

Eugenicide

Murder was always an option.

Point eight of the *Preliminary Report of the Committee of the Eugenic Section of the American Breeders Association to Study and to Report on the Best Practical Means for Cutting Off the Defective Germ-Plasm in the Human Population* specified euthanasia as a possibility to be considered.¹ Of course euthanasia was merely a euphemism—actually a misnomer. Eugenicists did not see euthanasia as a “merciful killing” of those in pain, but rather a “painless killing” of people deemed unworthy of life. The method most whispered about, and publicly denied, but never out of mind, was a “lethal chamber.”

The lethal chamber first emerged in Britain during the Victorian era as a humane means of killing stray dogs and cats. Dr. Benjamin Ward Richardson patented a “Lethal Chamber for the Painless Extinction of Lower Animal Life” in the 1880s. Richardson’s original blueprints show a large wood- and glass-paneled chamber big enough for a Saint Bernard or several smaller dogs, serviced by a tall slender tank for carbonic acid gas, and a heating apparatus. In 1884 the Battersea Dogs Home in London became one of the first institutions to install the device, and used it continuously with “perfect success” according to a sales proposal at the time. By the turn of the century other charitable animal institutions in England and other European countries were also using the chamber.²

This solution for unwanted pets was almost immediately contemplated as a solution for unwanted humans—criminals, the feeble-minded and other misfits. The concept of the lethal chamber was common vernacular by the turn of the century. When mentioned, it needed no explanation; everyone understood what it meant.

In 1895, the British novelist Robert Chambers penned his vision of a horrifying world twenty-five years into the future. He wrote of a New York where the elevated trains were dismantled and “the first Government Lethal Chamber was opened on Washington Square.” No explanation of

"Government Lethal Chamber" was offered—or necessary. Indeed, the idea of gassing the unwanted became a topic of contemporary chitchat. In 1901, the British author Arnold White, writing in *Efficiency and Empire*, chastised "flippant people of lazy mind [who] talk lightly of the 'lethal chamber'...."³

In 1905, the British eugenicist and birth control advocate H. G. Wells published *A Modern Utopia*. "There would be no killing, no lethal chambers," he wrote. Another birth control advocate, the socialist writer Eden Paul, differed with Wells and declared that society must protect itself from "begetters of anti-social stocks which would injure generations to come. If it [society] reject the lethal chamber, what other alternative can the socialist state devise?"⁴

The British eugenicist Robert Rentoul's 1906 book, *Race Culture; Or, Race Suicide?*, included a long section entitled "The Murder of Degenerates." In it he routinely referred to Dr. D. F. Smith's earlier suggestion that those found guilty of homicide be executed in a "lethal chamber" rather than by hanging. He then cited a new novel whose character "advocate[d] the doctrine of 'euthanasia' for those suffering from incurable physical diseases." Rentoul admitted he had received many letters in support of killing the unfit, but he rejected them as too cruel, explaining, "These [suggestions] seem to fail to recognize that the killing off of few hundreds of lunatics, idiots, etc., would not tend to effect a cure."⁵

The debate raged among British eugenicists, provoking damnation in the press. In 1910, the eugenic extremist George Bernard Shaw lectured at London's Eugenics Education Society about mass murder in lethal chambers. Shaw proclaimed, "A part of eugenic politics would finally land us in an extensive use of the lethal chamber. A great many people would have to be put out of existence, simply because it wastes other people's time to look after them." Several British newspapers excoriated Shaw and eugenics under such headlines as "Lethal Chamber Essential to Eugenics."⁶

One opponent of eugenics condemned "much wild and absurd talk about lethal chambers...." But in another article a eugenicist writing under the pseudonym of Vanoc argued that eugenics was needed precisely because systematic use of lethal chambers was unlikely. "I admit the word 'Eugenics' is repellent, but the thing is essential to our existence.... It is also an error to believe that the plans and specifications for County Council lethal-chambers have yet been prepared."⁷

The Eugenics Education Society in London tried to dispel all "dark mutterings regarding 'lethal chambers.'" Its key activist Saleeby insisted,

"We need mention, only to condemn, suggestions for 'painless extinction,' lethal chambers of carbonic acid, and so forth. As I incessantly have to repeat, eugenics has nothing to do with killing. . . ." Saleeby returned to this time and again. When lecturing in Battle Creek, Michigan, at the First National Conference on Race Betterment in 1914, he emphasized a vigorous rejection of "the lethal chamber, the permission of infant mortality, interference with [pre]-natal life, and all other synonyms for murder."⁸

