of Eugenics. A Secular Faith', *The New Yorker* (1984), 8 October, pp. 51–115; 15 October, pp. 52–125; 22 October, pp. 92–151; 29 October pp. 51–117.

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Until recently, interpretations of German eugenics have relied on an impressionistic creation of a composite picture of eugenics from textbooks and pamphlets. Study of the institutionalization of eugenics before 1933 requires the use of material in official archives. It is thus possible to gauge the extent to which eugenics was given official backing, who among the eugenicists had most influence, and which aspects of eugenics, positive or negative, compulsory or voluntary, were given most support.[8] In looking at the relations between the state and eugenic organizations, it is necessary to take into account the social composition, funding and activities of the societies for racial hygiene, and of university and other academic institutions for eugenic research. This entails analysis of the social composition and aspirations of the scientific community. The institutionalization of eugenics as a science cannot be understood without recognition of changes in the professional expectations of geneticists, and of a consequent redefinition of the scope of scientific activity. There arose the sense that biological laws of development, natural selection and inheritance could provide a new set of standards on which to base legislation and socio-economic planning.

During the 1920s, the German Racial Hygiene Society was dominated by public health officials and by geneticists. Alfred Ploetz, the originator of the term *Rassenhygiene* in 1895, and prime mover in the German Racial Hygiene Society before World War I, lost control of the reconstituted German Racial Hygiene Society in 1922, when it shifted its base to Berlin. Ploetz was excluded from government eugenic committees, and does not live up to Graham's claim that he was 'a central figure in the German eugenics movement of the 1920s'.[9] Doctors and biologists formed from the outset the largest prefessional group in the new Racial Hygiene Societies, but after 1918 they looked to the state for funds to promote their studies. An alliance arose between public health officials, who were keen to tackle the biological roots of ill-health, and geneticists, offering the state important new technical expertise.[10]

When Otto Krohne, a leading Prussian public health official, took over the Presidency of the Berlin and German Racial Hygiene Societies in 1922, these societies received annual government grants. In 1922, the Berlin Society was given its first annual subsidy of 3000 marks. Additional grants were made for specific projects: in 1924, the sum of 1000 marks was granted for research on criminal genealogies, in 1926 Prussia contributed 4000 marks towards the costs of a eugenic propaganda film, and in 1927 an exhibition on Racial Hygiene and Heredity was subsidized. Ministerial officials

[8] Research is in progress on Germany eugenics, although there is as yet no definitive study. There is much duplication of work already done. A major omission from most studies is B. Schreiber, *Die Männer Hinter Hitler: Eine deutsche Warnung an die Welt* (n.p., n.d.) [1971?], translated as *The Men Behind Hitler: A German Warning to the World* (London, n.d.) [1975?]. Fundamental is G. Mann, editor, *Biologismus im 19.Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1973). For an introductory sketch, see J. Kroll, 'Zur Entstehung und Institutionalisierung einer naturwissenschaftlichen und sozialpolitischen Bewegung: Die Entwicklung der Eugenik/Rassenhygiene bis zum Jahre 1933 (PhD Dissertation Tübingen University, 1983). Also H.-M. Dietl, *Eugenik Entstehung und gesellschaftliche Bedingtheit* (Jena, 1984). For a case-study of Schallmayer, see S. F. Weiss, 'Race Hygiene and the Rational Management of National Efficiency: Wilhelm Schallmayer and the Origins of German Eugenics, 1890–1920' (PhD Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1983). For Grotjahn and social hygiene, see P. J. Weindling, 'Soziale Hygiene und Eugenik: Der Fall Alfred Grotjahn', *Das Argument. Jahrbuch für kritische Medizin* (1984) pp. 6–20. On the distinction between Wiemar and Nazi eugenics, see G. Lilienthal, 'Rassenhygiene im Dritten Reich. Krise und Wende', *Medizinhistorisches Journal*, 14 (1979), 114–34. On the background to Nazi racial hygiene and public health, see A. Labisch and F. Tennstedt, *Der Weg zum 'Gesetz über die Vereinheitlichung des Gesundheitswesens'*, 2 vols (Düsseldorf, 1985).

[9] See Graham (footnote 5), 1136.

[10] For statistical analyses, see Kroll (footnote 8) 113. Also Weindling, "Die Preussische Medizinalverwaltung und die 'Rassenhygiene'", *Zeitschrift für Sozialreform* (1984), 675–87 (p. 677).

emphasized the public health element in eugenics by promoting a special society for eugenic propaganda, the *Bund für Volksaufartung*, which received from 6000 to 10000 marks per annum after 1925. District officials were encouraged to support the activities of both societies, and registrars of births, marriages and deaths enthusiastically supported government plans for eugenic certificates of good health for those intending to marry.[11]

Evidence of the role of geneticists in formulating social policy indicates the enlarged sphere of expertise which geneticists had arrogated for their science in Weimar Germany. This is further borne out when the writings of geneticists are examined, especially their textbooks and popularizations. Funding for genetic research was claimed on the basis of relevance to medical and social problems, and there was a corresponding application of hereditarian biological laws to public health and social welfare problems. In much of the scientific output of Weimar biologists, as well as in their social perceptions, genetics was indistinguishable from scientific eugenics. Any demarcation that was to be made was not between genetics and eugenics, but among the different factions of eugenicists, who differed in the level of their scientific and medical knowledge, and in social outlook.

