

THE KAISER WILHELM INSTITUTE FOR
ANTHROPOLOGY, HUMAN HEREDITY, AND EUGENICS,
1927–1945

BOSTON STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

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THE KAISER WILHELM
INSTITUTE FOR
ANTHROPOLOGY,
HUMAN HEREDITY,
AND EUGENICS,
1927–1945

CROSSING BOUNDARIES

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADW	Archiv des Diakonischen Werkes (Archive of the Protestant Church Welfare Organization)
AfRGB	Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie (Archive for the Biology of Race and Society)
BArch.	Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives)
BDC	Berlin Document Center
BDM	Bund deutscher Mädel (League of German Girls)
DFA	Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Psychiatrie (German Research Institute for Psychiatry, a Kaiser Wilhelm Institute)
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Association)
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei (German National Party of the Volk)
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei (German Party of the Volk)
EGG	Erbgesundheitsgericht (Hereditary Health Court)
EGOG	Erbgesundheitsobergericht (Hereditary Health Appellate Court)
EK	Eisernes Kreuz (Iron Cross)
Fs.	Festschrift
GzVeN	Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses (Law on the Prevention of Genetically Deficient Progeny)
HJ	Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth)
IFEO	International Federation of Eugenic Organizations
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Institute for Contemporary History)
IUSIPP	International Union for the Scientific Investigation of Population Problems
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
KWG	Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft (Kaiser Wilhelm Society)

KWI	Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut (Kaiser Wilhelm Institute)
KWI-A	Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik (Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics)
KZ	Konzentrationslager (concentration camp)
MPG-Archiv	Archiv zur Geschichte der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (Archive on the History of the Max Planck Society)
MPIP-HA	Max-Planck-Institut für Psychiatrie, Historisches Archiv (Max Planck Institute for Psychiatry, Historical Archive)
Ms.	Manuskript (manuscript)
ND	Neudruck (reprint)
NL	Nachlaß (estate)
NSDÄB	Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Ärztenbund (National Socialist League of German Physicians)
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party)
NSV	Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (the National Socialist welfare organization)
R	Rückseite (verso)
RM	Reichsmark (currency of the German Reich)
RuSHA	Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt (Main Office for Race and Settlement)
SA	Sturmabteilung (Storm Troopers)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SS	Schutzstaffel ("protection unit")
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
uk	unabkömmlich (in a reserved occupation = excused from service on the front)
USA	United States of America
Uschla	Untersuchungs- und Schlichtungsausschusses (Investigative and Arbitration Committee)
VfZ	Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte (Quarterly Journal for Contemporary History)
WVHA	Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt (Main Office of Economics and Administration)
ZIAVL	Zeitschrift für induktive Abstammungs- und Vererbungslehre (Journal for Inductive Theory of Descent and Heredity)
ZMA	Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie (Journal for Morphology and Anthropology)
ZMVKL	Zeitschrift für menschliche Vererbungs- und Konstitutionslehre (Journal for Human Genetics and Theory of Human Constitution)

Introduction

From its founding in 1927 until its dissolution in 1945, the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Genetics, and Eugenics (KWI-A) in Berlin-Dahlem transgressed many a boundary; indeed, the transgression of boundaries was in a sense its *raison d'être* from the outset. Initially this applied to the boundaries within the disciplinary canon of the human sciences. Even from its basic conception, the institute, centered around the person of its founding director Eugen Fischer (1874–1967), was to unify anthropology, genetics, and eugenics under one roof. In keeping with the understanding predominant in Germany between the wars, anthropology went beyond the scope of the framework of the ascendant “race theory” to cover not only physical anthropology, including paleoanthropology, but also elements of what we today would call cultural and social anthropology. Thus, this anthropology extended far into the fields of archeology, paleontology, prehistory and early history, history and sociology, and especially into ethnology and folklore. Human genetics, in turn, was more than the attempt to apply to humans the genetics developed by Thomas Hunt Morgan (1866–1945) and his school in the USA on the model of *drosophila*. In Germany, Morgan’s genetics, which concentrated on investigating the dissemination of genetic traits on the chromosomes and their morphological structure, was received with skepticism for two reasons. The first criticism was that this special orientation of the genetics neglected the problem of how genetic traits are manifested, so that the labyrinthine path from the genotype to the phenotype and the forces involved other than genes remained in the dark. Second, German geneticists – probably a consequence of the holistic style of thinking in the sciences predominant in Germany – found it unsatisfying that Morgan’s genetics studied, so to speak, development without evolution. German genetics, in contrast, attempted to link together genetics and evolutionary biology. Eugenics, finally, was located from its very establishment in the boundary area between many human sciences: biology, genetics, medicine, psychiatry, hygiene, anthropology, demography, political economy, and sociology. What was undertaken in Dahlem was thus nothing less than the attempt to develop a new, transdisciplinary key science of humans.

Yet, scientific praxis initially remained far behind these lofty goals. The phase of setting up the institute fell in the period of economic depression and political disintegration at the end of the Weimar Republic. The implementation of its ambitious

plans was postponed due to scarce financial resources. This did not change until the consolidation phase of the “Third Reich” from 1934 to 1939, after a turbulent phase of *Gleichschaltung* and “self-alignment” when the Nazis took over. But not even during this period did the integration of the research fields worked on at the KWI-A proceed as planned, and, paradoxically, not *despite*, but rather *because*, the institute was so successfully established in the National Socialist state. Although funding now flowed abundantly, the prescientific and nonscientific services performed by scientists at the KWI-A for the National Socialist state tied up considerable resources. What weighed more heavily was that, as a consequence of its intimate interconnections with politics, the practice of research, especially in the conventional paths of race theory and eugenics, was in danger of paralysis. The two departments assigned to these fields visibly drifted apart, while the field of human genetics nearly lay fallow after the departure of its department director, Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer (1896–1969), in 1935. From 1938 onward, Fischer, the founding director, and his pupil Verschuer, who returned to Berlin to take over as director in 1942, strived to reorganize the research under the new paradigm of phenogenetics. This shifted the problem of the manifestation of genes into the center of scientific interest, that is, the development of the genome into a phenome, and thus the proteome, the level of proteins, enzymes, and hormones, as well as the complex process of interaction between hereditary predisposition and environmental factors. Besides being able to generate new research perspectives, the new paradigm also made it possible to merge disciplines like experimental genetics, evolutionary biology, embryology, medicine, and anthropology, and to combine methods like twin research, dermatoglyphics, blood group research, and animal models. What is interesting is that the complex of questions linked with the concept of phenogenetics, which was already a subject of discussion under the label “epigenetics” in the USA at the beginning of the 1940s, appears highly topical from today’s perspective, as the completion of the human genome sequence increasingly is redirecting the interest of geneticists back to the intermediate steps between the genes and the completely developed organism.