But many British eugenicists clung to the idea. Arthur F. Tredgold was a leading expert on mental deficiency and one of the earliest members of the Eugenics Education Society; his academic credentials eventually won him a seat on the Brock Commission on Mental Deficiency. Tredgold's landmark *Textbook on Mental Deficiency*, first published in 1908, completely avoided discussion of the lethal chamber. But three subsequent editions published over the next fourteen years did discuss it, with each revision displaying greater acceptance of the idea. In those editions Tredgold equivocated: "We may dismiss the suggestion of a 'lethal chamber.' I do not say that society, in self-defense, would be unjustified in adopting such a method of ridding itself of its anti-social constituents. There is much to be said for and against the proposal. . . ." By the sixth edition, Tredgold had modified the paragraph to read: "The suggestion [of the lethal chamber] is a logical one. . . . It is probable that the community will eventually, in self-defense, have to consider this question seriously." The next two editions edged into outright, if limited, endorsement. While qualifying that morons need not be put to death, Tredgold concluded that for some 80,000 imbeciles and idiots in Britain, "it would be an economical and humane procedur  were their existence to be painlessly terminated. . . . The time has come when euthanasia should be permitted. . . ."⁹

Leaders of the American eugenic establishment also debated lethal chambers and other means of euthanasia. But in America, while the debate began as an argument about death with dignity for the terminally ill or those in excruciating pain, it soon became a palatable eugenic solution. In 1900, the physician W. Duncan McKim published *Heredity and Human Progress*, asserting, "Heredity is the fundamental cause of human wretchedness. . . . The surest, the simplest, the kindest, and most humane means for preventing reproduction among those whom we deem unworthy of this high privilege [reproduction], is a gentle, painless death." He added, "In carbonic acid gas, we have an agent which would instantaneously fulfill the need."¹⁰

By 1903, a committee of the National Conference on Charities and Correction conceded that it was as yet undecided whether "science may

conquer sentiment" and ultimately elect to systematically kill the unfit. In 1904, the superintendent of New Jersey's Vineland Training School, E. R. Johnstone, raised the issue during his presidential address to the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons. "Many plans for the elimination [of the feeble-minded] have been proposed," he said, referred to numerous recently published suggestions of a "painless death." That same year, the notion of executing habitual criminals and the incurably insane was offered to the National Prison Association.¹¹

Some U.S. lawmakers considered similar ideas. Two years later, the Ohio legislature considered a bill empowering physicians to chloroform permanently diseased and mentally incapacitated persons. In reporting this, Rentoul told his British colleagues that it was Ohio's attempt to "murder certain persons suffering from incurable disease." Iowa considered a similar measure.¹²

By 1910, the idea of sending the unfit into lethal chambers was regularly bandied about in American sociological and eugenic circles, causing a debate no less strident than the one in England. In 1911, E. B. Sherlock's book, *The Feeble-minded: a guide to study and practice*, acknowledged that "glib suggestions of the erection of lethal chambers are common enough. . . ." Like others, he rejected execution in favor of eugenic termination of bloodlines. "Apart from the difficulty that the provision of lethal chambers is impracticable in the existing state law. . .," he continued, "the removal of them [the feeble-minded] would do practically nothing toward solving the chief problem with the mentally defective set. . . , the persistence of the obnoxious stock."¹³

But other eugenicists were more amenable to the idea. The psychologist and eugenicist Henry H. Goddard seemed to almost express regret that such proposals had not already been implemented. In his famous study, *The Kallikak Family*, Goddard commented, "For the low-grade idiot, the loathsome unfortunate that may be seen in our institutions, some have proposed the lethal chamber. But humanity is steadily tending away from the possibility of that method, and there is no probability that it will ever be practiced." Goddard pointed to familywide castration, sterilization and segregation as better solutions because they would address the genetic source.¹⁴

In 1912, Laughlin and others at the Eugenics Section of the American Breeders Association considered euthanasia as the eighth of nine options. Their final report, published by the Carnegie Institution as a two-volume bulletin, enumerated the "Suggested Remedies" and equivocated on

euthanasia. Point eight cited the example of ancient Sparta, fabled for drowning its weak young boys in a river or letting them die of exposure to ensure a race of warriors. Mixing condemnation with admiration, the Carnegie report declared, "However much we deprecate Spartan ideals and her means of advancing them, we must admire her courage in so rigorously applying so practical a system of selection. . . . Sparta left but little besides tales of personal valor to enhance the world's culture. With euthanasia, as in the case of polygamy, an effective eugenical agency would be purchased at altogether too dear a moral price."¹⁵

William Robinson, a New York urologist, published widely on the topic of birth control and eugenics. In Robinson's book, *Eugenics, Marriage and Birth Control (Practical Eugenics)*, he advocated gassing the children of the unfit. In plain words, Robinson insisted: "The best thing would be to gently chloroform these children or to give them a dose of potassium cyanide." Margaret Sanger was well aware that her fellow birth control advocates were promoting lethal chambers, but she herself rejected the idea completely. "Nor do we believe," wrote Sanger in *Pivot of Civilization*, "that the community could or should send to the lethal chamber the defective progeny resulting from irresponsible and unintelligent breeding."¹⁶

Still, American eugenicists never relinquished the notion that America could bring itself to mass murder. At the First National Conference on Race Betterment, University of Wisconsin eugenicist Leon J. Cole lectured on the dysgenic effects of charity and medicine on eugenic progress. He made a clear distinction between Darwin's concept of natural selection and the newer idea of simple "selection." The difference, Cole explained, "is that instead of being *natural* selection it is now *conscious* selection on the part of the breeder. . . . Death is the normal process of elimination in the social organism, and we might carry the figure a step further and say that in prolonging the lives of defectives we are tampering with the functioning of the social kidneys!"¹⁷