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2. A new model of scientific organization

Eugenics changed from being the creed of an introverted nationalist grouping to becoming an integral part of social medicine. The shift occurred in conjunction with an enlarging of the scope of genetics to embrace new social values and a creed of utility. The Weimar state emphasized professional and scientific expertise, and geneticists rose to the challenge of restoring the biological fabric of the defeated and starving nation. Erwin Baur intensified his commitments to eugenics as a result of the war. In 1917 he became President of the Berlin Racial Hygiene Society. He gained a sense of the national importance of applied genetics. He believed that applying genetics to agriculture would improve the food supply, and permit the extension of rural settlements, where a vigorous new generation could be bred. He advised the government on rural settlements and on agricultural policy. He considered that just as a new species of grain could be produced, so the German race could be improved by applying the principles of natural selection to society. Baur typifies the post-war expectation that biology could provide national values and be a guide to future legislation, avoiding the chaos of party politics.[12] Other leading biologists like Hans Spemann were convinced that their work enshrined enduring standards which were important to the education of future generations.[13]

From 1919 these attitudes provided the rationale for the repeated demands for the state to support research into and teaching of hereditary biology and for a national eugenics institute. Yet the eugenicists went further. They considered that their scientific studies of heredity had the important role of guiding the state, municipal and medical authorities in methods for the improvement of the biological quality of the *Volk*.

Although the defeat of 1918 brought about administrative and financial collapse, scientists responded by arguing that biology could take a major role in national reconstruction. Before the war, demands that the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft support

[11] Zentrales Staatsarchiv Dienstelle Merseburg Rep 76 viiia Nr 2073 Bl 48, 74, 90, 91, 106, 496 for subsidies from 1923–1927.

[12] Konrad von Rauch, 'Gestalt und Wirken eines deutschen Biologen' (MS biography in the Bibliothek und Archiv zur Geschichte der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft) [hereafter MPG].

[13] T. J. Horder and P. J. Weindling, 'Hans Spemann as a Model Scientist', *A Critical History of Embryology*, edited by T. J. Horder and J. Witkowski (Cambridge) (in the press).

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eugenics had not met with any response, as when Geza von Hoffmann, the Hungarian consul and commentator on U.S. eugenics, wrote to Harnack in April 1914 of the need for a national institute for racial biology. Wartime publications of German eugenicists pointed to the substantial resources, which were being lavished on eugenics in the United States.[14] Baur was deeply impressed by the U.S. funding of eugenic record-keeping and applied genetics. The massive war losses and the declining birth rate implanted in scientists a sense of urgent need for a national eugenic institute. At a time when biological research might have been starved of funds, and suffered from international isolation, nationally-minded biologists launched a campaign for the funding of hereditarian biology and eugenics. The physiologist Emil Abderhalden pressed for a national institute for hereditarian research at the Prussian Assembly's Committee on Population Policy in 1919. The German and Berlin Racial Hygiene Societies echoed these demands in 1922, when the Prussian medical authorities were encouraged by Otto Krohne (who was also President of both Racial Hygiene Societies) to support the establishment of a national institute for human heredity and population studies.[15]

The spokesmen for the Prussian Medical Council's Committee on Racial Hygiene were Baur, Goldschmidt, von Luschan, and the medical statistician Roesle. They suggested an Institute staffed by three doctors and a statistician. On 4 January 1923, the Reich Minister of the Interior called a conference on the establishing of such an Institute. It was pointed out that Great Britain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States already had such institutes.[16] A wide range of research topics were regarded as urgent: these were hereditary diseases such as cancer and tuberculosis, hereditary factors in crime, the inheritance of nervous conditions, and the racial composition of Germany. Another model of the national institute was suggested which involved six departments, for cell biology, genealogical research, German racial anthropology, the study of hereditary diseases and biological constitutions, 'genetic' therapy for hereditary conditions, and statistics.[17] In the short term the Reich authorities decided that such an Institute could not be established, although they would continue to make available funds for new research posts in human heredity. The need for co-ordinating existing hereditarian and demographic research was emphasized. In the longer term these discussions explain how in 1927 (during the economically buoyant mid-1920s) the national eugenics institute was realized primarily with the support of state funds. These origins and the distinctive post-war context are generally overlooked by those seeing the Institute as a preliminary to Nazi racial policies.[18]

The demand for a national institute coincided with two novel features of Weimar science. In Imperial Germany, the generalized value of pure science had been stressed as superior to technical applications. By way of contrast, during the 1920s the national benefits of applied science and the co-ordination of science were regarded as vital, so as to make the most rational use of the nation's economic and human resources. Erwin

[14] MPG, Arbeitsphysiologie Gen II 8 Bd II (1913–1918) Bl. 80, 84. Die Leistungen der Amerikaner auf rassenhygienischen Gebiete, in BA Koblenz R 86/Nr 2371 Bd 1 Rassenhygiene Bl. 108.