At its founding in 1927, the KWI-A set out with more than the objective of transgressing the boundaries between scientific disciplines. From the outset it consciously endeavored to cross the boundaries between science and politics, although, in distinction from older forms of race hygiene and race anthropology, which were clearly located in the nationalist camp, the express goal of the KWI-A was not to perform politicized science, but rather to lay the foundations for scientific policy. This goal was based on a technocratic model of political consulting, in which “scientific expertise” decomposes politics into pure “practical constraints,” political decision-making processes congeal into a “rational” solution of “factual issues,” and, ultimately, science and technology replace politics. Because there was a broad political consensus for such social engineering in the Weimar Republic, it is no wonder that the founding of the institute was supported by a coalition extending from the Social Democrats to the Catholic Center Party, all the way to the far right of the party spectrum. In fact, research at the KWI-A was by no means as “free of political values” as the scientists claimed. Fischer and his staff attempted to

preform political decision-making processes – with notable success, in the case of the Prussian law for eugenic sterilization drafted in 1932; yet, it was hardly the case that the Weimar state implemented each and every one of the recommendations from science on a one-to-one basis.

Nevertheless, the KWI-A and its director Eugen Fischer initially found themselves under political pressure in 1933. The National Socialists, suspicious that the institute had been too closely bound up with the Weimar welfare state, forced the KWI-A to “align itself.” Yet, it is hardly the case that politics first invaded the sphere of “pure science” in the year 1933. The KWI-A had always attempted to extend its influence into the realm of political action. After a short phase of provocation and friction, it was quite willing to place its expert knowledge at the service of the regime, which, for its part – to a greater degree than the governments of the Weimar Republic – was ready to ground its political decision-making processes on scientific expertise, and quickly recognized the political value of the KWI-A. The result was *mutual* exploitation, albeit on the basis of a basic ideological consensus: science and the state were in agreement about the utopian goal of a comprehensive biological policy, whose objective was nothing less than the control of human evolution.

The consequence of the institute’s collaboration with the National Socialist state was that the scientists of the KWI-A participated in various positions and functions in the crimes this state committed: mass sterilizations in the interest of “race hygiene” in accordance with the Law for the Prevention of Genetically Deficient Progeny (*Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses*, GzVeN), the “euthanasia” campaign, the persecution and annihilation of Jews, Sinti, and Roma, and the plans for a new ethnic order in occupied Eastern Europe. In return, the KWI-A profited significantly from the National Socialist regime’s policy of genetic health and race policy. Research projects received generous support, the institute progressively expanded. Both the political prestige and the social status of the KWI-A and the scientists employed there increased constantly. However, the start of World War II threatened to push the KWI-A into the background and rob it of its value as a political resource. The reorganization of research under the paradigm of phenogenetics renewed the institute’s value as a political partner, which was expressed not least of all in the fact that the KWI-A – as the last Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Greater Berlin – was ultimately recognized as important for the war. Of particular interest for the rulers in this context was the KWI-A’s research on the hereditary disposition for tuberculosis and on the development of a biochemical “race test.” In the middle of the war the KWI-A was able to expand its budget and solicit additional funds for research. But above all, it profited enormously from the unfettered access to human subjects in the National Socialist “prerogative state.”

And this takes us to a third level of boundaries transgressed, the boundaries of scientific ethics. This boundary transgression, although neither conscious nor intentional, began in the institute’s early years, as participation in the large-scale inventory of the hereditary biological stock of the German people at the end of the Weimar Republic violated what we understand today to be the fundamental rules of personal privacy. In a sense, the Third Reich constituted a land of unlimited

opportunities for the science of humans. The research group around Fischer and Verschuer now received unhampered access to sensitive data; they could sound out humans who were the object of their interest even without their consent and against their will, without having to take any consideration of human or civil rights. All precautions based on law, morals, or professional ethics were rescinded. The scientists of the KWI-A performed investigations on human beings who were held prisoner in the National Socialist camp system and could no longer control what happened to their own bodies. They researched samples taken from the victims of genocide committed on the Jews, Sinti, and Roma. And they performed experiments for the benefit of others on patients who were not capable of giving their consent. As such, the guidelines on scientific ethics formulated in the early 1930s were violated even by those very researchers whose attitude toward National Socialism was marked by serious reservations. This obsession with scientific feasibility resulted not from political indoctrination, but rather from the hubris of research.

The transgression of these three kinds of boundaries constitutes the vanishing point of this study. It is conceived as a comprehensive history of an institute, which looks at structural conditions – the crisis of the welfare state in the late Weimar Republic and the reshaping of biopolicy in National Socialism, as well as institutional developments – financing, personnel development and policy, erection and expansion of the material infrastructure for scientific work, and finally scientific practice – paradigms and issues, fields of research, epistemic objects, and applied methods guiding research. Special attention is also due to the interfaces between science and politics: the institute's Board of Trustees, the manifold relationships to the ministerial bureaucracy and to the power centers of the National Socialist regime, the institute's contributions to the practice of genetic health policy and race policy. Against this background, the institute's participation in the crimes of the National Socialist state as well as the ethically reprehensible research projects embedded within it will be subjected to analysis. By placing these issues in a comprehensive institutional history it should be possible to make clear how it came to this fateful degeneration into the zone of crime.

Although by now there is a broad spectrum of literature on partial aspects of the institute's history, such a comprehensively conceptualized study has yet to be submitted. The closest anyone has come to a total history of the institute is the biography of Eugen Fischer published by Niels C. Lösch.¹ Lösch created solid ground for further research – passages of this work, too, are based on his pioneering study, although the portrayal and especially the interpretation of what happened there often arrives at different conclusions. The first brief overview portrayals of the history of the institute were presented by Paul Weindling as well as Anna Bergmann, Gabriele Czarnowski, and Annegret Ehmann.² Long passages by Peter Weingart, Jürgen Kroll, and Kurt Bayertz in their overview of the history of eugenics and race

¹Lösch, Rasse.