[15] ZSTA Merseburg Rep 76 viii B Nr 2003 Bl 187. Rep 169 D II C A Bd 2 Nr 1 Beiheft 2 Ausschuss Verhandlungen zu den Akten über die Bevölkerungsfragen. Antrag 8 Vererbungs- und Konstitutionslehre, 6 May 1919.

[16] BA Koblenz R 86/2371 Bd 1 Bl 232.

[17] BA Koblenz R 86/2371 Bd 1 Bl 196–199, 236–239.

[18] B. Müller-Hill, *Tödliche Wissenschaft. Die Aussonderung von Juden, Zigeunern und Geisteskranken 1933–1945* (Reinbek, 1984).

Baur advocated both these novel aspects of science policy as adviser to the emergency fund for science, the *Notgemeinschaft Deutscher Wissenschaften*. He warned that the Soviet Union, despite its materialist barbarism, was pouring money into applied biology. He consequently pressed for a nationally co-ordinated research policy. He enlisted the support of Robert Bosch and of Hans Spemann to urge the appointment of a national organizer, or Führer, who was to co-ordinate all scientific activity. While this scheme was never realized, Weimar eugenics represented the modern type of science which was eminently suitable for restructuring on such a nationally co-ordinated and applied basis. The spirit of co-ordination was manifested in the textbook of eugenics written by Baur, Fischer and Lenz in 1921. Baur's deep commitment to a nationalist biology was later revealed in his support for the Lehmann journal, *Der Biologe. Monatsschrift zur Wahrung der Belange der deutschen Biologen*, which first appeared in 1931.[19]

Similar shifts of priorities had occurred on many levels of biological and medical science. From 1919 there was a rapid expansion in the teaching of heredity. Medical research was reorientated to problems of the hereditary constitution in the conceptualizing of problems like immunity to infection, ageing and hygiene. Eugenics became an accepted part of medical science. This occurred on many levels: in medical education, in the training of medical officers, school doctors and dentists, midwives, infant nurses and *Kindergärtnerinnen*, and of social workers.

An indication of the extent to which eugenics affected biomedical research is provided by several of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes. Eugenic dimensions to research were emphasized by Oscar Vogt's Institute of Brain Research. At the Institute for Experimental Therapy, Hans Reiter (who was later to take a leading position in public health during the Third Reich) did research on heredity and environment in child development. Baur's *Institut für Zuchtungsforschung* at Müncheberg, opened in 1927, pioneered applied genetics for agriculture, and he regarded this as having implications for human heredity.[20]

Two major pillars of eugenic research were the Institute for Biology and the Institute of Psychiatry. The foundation of an Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics was neither an isolated occurrence nor an aberration in policies to support pure research, but the keystone in a grand eugenic edifice. At the Institute for Biology several researchers such as Bluhm, Goldschmidt and Nachtsheim drew eugenic conclusions from their work and served on government racial hygiene committees. Agnes Bluhm's interest in eugenics stretched back to the 1880s, when she had encountered the eugenic idealism of August Forel and Alfred Ploetz. Her research on heredity and alcoholism was financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, which from at least 1923 drew on the advice of the eugenicist and geneticist, Hermann Poll. In 1927, Goldschmidt wrote in his popular work on heredity, *Ascaris*, that the scientist was in a position to draw conclusions for humanity like a breeder for the improvement of his stock. He pointed out that the 'feeble-minded' and the deaf and dumb would not survive in nature, and that it was mistaken of society to allow the procreation of poor hereditary stock. He recommended that it was necessary to institutionalize or sterilize

[19] B. Schroeder-Gudehus, 'The Argument for the Self-Government and Public Support of Science in Weimar Germany', *Minerva*, 10 (1972), 537–70 (p. 550); E. Baur, E. Fischer and F. Lenz, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene, vol. 1, Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre* (Munich, 1921).

[20] O. Vogt, 'Neurology and Eugenics: The Role of Experimental Eugenics in their Development', *Eugenics Review*, 24 (1932), 15–18; H. Stubbe, *Geschichte des Instituts für Kulturpflanzenforschung Gatersleben* (Berlin, 1982), pp. 12–14.

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all those with bad hereditary traits, and to instill in children that only those of eugeni value had any attractions or merit. Eugenicists argued that natural selection should b allowed to operate throughout society, as urban conditions and humanitaria medicine and welfare caused degeneration. It is in this context that biological studies c domestication as causing physical degeneration and pathological behaviour should b understood.[21]

The Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft had a major eugenic commitment in th Genealogical-Demographic Department of the *Deutsche Forschungsanstalt fü Psychiatrie*. The Institute was established in April 1918 by Karl Kraepelin, and th Genealogical Department was headed by Ernst Rüdin. Before World War I the Kaise Wilhelm Gesellschaft had rejected the idea of a combined research institute an psychiatric hospital as alien to its original concept of a research institute. U.S. fundin for family research was also important as a model, and an expatriot patron was foun in the American, James Loeb. The post-war aspirations of German biology an medicine made the idea of twinning a research institute with medical facilities desirable In 1924, the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft took over joint responsibility with th Bavarian state for maintaining the *Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Psychiatrie*.[22]

During the 1920s concern with social deviancy and hopes of its scientific contro and cure made a hospital as legitimate a scientific facility as a research station. Ne requirements for the co-operation of state, municipal and school authorities aros Eugenicists like Otmar von Verschuer needed schools and hospitals to provide th records of many hundreds of twins needed for research into hereditary disease. Rüdin's research on hereditary biology had the backing of the Bavarian Ministeries c Justice and the Interior, as well as the co-operation of medical authorities an institutions. He established impressive standards for the reconstruction of families fc the purpose of research into a wide variety of problems of heredity. In 1925 Raine Fetscher began a similar *Erbbiologisches Kartei* supported by the Saxon authoritie. Prussia also authorized the compilation of such records from 1927, which significantl was the year in which the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology wa established.[23]

These innovative research models, designed to produce an applied science c heredity oriented to social problems, profoundly affected the organization and scope c the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology. Without taking into account long standing demands for a national research institute for eugenics and the new direction in the organization of Weimar science, the responsiveness of the Kaiser Wilhelr Gesellschaft and of state authorities to the proposal of an institute for human heredit would be difficult to explain. Earlier eugenic planning for a national institute account for the rapidity of the realization of such an institute after it was first suggested in 192 by the Jesuit biologist and expert on welfare issues, Hermann Muckermann.

3. The founding of the Institute

It might seem paradoxical that the national eugenics institute should have been th brain-child of a Roman Catholic. In 1919, Muckermann had been antagonistic t eugenics. But by 1922 he had joined the committees of the Berlin and German Raci

[21] R. Goldschmidt, *Die Lehre von der Vererbung*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1927), pp. 203–17.

[22] E. Kraepelin, *Lebenserinnerungen* (Berlin, 1983), pp. 209, 219.

[23] For surveys of the 'antisocial', see BA Koblenz R 86/2374 Bd 1 Bl 328–9. ZSTA Merseburg Rep 76 v B Nr 2074 Bl. 346.

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Hygiene Societies. His change of heart on eugenics was symptomatic of the recognition of the importance of eugenics for social welfare. Muckermann's influence cannot be ascribed solely to his energy as an organizer, but must be explained in terms of the structural conditions of social welfare administration and the balance of political power in Prussia.[24]

In Prussia, during the Weimar Republic, health administration was transferred to a new ministry of welfare, *das Ministerium für Volkswohlfahrt*. Both the Ministers, Adam Stegerwald and then Heinrich Hirtsiefer, were prominent in the Centre Party. During the Weimar Republic Prussia was controlled by a coalition of the SPD and the (Roman Catholic) Centre Party. Heinrich Hirtsiefer was Minister of Welfare from 1921 until the dissolution of the Ministry in the financial crisis of 1932. His approval of eugenics was important in allowing professional groupings of doctors, and of public health and social work experts to initiate a number of eugenic schemes like genetic counselling before marriage. It also meant that senior officials were replaced by members of the Centre Party. In 1928, Heinrich Schopohl, a Catholic and Centre Party man, became Ministerial Director of the Health Department. Schopohl was to preside over the sterilization discussions in the early 1930s. Muckermann's influence must consequently be seen in the context of the Centre Party's control of welfare. He was also on excellent terms with the Bavarian *Staatspräsident*. Muckermann assumed the important role of a middle man between the eugenicists and state officials.

When Muckermann suggested to the geneticist Hans Nachtsheim (who worked in Baur's Institute) that there was a need for a eugenics institute, Baur mobilized the support of geneticists, while Muckermann took charge of recruiting support among state authorities and the general public.[25] The close relations between the state and welfare organizations explain why Muckermann was in a position of influence which far exceeded his capacities as a biologist. He aimed to collect one million marks for the new eugenic institute. During 1926 to 1927 he undertook extensive fund raising. The Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft had traditionally relied on donations from wealthy industrialists to support research in pure and applied science. It was indicative of the shift in the organization of science and medicine in the Weimar Republic that industrialists gave far less to the new Institute than the Reich and Prussian administrations. Muckermann had initially hoped to use his contacts with Ruhr industrialists to good ends, but contacts with state, municipal and insurance fund

[24] F. Glum, *Zwischen Wissenschaft, Wirtschaft und Politik* (Bonn, 1964), p. 284; H. Muckermann, 'Erblichkeitsforschung und Eheschliesssung in der Zukunft', *Bericht der Verhandlungen des bevölkerungspolitischen Kongress der Stadt Köln, Pfingstwoche von 17.–21 Mai 1921* (n.p., n.d.), pp. 73–97; K. Nowak, *'Euthenasie' und Sterilisierung im 'Dritten Reich'*. Third edition (Weimar/Göttingen, 1984), pp. 107–111.

[25] H. Nachtsheim, 'Die Notwendigkeit einer aktiven Erbgesundheitspflege', *Gesundheitspolitik* (1964), 321–339 (p. 323).