²Weindling, Weimar Eugenics; Bergmann/Czarnowski/Ehmann, Menschen.

hygiene in Germany deal with the KWI-A, as does Paul Weindling in his large-scale study *Health, Race, and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* – with an emphasis on the period of the Weimar Republic.³ Kristie Macrakis was the first to deal in greater detail with the *Gleichschaltung* and “self-alignment” of the KWI-A in the Third Reich, in her book about the history of the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft (KWG) in National Socialism, *Surviving the Swastika*.⁴ As to the relationship between the institute and the National Socialist state in the years from 1933 to 1939, Lösch’s work set a new standard. The analysis and interpretation of this complex of problems was driven further by Sheila F. Weiss in her recent, excellent study, *Humangenetik und Politik als wechselseitige Ressourcen*. In an additional, thoroughly inspiring study, Weiss investigated the role played by leading scientists at the KWI-A in international conferences during the period of the Third Reich.⁵ More valuable information on this period is supplied in the first chapters of the outstanding postdoctoral work by Hans-Peter Kröner, who portrayed in detail the dissolution of the KWI-A after 1945, the history of its successor institutes and the postwar careers of its leading scientists.⁶ With this the history of the institute in the first years of the Third Reich, along with its “posthistory” in the period after 1945, could be regarded as quite well researched; yet, for the period during World War II great gaps in research are apparent. This work thus places its emphasis primarily on the years from 1938 until 1945, while its discussion of the phase of the Nazi’s seizure of power and *Gleichschaltung* are based for the most part on the exhaustive portrayals by Lösch, Weiss, and Kröner; the period after 1945 is left out completely.

The research gaps regarding the period of World War II appear astonishing at first glance, as such a great number of authors have dealt with the “complicity” of the KWI-A in the crimes of the National Socialist state and the criminal research associated with them. Benno Müller-Hill, in his study *Tödliche Wissenschaft*, earned the distinction of being the first to point out the institute’s important role in the genetic health and race policies of the Third Reich, especially in its policies toward Jews.⁷ Müller-Hill and Ute Deichmann were the first to report about an experiment in which epileptic children from the “euthanasia” facility in Brandenburg-Görden were subjected to a partial vacuum by Hans Nachtsheim (1890–1979).⁸ Hans Hesse exhaustively investigated the biography of Karin Magnussens (1908–1997) and her research on the eyes of Sinti and Roma from the “Auschwitz Gypsy Camp.”⁹ Bernd Gausemeier and Achim Trunk recently shed light on the “specific

³Weingart/Kroll/Bayertz, *Rasse*, pp. 239–246, 407–424; Weindling, *Health*, pp. 430–439.

⁴Macrakis, *Surviving the Swastika*, pp. 125–130.

⁵Weiss, *Humangenetik*; *ibid.*, *Sword*.

⁶Kröner, *Von der Rassenhygiene zur Humangenetik*.

⁷Müller-Hill, *Tödliche Wissenschaft*; *ibid.*, *Blut*.

⁸Müller-Hill, *Genetics after Auschwitz*; Deichmann, *Biologen*, pp. 308–314; *ibid.*, Hans Nachtsheim, pp. 146–148. See also Koch, *Humangenetik*, pp. 120–148.

⁹Hesse, *Augen*.

proteins” research project so shrouded in secrecy, which worked with blood samples sent to Dahlem from Auschwitz by Josef Mengele.¹⁰ In his book, *Auschwitz, die NS-Medizin und ihre Opfer*, Ernst Klee studied the “Dahlem-Auschwitz” connection more closely.¹¹ Benoît Massin succeeded in convincingly reinterpreting Mengele’s research against the background of the twin research performed in Dahlem, although this study does not agree with Massin’s critical thesis that Mengele’s research empire amounted to the “Auschwitz branch” of the KWI-A.¹²

Even today, the research praxis of the KWI-A is still *terra incognita*. Benoît Massin, with his attempt at a quantitative assessment of the publications that emerged from the institute, made first inroads into this broad field of research.¹³ Several works have been produced on individual departments of the institute. In two shorter papers, Mitchell G. Ash gave insight into the work of the Department for Genetic Psychology directed by Kurt Gottschaldt (1902–1991).¹⁴ The Department for Experimental Hereditary Pathology, led by Hans Nachtsheim, is portrayed exhaustively in an outstanding dissertation by Alexander von Schwerin.¹⁵

This study is intended to spin the threads of collective knowledge on the current state of research into a common strand. However, painstaking review of the central source materials – although many of these have been reviewed frequently in the past – revealed a surprising multitude of, as yet, unknown details. The systematic screening of the institute’s publication proved equally fruitful. In this manner it was possible to fill in a number of gaps in the total picture of the institute’s history, to accentuate some nuances differently, to give sharper contours to some fuzzy lines, and to deepen the background, so that the picture, the author hopes, takes on a sharper focus.

¹⁰Gausemeier, *Radikalisierung*; Trunk, *Zweihundert Blutproben*.

¹¹Klee, *Auschwitz*, pp. 449–491.

¹²Massin, *Mengele*.

¹³Massin, *Rasse, und Vererbung*. Unfortunately, this essay is of only limited significance due to a number of methodological deficiencies: the publication list upon which it is based (which is by and large the same as the list compiled by Niels C. Lösch on the basis of the institute’s work reports) contains a number of errors; the attribution of the titles to the individual fields of research is often uncertain, the research fields are demarcated quite arbitrarily, and a temporal differentiation is largely missing, but would seem imperative, because the institute’s research emphases shifted considerably on several occasions.

¹⁴Ash, *Erbpsychologische Abteilung*; *ibid*, “Positive Eugenics.”

¹⁵Schwerin, *Experimentalisierung*.

Chapter 1

A “Purely Theoretical Institute for the Study of the Nature of Man”: The Founding of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics, 1920–1927

The linkage of race hygiene, science, and politics in the early Weimar Republic was the context in which the initiative to found an extra-university research institution for the fields of anthropology, human genetics, and eugenics took shape. This triangle was the result of converging interests: race hygiene conceived of itself as an applied science, aspiring to a scientific foundation for its practical agenda, and hoping to establish itself as a new discipline between biology, genetics, medicine, psychiatry, hygiene, anthropology, demographics, national economy, and sociology, and to influence state and society through scientific policy consulting. The modern interventionist state, in turn, demanded expertise from the human sciences to the extent that it laid claim to the control over birth and death, sexuality and reproduction, body and germline, variability and evolution, as part of a comprehensive *biopolicy*.¹ After all, the human sciences ultimately offered the modern interventionist state their expertise in exchange for funding. In this process race hygiene functioned as a kind of relay switched between scientific knowledge and biopolicy interest.