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officials proved far more lucrative. Between 24 April 1926 and 2 August 1927 the following amounts of money were raised:

Type of donor	Reichmarks	Number of persons/institutions
Private and industrial	23 200	16
Municipal	8 725	7
Provincial insurance funds *Landesversicherungsanstalten*	15 868	21
Provincial and district *Landkreis und Provinz*	56 700	9
Preussicher Minister für Wissenschaft	200 000 + site worth 200 000	
Reichsminister des Inneren	500 000	

In addition to state donations, others of at least 5000 marks came from:[26]

	Reichmarks
Landeshauptkasse Oberschlesien	20000
Rheinprovinz	10000
Provinz Westfalen	7500
Landkreis Beuthen	5000
Stadtkasse Essen	5000
Landeshauptkasse Schlesien	5000
Schaffgott'schen Werke Chemnitz	5000
Julius and Hans Thyssen	5000

Berlin was regarded as an appropriate location due to the presence of the immense statistical resources of the Reich administration. Close scientific co-operation was envisaged with the Biological Institute of the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft, and support from municipal medical institutions was ensured. Wilhelm von Drigalski, the municipal medical officer of Berlin, was on the *Kuratorium* of the Institute, as well as Alfred Grotjahn, the Berlin professor of social hygiene.

The new Institute was seen as having a dual scientific and social role. The Senate of the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft hoped that the Institute would counter dilettante racism. In 1929 there was a major controversy over the subsidies of the *Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft* to the Gobineau disciple, Ludwig Schemann. Many eugenicists—although significantly neither Eugen Fischer nor Fritz Lenz—regarded Gobineau's works as no more than Right-wing propaganda using false theories of Aryan racial purity for anti-Semitic and nationalist ends. Certain Reichstag members like the SPD Reichstag representative and physician, Julius Moses, forced the *Notgemeinschaft* to accept additional state controls, and to be more cautious in the funding of anthropology to prevent its use for overtly political ends.[27] The guarding of the scientific image was important.

[26] MPG Generalverwaltung 2411, Finanzierung 18.6.1926–2.9.1927. Nr 2412, Finanzierung 17.9.1927–30.12.1931.

[27] MPG Generalverwaltung 2043. K. Nemitz, 'Antisemitismus in der Wissenschaftspolitik der Weimarer Republik. Der "Fall Ludwig Schemann"', *Jahrbuch des Instituts für deutsche Geschichte*, 12 (1983), 377–406.

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The emphasis on the scientific image of eugenics was conveyed by the use of the term *Eugenik* in preference to *Rassenhygiene*. This was a direction favoured by the Berlin group of the Racial Hygiene Society, which later switched to the term *Eugenik* in 1931. The claim to scientific standing was reinforced by the opening of the Institute coinciding with the 'Fifth International Congress of Heredity', organized by Nachtsheim and massively subsidized by the Reich.[28] The Congress marked the end of over a decade of isolation of German biology—and of German eugenics.

4. The organization of the Institute

The Institute had three departments. Fischer, as Director, headed the department for anthropology, Muckermann headed the eugenics department, and Othmar von Verschuer headed the department for human heredity. These researchers came from the Catholic peripheries of Germany. Muckermann hailed from Westphalia, Fischer from Freiburg/B., and Verschuer from Tübingen. It was only later in life that Fischer left the Catholic Church. Politically, he was nationalist and conservative. Verschuer's religious beliefs were evangelical and he maintained a deep faith throughout the Third Reich. He was relatively young and not at that time a leading researcher. He had an additional distinctive feature to his pedigree, as he had fougnt in the *Freikorps* in the Baltic after Germany had lost the war. Nationalist impulses pervaded his biological research on hereditary diseases.[29]

In keeping with the spirit of co-ordination in science, the new Institute had close links with the University. Fischer's appointment was combined with a University chair in anthropology, and the Institute took over the University's anthropological collection. He also emphasized the relevance of his work to public health and to judicial proceedings, one activity of the the Institute being the establishing of paternity.

Fischer's approach to anthropology had a scientifically distinctive feature in that he emphasized biological heredity rather than just the measurement of physical characteristics. He relied less on craniometry and other anthropometric methods, and more on genetics, and the mapping of racial variation in terms of biological characteristics like blood groups, inherited diseases and other traits which could be explained in hereditarian terms. Family reconstruction was thus a major feature of the new biologistic methodology. Initially Fischer had emphasized the benefits of racial interbreeding, as in his classic study of the Rehoboth intermarrying of settlers and natives in Namibia (South West Africa). Later Fischer accepted Gobineau's emphasis on racial purity, as both Schemann and Fischer worked in Freiburg. During the 1920s Fischer supported the popularization of Gobineau's writings by Schemann as well as of nationalist anthropologists like Hans Guenther.[30]

Soon after the Institute opened, a plan for a major national project on racial variation was submitted by Baur and Lenz on 17 December 1927 to the *Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft*. They suggested *Gemeinschaftsarbeiten*, which would include research on racial variation as indicated by blood groups, the incidence of hereditary diseases, and physical anthropology. When the *Notgemeinschaft* provided additional research funding, the major beneficiary was Fischer. In April 1928 the

[28] H. Nachtsheim, 'Der V. Internationale Kongress für Vererbungswissenschaft', *Die Naturwissenschaften*, 15 (1927), 989–95. ZSTA Merseburg Rep. 76 viii B Nr 2073 B1 308. Goldschmidt (footnote 2), pp. 232–3.

[29] K. D. Thomann, 'Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer—ein Hauptvertreter der faschistischen Rassenhygiene', in Thom and Spaar (footnote 1), pp. 36–52.

[30] On Fischer's backing of Schemann, see Nemitz (footnote 27), 399, 401–2.

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Notgemeinschaft agreed to a plan for co-operative research in anthropology. The idea was to do research on especially significant groups like the Westphalian nobility. Through the *Notgemeinschaft* it was possible to co-ordinate research and funding. The *Notgemeinschaft* had agreed to match contributions from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1930. Fischer received 100 000 marks over five years for systematic local surveys. The work of Rüdin and the criminologist Viernstein in Bavaria was to supplement the surveys organized by Fischer.[31]

Muckermann was as much a propagandist as a researcher. He promoted a Broad Church approach in his efforts to overcome differences between various factions among the eugenicists. He attempted to follow a *via media* between the old guard of Ploetz, the Munich advocates of sterilization, and the advocates of social welfare and positive eugenics. His solutions tended to be couched in rather ambivalent terms like the need to promote a new racial consciousness, so blurring over what were often substantial differences on eugenic issues. His research focused on 'the normal family', and on groups selected for positive eugenic qualities. He studied rural populations with large families and low infant mortality. He analysed the fertility of 5000 university professors. There followed studies of 4800 army officers and of 39 000 Prussian police and officials. Although he was shaken by the Papal condemnation of sterilization in the encyclical, *casti conubii* of 31 December 1930, he continued for as long as it was possible to advocate sterilization.[32]

The department of human heredity, headed by Verschuer, concentrated on twin studies. He examined 700 pairs of twins with regard to the issue of the inheritance of mental qualities. He found 150 pairs of criminal twins, and did research on the inheritance of tuberculosis and cancer. This work was supported by the Reich Ministry of the Interior, the Prussian Ministry of Welfare and the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1927, Verschuer was already an advocate of sterilization for the mentally and 'morally' subnormal, and he emphasized the biological basis of class structure. He condemned democracy as a quantitative rather than a qualitative social system, which posed undue financial burdens on the national elite.[33] Wolfgang Abel did research into the inheritance of physiognomy. Other research was on blood groups, and IG Farben financed an experimental project on the determinants of cranial form using vitamins and toxic substances.

The Institute placed as much emphasis on eugenic education as on research, emphasizing the links between theory and practice. From 1927, Muckermann, Fischer, and Verschuer edited a journal, *Das kommende Geschlecht*, which was distributed by the Prussian state to officials and medical officers. By 1932, Fischer had given three courses to Prussian medical officers on eugenics. Muckermann undertook a marathon lecture programme on eugenics for the Berlin Racial Hygiene Society, and encouraged

[31] E. Fischer, 'Rassenkundliche und erbpathologische Erhebungen am Deutschen Volk. Eine Gemeinschaftsarbeit', and E. Rüdin to Schmitt-Ott, 20 Janauary 1930 on 'Gemeinschaftsarbeit über Rassen', in BA Koblenz R 73/169. MPG Generalverwaltung 2404 Bl. 2–3 re the anthropological researches until 1928. BA Koblenz R 73/169 Rasseforschung I and R 73/170 Rasseforschung II. Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv MK 11779 Erbiologische und kriminalbiologische Untersuchung der Strafgefangenen 1925–30. Staatsarchiv Dresden Justizministerium Nr 1587 *Erbbiologisches Kartei.* Kriminalbiologische Gesellschaft Bd 1–2. Ministerium für Volksbildung Nr 10209/49 Zwillingsforschung.

[32] Muckermann's many eugenic publications are too numerous to list fully here. For examples, see H. Muckermann, 'Wesen der Eugenik und Aufgaben der Gegenwart', *Das kommende Geschlecht*, 5 (1929), 1–48. BA Koblenz R 86 Nr 2370 Vererbungsforschung, for research on differential fertility in 1931. MPG 2404 Tätigkeitsbericht. Nowak (footnote 24), 33, 40, 107–11.

[33] Thomann (footnote 29), 38–41.

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the foundation of new groups. The new Institute provided the leadership of the German and Berlin Racial Hygiene Societies. This marked a shift away from the directing role of state officials. Fischer was President of the German and Berlin Racial Hygiene Societies from 1928 to 1933. Muckermann and Verschuer were Secretaries of both Societies, which met at the Institute. For example, Rüdin spoke there on sterilization for psychiatric conditions in 1929, and Burgdöfer on population statistics. Fischer and Muckermann were also deeply involved in a eugenic education association, the *Bund für Volksaufartung*, presided over by the state official Artur Ostermann. State officials placed great reliance on the role of the scientific elite to provide guidance on social issues. Ostermann and another official, Tschammer von Quaritz, went so far as to call for biologically based laws.[34]

The Institute must consequently be seen as marking a new phase of confidence in the science of eugenics. Whereas previously legislation had been hampered by doubts as to whether there was a firm enough scientific basis for eugenics, the confidence and dynamism of the Institute did much to dispel such doubts. At a time of financial crisis eugenicists offered the state positive reasons for the dismantling of welfare institutions, and for the drafting of sterilization legislation in 1932.[35]

5. The transition to Nazi eugenics

Nazi eugenics was not a direct outgrowth from the activities of the Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics. The Institute was too embedded in the structure of Weimar science and social policy for there to be simply continuity before and after 1933. Attention to the composition of the Institute's staff, and to the social responsibilities of the Institute does not support any thesis of direct and uninterrupted lines of bureaucratic or ideological continuity. Intense pressures had to be exerted on the biologists in order to integrate them into the New Order.