1.1 World War I, the Crisis of the Weimar Welfare State, and the Rise of Race Hygiene

1.1.1 *The Inceptions of Race Hygiene*

Race hygiene originated as a German variety of eugenics at the close of the nineteenth century.² Initially the field constituted a loose lattice of friendships and relations surrounding the young physician Alfred Ploetz (1860–1940).³ At first, hardly

¹Foucault, Wille. See also: Stingelin (ed.), *Biopolitik*; Schwartz, Wissen; Raphael, *Verwissenschaftlichung*; Byer, *Rassenhygiene*; Reyer, *Eugenik*; Osborne, *Frauenkörper*; Kaufmann, *Eugenik*; Hahn, *Modernisierung*.

²Survey portrayals: Kröner, *Eugenik*; Kroll, *Entstehung*; Weingart/Kroll/Bayertz, *Rasse*; Weindling, *Health*; Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie*; Proctor, *Race Hygiene. On the state of research*; Trus, *Heiliger Krieg. On parallel developments abroad and the international context*; Adams (ed.), *Science*; Kühl, *Internationale*; Weingart, *Science*; Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene in Deutschland*.

³For a biography: Doebele, *Alfred Ploetz*; Labisch/Tennstedt, *Weg*, vol. 2, pp. 467–470; Klee, *Personenlexikon*, p. 466.

more than a hermetic circle of young academics in the wake of the “Life-Reform Movement” (*Lebensreformbewegung*), the circle around Ploetz began taking on a more solid organizational structure in the first decade of the twentieth century. Yet the consolidation process proceeded laboriously. A first step was made with the founding of the “Archive for the Biology of Race and Society” in the year 1904.⁴ In 1905 Ploetz founded the “Berlin Society for Race Hygiene;” even before World War I, additional societies emerged in Munich (1907), Freiburg (1908–1910), and Stuttgart. In 1910 these groups merged to form the “German Society for Race Hygiene.” From 1907 on the local organizations were also members of an “International Society for Race Hygiene,” which maintained contacts to Sweden,⁵ Norway, the Netherlands, the USA, and Great Britain. Do not be misled, however, on the eve of World War I, the network of race hygienists, which understood itself to be not only the crystallization point of an emerging scientific community, but also a scientifically grounded movement for the reform of life and society, amounted to only around 400 men and women.⁶

1.1.2 *The Disruption of the World War I*

At the beginning of the war, the German Society for Race Hygiene increasingly directed its energies to the outside world. The prospects for legislation along the lines of race hygiene appeared good, as it was expected that the war would explode the encrusted structures of state and society: “An opportunity [...] like the one presented by the reordering of all circumstances after the war may never return [...]”⁷ However, the mood of renewal soon dissipated. Toward the end of the war, resignation took hold among the race hygienists. Their proposal to prescribe by law that partners exchange health certificates before marrying, and their demand that marriage be prohibited for those with mental illnesses and disabilities were as fruitless

⁴On this, with an international comparative perspective: Heuer/Propping, Comparison.

⁵The first “country group” of the International Society for Race Hygiene was founded in 1909 in Sweden, the *Svenska sällskapet för rashygien*. The majority of its founding members already belonged to the International Society for Race Hygiene. In 1920, these 46 Swedes constituted the largest group of its foreign constituents: Broberg/Tydén, *Eugenics in Sweden*, p. 83. Slightly different numbers in: Weindling, *Health*, pp. 145, 140f., *ibid.*, *International Eugenics*, p. 192. For additional German-Swedish relations in the field of eugenics, see Bär, *Schwedische Eugenik*.

⁶Weindling, *Health*, p. 145, gives the number of *German* members of the International Society for Race Hygiene in December 1913 as 425 (including nine members from Austria-Hungary, Switzerland, Romania, and Germans from foreign provinces). The numerical data vary in the literature, but give an impression of the approximate order of magnitude. Cf. Fischer, *Geschichte*, p. 2, Weingart/Kroll/Bayertz, *Rasse*, pp. 188–208; Weber, Ernst Rüdin, p. 71. Physicians dominated the Society for Race Hygiene in the period before 1914, representing around one third of the members. Women constituted one fifth of the membership. Cf. Weindling, *Health*, p. 148f. (table 39).

⁷Lenz, *Bund zur Erhaltung*, p. 555.

as their drive to legally allow voluntary sterilization. What is more, race hygienists did not even achieve their immediate objective of imposing a *qualitative* population policy upon the *quantitative* population policy aspired to by the Reichstag and leading positions in the ministerial bureaucracy, in order to propagate the race hygiene program in the state and society in the wake of a visibly increasing population policy movement. In this case, their efforts actually backfired: the “German Society for Population Policy,” founded in 1915, whose membership soon surpassed that of the German Society for Race Hygiene, deftly appropriated the latter’s “Guidelines on the Birth Question,” which it passed shortly before the outbreak of World War I, thus taking the wind out of the race hygiene movement’s sails.⁸ At the end of the World War I, the youthful German Society for Race Hygiene appeared to be on its last legs, and its work ground to a temporary halt.

Yet the devastating defeat in the World War I, the collapse of the old state order, the November Revolution, the subsequent chaos of the civil war, and hyperinflation proved to be fruitful soil that fostered the growth of the race hygiene movement. Societal upheaval and disruptions, compounded by the immense loss of human life, the drop in the birth rate caused by the war, the poor health of broad sectors of the population, and the economic privation of the post-war period, created a climate of fear, bewilderment, and violence, which very quickly turned against those who had been pushed beyond the fringes of society during the war. For social oppositions had erupted during the course of World War I that cut across the class structures of Wilhelminian society. First and foremost, starting around 1916, when the “hunger blockade” imposed by the Entente powers against the German Reich kicked in to its full effect, a new social class system of “food hierarchy”⁹ emerged, based on the population’s varying access to food. On its lowest level were the residents of the large cities, white-collar employees and civil servants, families of soldiers on the front, seniors living alone, and – at the very bottom – those *institutionalized* in war prison camps, prisons and penitentiaries, welfare homes, nursing homes and rest homes, sanatoriums and clinics. Despite the fact that more than 70,000 of the disabled and infirm in closed institutions starved, froze, or succumbed to contagious diseases between 1914 and 1918,¹⁰ this population became the target of a biologicistic version of the “stab-in-the-back” legend after the war:

The war protects the blind, the deaf and dumb, the idiots, the hunchbacks, the scrofulous, the imbeciles, the impotent, the paralytics, the epileptics, the dwarfs, the freaks. – All of this residue and dross of the human race can rest assured, for no bullets are whistling toward them [...]. For them the war thus constitutes nothing less than life insurance, for this physically and mentally ‘cripple guard,’ hardly able to hold its own against its able rivals in free competition during peacetime, now gets the most lucrative positions and is highly paid.¹¹

⁸ Weingart/Kroll/Bayertz, Rasse, pp. 216–230; Weindling, Health, pp. 295–301.