A number of leading eugenicists in the Weimar period were Jews. In the case of Goldschmidt, this meant the loss of a leading geneticist, who had been a major advocate of sterilization legislation. In the case of Hermann Poll, it meant that the Rockefeller Foundation's major advisor in Germany was now forced out of academic life. Neither Goldschmidt nor Poll—at least initially—realized the dangers inherent in eugenics. Yet the meaning of eugenics fundamentally altered in the Third Reich. Poll for a short time gave courses in eugenics during 1933 before dismissal from Hamburg University. Goldschmidt complained that the Nazis perverted well founded eugenic sterilization legislation. For their part the Nazis warned against racial science falling into Jewish hands.[36]

Other eugenicists had socialist connections. Although Grotjahn withdrew from the SPD by 1926, Benno Chajes (his successor) and Georg Loewenstein, the venereologist, were active in the SPD. Their eugenic commitments underline the concern with the so-called 'social problem group' of the social misfits rather than with racial biology. Muckermann's family-oriented eugenics fitted in well with the aims of such socialists. The influence of the socialist, Catholic and Jewish camps caused long-running tensions between the Berlin and Munich Racial Hygiene Societies. To certain nationalists in the Munich Society, like the publisher Julius Lehmann who was Secretary of the Society, the Berlin trends pointed in diametrically opposite directions.[37]

[34] ZSTA Merseburg Rep 76 viii B Nr 2073 Bl 373, Nr 2074 Bl 467, 480.
[35] Lilienthal (footnote 8).
[36] Personalakt Poll, Staatsarchiv Hamburg. Communicated by Dr Cochanski.
[37] ZSTA Potsdam 15.01 Nr 26244 Reche.

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To some extent these differences have been obscured by the preparation of sterilization legislation in the early 1930s. In the economic crisis, sterilization offered a means of reducing the costs of institutional care. Whereas the positive eugenicists of the 1920s had recommended institutionalization as a humane way of preventing the asocial from procreating, now institutions were regarded as a major burden. The issue of institutional 'care' is a further divide between Weimar eugenics and the Third Reich.

Eugen Fischer offers an important case-study in the complexities of the transition to national socialism. When the Prussian State Health Council discussed sterilization legislation at a meeting in July 1932, there were open disagreements between Fischer and the Nazi delegates. The Nazis claimed that they were the only political party to advocate sterilization for medical conditions, and they also demanded its extension to racial minorities. Fischer replied that he recognized that the Nazi programme included many good eugenic measures, but he dismissed the NSDAP as much more recent than the eugenics movement. The meeting showed that the balance of opinion among medical officers, doctors' organizations and other welfare bodies had shifted to sterilization. The Nazis were merely one group, reinforcing the shift of opinion, and out of step in their anti-Semitism.[38]

Fischer remained a difficult figure to accommodate in 1933. At a speech on 1 February 1933, given in the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft, he criticized national socialism. Nazi administrators like Gütt (a former medical officer) distrusted the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology as a legacy of the despised Weimar era. The Nazis were intent on breaking the alliance between Fischer, Muckermann and the Prussian official Ostermann. On 29 May 1933 Karl Astel and Bruno K. Schultz of the Munich Racial Hygiene Society declared their support for the new regime and denounced Fischer, Muckermann and Ostermann. Muckermann and Ostermann were forced out of office. Despite Fischer's support of Muckermann, an assistant was found to testify that Muckermann had referred to the Führer as 'an idiot' (a particularly galling remark to any eugenicist who favoured sterilization for the mentally subnormal).[39] A directive came from the Prussian Ministry of the Interior that Fischer should be watched by assistants who ought to be exclusively Party members. Fischer was forced to cede control of the German Racial Hygiene Society to Rüdin, and the Society was transferred back to Munich. His name was to be struck off the list of editors of the major eugenic journal, *Das Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie*.[40]

On 29 July 1933, Fischer was elected Rector of Berlin University, beating a national socialist rival. But he now showed that he was prepared to compromise with the new order. At his inaugural speech, he praised the Nazis for being able to see and think in biological terms. This speech is often interpreted as revealing Fischer as a turncoat. Yet if the pressure of the circumstances is taken into account, the speech could be seen as an attempt to maintain the supremacy of biologists on issues of social policy. Fischer remained out of favour for some time. An indication is provided by a letter of Julius Lehmann on 12 January 1934. Lehmann wrote that Fischer's support of Muckermann as a Jesuit had alienated him, although he appreciated that Fischer was the first anthropologist to praise the racial popularizations of Hans Guenther. Lehmann offered to publish a popularization of racial anthropology so as to provide Fischer with an opportunity to work once again for the Fatherland.[41]

[38] 'Die Eugenik' (footnote 2), 98.
[39] ZSTA RMdI Potsdam-15.01 Nr 26243 Bl 289.
[40] Ibid. Bl 348.
[41] Nachlass Lehmann, Munich: letter of 12.1.1934.

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Fischer responded positively to such invitations to support the New Germany. As early as 5 July 1933, the Reich Ministry of the Interior requested the support of Fischer, along with Rüdin, Baur, and Verschuer for the rapid implementation of sterilization legislation. Fischer held office in the sterilization court, and took an important role in the scientific evaluation of sterilization. Fischer's Institute was asked to train medical experts in racial theory. He compiled reports on the racial ancestry of individuals. He took a leading role in the organization of a national anthropological survey of the *total* population, an aim according with Nazi plans for centralized registration of the population, and for the reporting of hereditary diseases and disabilities. From 1939 he attacked the Jews as a threat to the German *Erbgut*. He began work on a book on Old Testament Jewry, and he made comparisons with racial types in the new ghettos. He was involved in state discussions of the Jewish question and of extermination through forced labour.[42] Fischer did, indeed, co-operate with the demands of the Nazi order. He cultivated Walter Gross of the *Rassepolitisches Amt* of the NSDAP and the *Reichsärzteführer*, Leonardo Conti, so as to maintain the prestige of his Institute. Yet his role was no longer that of an arbiter of social policy as it had been in the final years of Weimar Germany. His solutions to the Jewish question were based on a type of apartheid and so were not radical enough to have been influential. He became a Party member only during the Second World War. The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology had a significant, although (on current evidence) subordinate role as a cog in the Nazi racial apparatus with the provision of racial certificates, and with the participation of certain of its members as state advisers on racial policy. At least one Institute member used material from concentration camps for research. Yet there is no evidence that the Institute was a major decision-making body.[43]

The pressure that was imposed on Fischer was also inflicted on Baur. He supported the new order, but there were points of friction. Goldschmidt's verdict was that Baur was 'a Nazi killed by super-Nazism'. Such pressure was also exercised on Verschuer. In 1933 he was more readily compliant, but the authorities did not trust him.[44] The verdict was that although he was prepared to work under his new masters, he did not understand their ultimate aims. He was dispatched to Frankfurt/M. to open a new Institute, and in 1934 was replaced by Lenz from Munich. Verschuer now began to fuse hereditary science with views more compatible with Nazi racial ideology, as in the periodical, *Der Erbarzt*. His writings were increasingly racist against non-whites, gypsies and Jews. Lenz later fell foul of key figures like Himmler over the issue of the eugenic worth of illegitimate children, and in 1942 Verschuer was recalled as a successor to Fischer. By 1944 Verschuer was calling for radical measures to racially cleanse the 'body politic'.[45]

There were many issues of tension between the eugenicists and the Party. The sterilization of Party members for hereditary physical and mental illness, and the eugenicists' views on qualitative as opposed to quantitative breeding brought about difficulties over, for example, the question of the fitness of the illegitimate. The Third

[42] Müller-Hill (footnote 18), 31, 77–81, 119–121. BA Koblenz R 73/28 about Fischer's anthropological proposals, 3.5.33. MPG Generalverwaltung 2403, Hauptakten Fischer to Gross, 14.6.1935. Fischer to Telschow on his preference for Conti over Gross as head of the *Kuratorium*, 18.3.1940. GStA Dahlem Rep 84a Nr 872.

[43] MPG Generalverwaltung Nr 2413 Finanzierung 8.1.1932–21.1.1941, Bl. 18a on cautious attitude to the state.

[44] ZSTA Potsdam 15.01 Nr 26244 Bl. 81–2 Gross to Gütt July 1933.

[45] MPG 2400, Hauptakten 4.12.1940–18.6.1945. Letter of Fischer 20.10.1941 recommending Verschuer as his successor. Goldschmidt (footnote 2), 272.

Reich was an inherently unstable system in which there were competing political and bureaucratic structures, making the centres of power shifting and insecure. Racial biology and medicine were subject to a number of competing authorities. The role of eugenicists in this complex situation has only begun to be evaluated.

6. Conclusions

The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics represented a culmination of some of the more influential trends in Weimar eugenics. The Institute was shaped by the distinctive new directions in the organization of Weimar science. The integration of social utility with scientific research was encouraged. Contemporary standards in German science suggest that there was no necessary demarcation between hereditarian biology and eugenics, even if the researchers differed in the extent of their eugenic commitments and in their social philosophies. State funding and support played a major role. The new directions in Weimar biology were determined by the political and economic conditions under which the Republic laboured. At the end of the 1920s, economic crisis and a shift to authoritarian politics provided favourable circumstances for eugenicists to exert influence on social policy in the planning of sterilization legislation and in the dismantling of welfare institutions. The laws of natural selection would be restored in human society, which would thereby be purged of the degenerative effects of civilization. It was a brief phase of eugenic dictatorship. Scientists in the Third Reich were subject to greater political and governmental controls, and new policy-making organs were established. The Nazi take-over resulted in the dissolution of the alliance between Fischer's anthropology, Muckermann's pontificating on positive eugenics, and the state's support of the professional eugenic experts.

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