⁹ Faulstich, Hungersterben, p. 29.

¹⁰ Siemen, Menschen, p. 29. Summarized in: Kersting/Schmuhl, Einleitung, pp. 6–8.

¹¹ Nicolai, Biologie, vol. 1, p. 81.

This diatribe against the disabled, sick, and weak was penned by one of the most dogmatic pacifists in Germany: the physiologist Georg Friedrich Nicolai (1874–1964). During World War I Nicolai had been degraded from a civilian doctor with the rank of an officer to a medical orderly because of his critical position against the German conduct of war, and had eluded the attempt to force him into combat service by fleeing to Denmark. After the war he returned to Germany and was appointed to an associate professorship for physiology at the University of Berlin, but, because he had “fouled his own nest,” was forced to succumb to the pressure of his students and colleagues and leave Germany for good in 1922. Thus, he was anything but a race nationalist,¹² whose book *The Biology of War*, written during the war and published in 1919, according to the preface was oriented toward the “humanitarian idea.”¹³ Nicolai was a cosmopolitan, who believed he had an obligation to humanity as a whole. And yet, on the authority of the Darwinist principle of natural selection, it was a matter of course for Nicolai to exclude from humanity all of the sick, handicapped, weak and decrepit. One root of his pacifism was the eugenic thesis of the contraselective effects of modern war. The two founding fathers of race hygiene, Alfred Ploetz and Wilhelm Schallmayer (1857–1919),¹⁴ already had warned about the danger of adverse selection associated with the war, and even during World War I – once the initial euphoria about the “war for existence” (*Kampf ums Dasein*) between the nations of Europe had dissipated – prominent advocates of race hygiene like the Munich hygienist Max von Gruber (1853–1927)¹⁵ and the Swiss psychiatrist August Forel (1848–1931)¹⁶ had drawn attention to the devastating consequences of the life-devouring, static war for genetic health. This prophecy of doom was based on a distorted perception: the shock of the first industrial war was so deep that it deadened the senses to the death, hunger, and misery on the home front. The consequence was an abrupt break in mentality, as the psychiatrist Karl Bonhoeffer (1868–1948) was right to fear, indeed, a “transformation in the concept of humanity.” At the annual convention of the German Association for Psychiatry in 1920 he hypothesized:

[U]nder the difficult experiences of war, we were forced to value the individual human life differently than before, and that in the years of hunger during the war we had to come to terms with watching as our institutionalized sick died en masse of malnutrition, and nearly to sanction this in the thought that this sacrifice may have saved the lives of the healthy. This emphasis of the right of the healthy to self-preservation, as is entailed in a time of need, conceals a risk of exaggeration [...].¹⁷

¹²Zuelzer, Fall Nicolai; Schmiedebach, Sozialdarwinismus, pp. 110–116.

¹³Nicolai, Biologie, vol. 1, p. 5.

¹⁴Weiss, Race Hygiene, pp. 140–146. On his biography, see also: Labisch/Tennstedt, Weg, vol. 2, pp. 486 ff.

¹⁵Schmiedebach, Sozialdarwinismus, pp. 100–102; Eckart, “Versuch,” pp. 314–316. With a different emphasis: Kudlien, Max von Gruber. On his biography, see also: Klee, Personenlexikon, pp. 205 f.

¹⁶Wettley, August Forel, pp. 140–144; Schmiedebach, Sozialdarwinismus, pp. 108–110. Cf. Kühl, Internationale, pp. 41–48.

¹⁷Bericht über die Verhandlungen psychiatrischer Vereine, p. 598. On its interpretation: Gerrens, Medizinisches Ethos, pp. 63 f.

Voices exhorting caution like this one found little resonance, however. Under the impression of the immense loss of human life in the “storms of steel” of the World War I, the argumentation of the race hygienists appeared compelling. It was picked up by warmongers and pacifists alike, by the *Alldeutsch* movement, liberals and socialists, Protestants and Catholics, all the more as the agenda of the race hygiene program must have appeared a moderate alternative to the demand voiced at the conclusion of the pamphlet by Karl Binding (1841–1920) and Alfred E. Hoche (1865–1943) for “clearance for the annihilation of life ‘unworthy of life’.”¹⁸

1.1.3 Racial Hygiene in the Weimar Republic

Race hygiene continued to receive impetus in the Weimar Republic. Paradoxically, this development was a consequence of the fact that the principle of the social state received constitutional status for the first time, and even achieved inclusion in the Weimar constitution’s catalog of basic rights – an altogether cunning project, whose significance for the future development of the social state in Germany cannot be estimated highly enough. Yet in this the young republic also took on a heavy burden, for ultimately there was not enough economic power to advance the erection and expansion of the social state in a sufficient manner. The guarantee of the social state thus remained “an unredeemed promise.” The Weimar Republic was “an overstrained welfare state.”¹⁹ From its inception, the reality of social policy lagged behind the high target specification, and the gulf between the state guarantee of social security and a reality marked by inflation, laborious stabilization, and depression could hardly be bridged. Especially in the beginning and final phases of the Weimar Republic, the social state seemed about to collapse under the constantly growing welfare burden. According to a contemporary estimate, in the first years after the war the circle of those deemed needy and eligible for welfare amounted to around 15 million at times, nearly one fourth of the Reich’s population.²⁰ And in late 1932, at the nadir of the worldwide economic crisis, the official statistics office calculated that – in addition to the around 2.5 million unemployed, who received support transfers from unemployment insurance – a further nine million people hung on at mere subsistence, or often below, from public welfare for unemployed welfare recipients, small pensioners and retirees, war invalids, war widows, and war orphans. Beyond this there were an estimated 2.4 million individuals who had fallen through the mesh of all of the social security systems.²¹

¹⁸ Binding/Hoche, *Freigabe*. Cf. Hoffmann, *Inhalte*, pp. 99–107; Rehse, *Euthanasie*, pp. 73–79; Hafner/Winau, *Freigabe*, pp. 233–245; Fichtner, *Euthanasiediskussion*, pp. 25–29; Nowak, “Euthanasie,” pp. 48–52; Burkhardt, *Euthanasie*; Benzenhöfer, *Der gute Tod*.

¹⁹ Abelshäuser, *Weimarer Republik*, p. 30, 31.

²⁰ Schreiber, *Deutsches Reich*, pp. 12 f.

²¹ Sachße/Tennstedt, *Wohlfahrtsstaat*, pp. 84–97; Schmuhl, *Arbeitsmarktpolitik*, pp. 162 f., 189. For a classic example: Lohalm, *Wohlfahrtskrise*.

Under these circumstances, race hygiene, characterized by its own tension between the apocalyptic vision of the final days and millenary promise of salvation, critique of civilization, and scientocratic obsession with feasibility, fell on fruitful soil.²² On the one hand it provided a simple, seemingly scientifically grounded explanation for societal miseries: the social state, by abrogating the laws of natural selection, rears an army of the genetically inferior, cripples, idiots, mentally ill, neurasthenics, psychopaths, and hypochondriacs, who threaten to hopelessly overstrain the systems of social insurance and irretrievably damage the genetic health of the nation within just a few generations. On the other hand, race hygiene also indicated a way out of the scenario of decline it prophesied: with the instruments of positive and negative eugenics, scientifically grounded social engineering appeared possible, which could not only check the alleged degeneration process, but also raise the genetic health of the nation. At the same time, the social state was to be stabilized through restructuring toward a social welfare that differentiated among recipients on the basis of their genetic biology. Race hygiene therefore did not limit itself to criticism of the Weimar welfare state, but further designed the utopia of a technocracy that was to raise the social state to a new level – on the strength of comprehensive, scientifically guided biopolitics.

Against this background, the race hygiene movement in the Weimar Republic rose to become an influential pressure group, which succeeded in gradually anchoring race hygiene/eugenics as a research orientation and subject of instruction in the human sciences and in placing eugenic postulates and programs on the political agenda.

Since race hygiene/eugenics was located in the boundary region between the various human sciences, it was not clear from the outset which of these disciplines would develop into sciences of reference for race hygiene. Accordingly, at the first German Sociology Convention, held in Frankfurt in 1910, Ploetz was still attempting to establish race hygiene as a subdiscipline of sociology. While he lost this debate, driven from the field by Max Weber (1864–1920),²³ Ploetz found more favor at the meeting of the German Association for Public Health Care in the year 1911. Two years later, race hygiene was accepted into the main medical group of the Society of German Natural Scientists and Physicians. The emerging field of race hygiene thus oriented itself even on the eve of the World War I toward the field of medicine, a tendency that intensified in the Weimar Republic.

This was also demonstrated through the introduction of race hygiene as a subject of instruction at the institutions of higher education in the German Reich. Before World War I only a few university catalogs listed courses on race hygiene. After the war, the number of courses rose dramatically. Over the course of the 1920s, race hygiene gained access to the curricula of all German universities and nearly all polytechnic institutions. The tendency toward establishing race hygiene as a subdiscipline of medicine was unmistakable in this development. While in the early 1920s most courses on race hygiene were offered in the context of the *studium*

²² Schmuhl, Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie, pp. 59–65.

²³ Verhandlungen des Ersten Deutschen Soziologentages, pp. 154f. Cf. Schmuhl, Max Weber.

generale for students of all faculties, over the course of the decade medical lectures, courses, laboratory courses, seminars, and colloquia took up an ever larger share of the courses offered on the subject of race hygiene.²⁴ Even where race hygiene was positioned within the field of medicine underwent a transformation. At the beginning of the 1920s it was still generally considered to be a specialized area of (social) hygiene, but it increasingly took on an orientation toward psychiatry, which soon became its most important science of reference. The psychiatric science of the postwar period, still proceeding from Wilhelm Griesinger's (1817–1868) axiom that “mental illnesses are brain illnesses,” was directed toward the study of genetic influences in the emergence of mental illnesses and mental disabilities, while practical psychiatry was dedicated to eugenic prevention, because there were still very few therapeutic possibilities for psychic illnesses.²⁵ In this context the German Research Institute for Psychiatry (*Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Psychiatrie* – DFA), which was admitted into the KWG in 1924, took on the important role of pacemaker, especially the Institute for Psychiatric Genetics (*Institut für psychiatrische Erbllichkeitsforschung*), renamed to the Institute for Genealogy and Demography (*Institut für Genealogie und Demographie*) in 1924.²⁶

In the 1920s race hygiene found an additional mainstay in the research and instruction of anthropology.²⁷ Even in the period between the wars, in Germany anthropology was primarily *physical* anthropology. There were some incipient steps toward *cultural* anthropology, but in Germany these cultural anthropological elements tended to flow into the predominant *race* anthropology – a very different situation than in the USA, where the influence of the school founded by Franz Boas (1858–1942) resulted in a demarcation between cultural anthropology and race anthropology.²⁸ Methodologically, the race anthropology of the 1920s was heading for a crisis – increasingly, classical anthropometry was regarded as insufficient. The trend was toward anthropobiology, which aspired to build a bridge to paleoanthropology and evolutionary biology, to genetics and research of the human constitution, to physiology and pathological anatomy, to psychiatric genetics, genealogy, and genetic family research as well as to hygiene, and also to social hygiene. In the mid-1920s, a king's road to combining anthropology and human genetic biology appeared emerge: blood-group research.²⁹ Thus, anthropology became increasingly interlinked

²⁴ Günther, *Institutionalisierung*. Cf. Weindling, *Health*, p. 339 (table 6). In addition to hygienists, anthropologists and psychiatrists, individual physiologists, internists, gynecologists, dermatologists, biologists, zoologists, historians, and theologians gave instruction in race hygiene. The center of race hygiene theory was the University of Munich, but the various emphases stood out at the universities of Berlin, Breslau, Dresden, Freiburg, Halle, Hamburg, Heidelberg, Jena, Leipzig, and Rostock as well.

²⁵ Kersting/Schmuhl, *Einleitung*, pp. 11–20.

²⁶ Weber, *Forschungsinstitut*; *ibid.*, *Psychiatrie*; *ibid.*, Ernst Rüdin; *ibid.*, Harnack-Prinzip; *ibid.*, *Forschungen*.

²⁷ Weingart/Kroll/Bayertz, *Rasse*, pp. 355–362.

²⁸ Cf. Kaufmann, “Rasse und Kultur.”

²⁹ Geisenhainer, “Rasse,” pp. 125–140.

with areas of knowledge in which race hygiene had already gained a firm foothold. As a consequence, the objects, concepts, and methods of anthropology – at least conceptually – became increasingly accessible to the race hygiene agenda.

By contrast, the connection between race hygiene and genetics in Germany was initially extremely casual.³⁰ There were several reasons for this: First, genetic research in Germany initially concentrated on the genetics of plants and animals in the context of breeding research – human genetics was positioned on the margins. Second, genetics was established predominately “as a theoretical science,” which “was oriented to fields of practice only in individual cases.”³¹ Third, concepts of population genetics, which was, after all, the means of building a bridge to human genetics, initially found little resonance in Germany outside of psychiatric genetics. Nevertheless, the circumstance that nearly all members of the leading circle of the German Society for Race Hygiene joined the newly founded German Society for Genetics (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Vererbungswissenschaft*) in 1922³² indicates that race hygiene aspired to connect with the field of genetics.

As the field became more scientific, the race hygiene movement changed as well: its social basis broadened and shifted toward the universities, the administrative bodies of the Reich, the states and provinces, the districts and municipalities, the churches, the Protestant and Catholic relief organizations, the parliaments, the parties, associations, and clubs. Race hygiene was now no longer a matter for a handful of intellectuals more or less freelancing for the cause; now it found support in a broad group of sponsors from the educated middle bourgeoisie – university professors, preparatory school teachers, medical officers, physicians, pastors, jurists. Influential interest groups like the “Reich Alliance of Germans with Many Children” (*Reichsbund der Kinderreichen Deutschlands*), founded in 1923, picked up on the race hygiene program. Politically, race hygiene disengaged itself from the nationalist corner, became “presentable,” even finding growing acceptance among the Catholic Center party, the Protestant relief organization, the women’s movement, and the Social Democrats.³³ This development entailed many inner conflicts and tension.

At its general meeting in 1922, the German Society for Race Hygiene underwent a major reorganization. A change of the guard took place at the top: the leadership of the Munich contingent was relieved by the association’s Berlin chapter of the group. Ploetz and Gruber were appointed honorary chairmen, with the medical councilor Otto Krohne (1868–1928)³⁴ elected as chairman of both the German and

³⁰Weingart/Kroll/Bayertz, *Rasse*, pp. 351–355.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 352.

³²For example: Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, Max von Gruber, Fritz Lenz, Hermann Muckermann, Alfred Ploetz and Ernst Rüdin. *ibid.*, p. 352.

³³On the churches: Nowak, “Euthanasie;” Kaiser, *Innere Mission*; Schwartz, *Milieus*; Schleiermacher, *Sozialethik*; Richter, *Katholizismus*. On the women’s movement: Herlitzius, *Frauenbefreiung*; on the political left: Schwartz, *Eugenik*; *ibid.*, “Proletarier.”

³⁴For a biography, see Labisch/Tennstedt, *Weg*, vol. 2, pp. 445f.; Stürzbecher, *Otto Krohne*; Weindling, *Health*, p. 217, 349; Saretzki, *Reichsgesundheitsrat*, pp. 17f.

the Berlin Societies for Race Hygiene. The personnel changes signified a change in course, which was also expressed by the society's passing a new set of guiding principles, in which the old "life reform" elements were discarded once and for all. After this shift, new local chapters were founded in rapid succession.³⁵ By 1931 the society had raised its total membership to 1,085.³⁶

The upswing was marred by internal oppositions, however. As early as the first half of the 1920s, an old line of conflict was thrown into bold relief. This tension had become apparent at the very outset of the race hygiene movement and was rooted in the different standpoints on the race question. From the outset, the boundaries between race hygiene and race anthropology had been blurred. While Wilhelm Schallmayer advocated a strict demarcation of what he called *Rassehygiene* from all forms of race anthropology,³⁷ Alfred Ploetz soon developed an affinity for the Nordic idea. After moving to Munich in 1907, Ploetz started a "Nordic Ring," later the "Munich Bow Hunters," which left an enduring mark on the Munich branch of the German Society of Race Hygiene. During the Weimar period, tensions increased between this "Munich line" and the "Berlin line," which was closely associated politically with the Center Party and with elements of the Social Democratic Party and clearly distanced itself from all nationalist and Nordic aspirations. They were openly manifest in the arguments about compulsory nomenclature. For the Munich line, the very term "eugenics" constituted "a kind of deviation to the left"³⁸ away from race hygiene, while the Berlin line, in order to avoid any misunderstandings, favored the term eugenics over "race hygiene."

This opposition was also behind the temporary split in the race hygiene movement. Ostensibly it was about questions of the organizational structure. In 1924, the around 7,000 members of the "Reich Association of German Registrars" (*Reichsverband der deutschen Standesbeamten*) proposed to the German Society for Race Hygiene that they form a working group together; the latter refused, pointing to the limited possibilities of claiming nonprofit status. As a response, the "German Association for Volkish Improvement and Genetics" (*Deutscher Bund für Volksaufartung und Erbkunde*) was founded in 1925. The new organization enjoyed the solid support of the Reich Ministry of the Interior, the Prussian Welfare Ministry, the Berlin City Council and, of course, the Association of Registrars, whose director Edwin Krutina (1888–1953),³⁹ the driving force behind the new founding, was elected secretary of the association. Its chairman was the jurist and founder of the German and Prussian Association for Infant Welfare, Carl von Behr-Pinnow

³⁵Dresden (1922), Kiel and Bremen (1923), Tübingen (1924), Württemberg (1925) Münster and Osnabrück (1926). Fischer, *Geschichte*, p. 4; Kroll, *Entstehung*, pp. 167f.; Kröner, *Eugenik*, pp. 80f., 84, 87. Cf. also Weindling, *International Eugenics*, p. 183 (table 1).

³⁶Weingart/Kroll/Bayertz, *Rasse*, p. 215. Fischer, *Geschichte*, p. 4, listed the number of members in 1930 as 1,300.

³⁷Schallmayer, *Vererbung*, pp. 375–387. Cf. Weiss, *Race Hygiene*, pp. 100–104.

³⁸Saller, *Rassenlehre*, p. 72. Cf. Lenz, *Auslese*, pp. 249–254.

³⁹For a biography: Labisch/Tennstedt, *Weg*, vol. 2, pp. 446f.

(1864–1941);⁴⁰ the ministerial councilor in the Prussian Welfare Ministry, Arthur Ostermann (1876–1943) became deputy chairman.⁴¹ After 1 year, the new association had 1,500 members, and was thus already larger than the Society for Race Hygiene. Officially, the Association for Volkish Improvement and Genetics portrayed itself as an extension of the Society for Race Hygiene, which it characterized as an institution that performs “pioneering work of a more scientific and theoretical nature,” while the association was supposed to “cultivate and propagate” eugenics “in an entirely popular form understandable to everyone.”⁴² The primary vehicle for this was the *Zeitschrift für Volksaufartung und Erbkunde* (“Journal for Volkish Improvement and Genetics”), called *Eugenik, Erblehre, Erbpflege* (“Eugenics, Genetics, Care of Heredity”) from 1930 onward, which had a circulation of 5,000 and thus reached five times the audience of the *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* (“Archive for the Biology of Race and Society”). However, the German Association for Volkish Improvement and Genetics also contrasted with the German Society for Race Hygiene as regards its content, in that it emphasized the “generally biological.” As its chairman Behr-Pinnow explained, the association intended to “restrain the manifestations of degeneration and be of service to the positive improvement of the people [...] without consideration of any particular race, be it Nordic, Dinaric or other.”⁴³ Accordingly, the statute claims that the association is to serve “the totality of the German people without any differentiation among political parties or confessions.”⁴⁴ The German Society for Race Hygiene viewed the new organization skeptically as a “competing movement,”⁴⁵ especially since the Association for Volkish Improvement and Genetics, contrary to its appeasing announcement that it would restrict itself to propaganda, also regarded it as its duty to make suggestions to the “organs of legislation and administration,”⁴⁶ with good chances of success thanks to the new organization’s close ties to the Prussian ministerial bureaucracy.

Thus we can summarize that different lines of development came together in the first half of the 1920s, with the consequence that race hygiene, science, and politics became closely entangled. First, the catastrophe of the World War I catapulted race hygiene out of its sectarian corner to the middle of society – the race hygiene agenda appeared to offer a direction toward a new form of biopolitics to guide state and society out of the many overlapping social problems and crises the war had left behind. Second, the race hygiene paradigm increasingly trickled into the human sciences – entanglements under the auspices of heredity, above all psychiatry’s turn toward genetics, anthropology’s transition to anthropobiology and the first steps

⁴⁰ For a biography: *ibid.*, pp. 380 f. During World War I, Behr-Pinnow was a board member of the Berlin Society for Race Hygiene.

⁴¹ For a biography: *ibid.*, pp. 463 f.

⁴² Behr-Pinnow, *Deutscher Bund für Volksaufartung*, p. 411.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Quoted in Lenz, “*Deutscher Bund für Volksaufartung*,” p. 349.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*

toward extending animal and plant genetics toward human genetics, contributed to race hygiene becoming more scientific. Third, the social basis of the race hygiene movement broadened: in the political center and to its left, a new form of eugenics emerged, which, in contrast to the old race hygiene linked with the nationalist camp, was an acceptable partner for cooperation with the Weimar coalition governments. Fourth, the “overburdened welfare state” ultimately relied more and more on the human sciences to find a way out of the crisis of the social systems, and in this framework of scientific political consulting, a key role fell to eugenics. From this constellation emerged the initiative for a state-dominated research institute dedicated to the areas of anthropology, human genetics, and eugenics.

1.2 The First Attempt: A Reich Institute for Human Genetics and Demographics

1.2.1 *Genetics, Race Hygiene and Scientific Policy Consulting*

In 1919, responsibility for medical affairs in Prussia was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the newly founded Ministry for the Welfare of the People (*Ministerium für Volkswohlfahrt*), headed by the Center politician and Christian trade unionist Adam Stegerwald (1874–1945), who was open to the eugenic idea. The Department for People’s Health (*Abteilung für Volksgesundheit*) was delegated to the Berlin physician and city councilman Adolf Gottstein (1857–1941),⁴⁷ who was in charge of Prussian medical affairs until his retirement in 1924. From the outset, Gottstein demonstrated a marked interest in genetics, genetic family research, and eugenics.⁴⁸ It is telling that

⁴⁷For a biography: Labisch/Tennstedt, Weg, vol. 2, pp. 416f.; Weindling, Health, p. 171, 219; Saretzki, Reichsgesundheitsrat, p. 16.

⁴⁸For example, cf. the explicit decree of 2 September 1920, in which Gottstein urged the Prussian President (*Oberpräsident*) and the president of the district government to set up information centers for the “nervous and mentally ill.” He justifies his proposal with the argument that “The difficult experiences during the war period and the chronic malnourishment frequently disturbed the mental balance of sensitive individuals, especially those of high intellectual development. Under the unusually strict restrictions of personal freedom existing during the war period, and the relaxation of social sentences and bonds that occurred after the revolution, it was thus possible for a schism to emerge in people disposed to illness, in which the initiatives suppressed for so many years liberated themselves from the powerful impulse of dissatisfaction, to the detriment of the general public. The intense excitability of affect and the psychopaths’ conviction of the truthfulness of their view, which persists even when strong exaggerations and distortions of facts are apparent to the mentally healthy, secured these ill individuals a disproportionate influence on the mass of the nation, an influence that is all the more threatening because the extraordinarily miserable economic situation and the political inattentiveness of wide sectors of the population raised the general level of dissatisfaction, thus creating unusual receptiveness to influence by suggestion. Just as in earlier nationalist movements, it has been observed now, too, that these youthful psychopaths are the ones at the foreground of the political extreme orientations.” Cited in Kersting/Schmuhl (eds.), Quellen, pp. 145f. Cf. also Weindling, Health, pp. 381–383.