Paul Popenoe, leader of California's eugenics movement and coauthor of the widely-used textbook *Applied Eugenics*, agreed that the easiest way to counteract feeble-mindedness was simple execution. "From an historical point of view," he wrote, "the first method which presents itself is execution. . . . Its value in keeping up the standard of the race should not be underestimated."¹⁸

Madison Grant, who functioned as president of the Eugenics Research Association and the American Eugenics Society, made the point clear in *The Passing of the Great Race*. "Mistaken regard for what are believed to be divine laws and a sentimental belief in the sanctity of human life tend to

prevent both the elimination of defective infants and the sterilization of such adults as are themselves of no value to the community. The laws of nature require the obliteration of the unfit and human life is valuable only when it is of use to the community or race."¹⁹

On November 12, 1915, the issue of eugenic euthanasia sprang out of the shadows and into the national headlines. It began as an unrelated medical decision on Chicago's Near North Side. At 4 A.M. that day, a woman named Anna Bollinger gave birth at German-American Hospital. The baby was somewhat deformed and suffered from extreme intestinal and rectal abnormalities, as well as other complications. The delivering physicians awakened Dr. Harry Haiselden, the hospital's chief of staff. Haiselden came in at once. He consulted with colleagues. There was great disagreement over whether the child could be saved. But Haiselden decided the baby was too afflicted and fundamentally not worth saving. It would be killed. The method—denial of treatment.²⁰

Catherine Walsh, probably a friend of Anna Bollinger's, heard the news and sped to the hospital to help. She found the baby, who had been named Allan, alone in a bare room. He was naked and appeared to have been lying in one position unattended. Walsh urgently called for Haiselden, "to beg that the child be taken to its mother," and dramatically recalled, "It was condemned to death, and I knew its mother would be its most merciful judge."²¹

Walsh pleaded with Haiselden not to kill the baby by withholding treatment. "It was not a monster—that child," Walsh later told an inquest. "It was a beautiful baby. I saw no deformities." Walsh had patted the infant lightly. Allan's eyes were open, and he waved his tiny fists at her. She kissed his forehead. "I knew," she recalled, "if its mother got her eyes on it she would love it and never permit it to be left to die." Begging the doctor once more, Walsh tried an appeal to his humanity. "If the poor little darling has one chance in a thousand," she pleaded, "won't you operate and save it?"²²

Haiselden laughed at Walsh, retorting, "I'm afraid it might get well." He was a skilled and experienced surgeon, trained by the best doctors in Chicago, and now chief of the hospital's medical staff. He was also an ardent eugenicist.²³

Chicago's health commissioner, Dr. John Dill Robertson, learned of the deliberate euthanasia. He went to the hospital and told Haiselden he did not agree that "the child would grow up a mental defective." He later recollected, "I thought the child was in a dying condition, and I had doubts that an operation then would save it. Yet I believed it had one chance in

100,000, and I advised Dr. Haiselden to give it this one chance." But Haiselden refused.²⁴

Quiet euthanasia of newborns was not uncommon in Chicago. Haiselden, however, publicly defended his decision to withhold treatment as a kind of eugenic expedient, throwing the city and the nation into moral turmoil amid blaring newspaper headlines. An inquest was convened a few days later. Some of Haiselden's most trusted colleagues were impaneled on the coroner's jury. Health Commissioner Robertson testified, "I think it very wrong not to save life, let that life be what it may. That is the function of a physician. I believe this baby might have grown up to be an average man. . . . I would have operated and saved this baby's life. . . ."²⁵

At one point Haiselden angrily interrupted the health commissioner's testimony to question why he was being singled out when doctors throughout Chicago were routinely killing, on average, one baby every day, under similar circumstances. Haiselden defiantly declared, "I should have been guilty of a graver crime if I had saved this child's life. My crime would have been keeping in existence one of nature's cruelest blunders." A juror shot back, "What do you mean by that?" Haiselden responded, "Exactly that. I do not *think* this child would have grown up to be a mental defective. I know it."²⁶

After tempestuous proceedings, the inquest ruled, "We believe that a prompt operation would have prolonged and perhaps saved the life of the child. We find no evidence from the physical defects that the child would have become mentally or morally defective." The doctor jurors concluded that the child had at least a one-in-three chance—some thought an "even chance"—of surviving. But they also decided that Haiselden was within his professional rights to decline treatment. No law compelled him to operate on the child. The doctor was released unpunished, and efforts by the Illinois attorney general to indict him for murder were blocked by the local prosecutor.²⁷

The medical establishment in Chicago and throughout the nation was rocked. The *Chicago Tribune* ran a giant banner headline across the width of its front page: "Baby Dies; Physician Upheld." One reader in Washington, D.C., wrote a letter to the editor asking, "Is it not strange that the whole country should be so shaken, almost hysterical, over the death of a babe never consciously alive . . . ?" But the nation was momentarily transfixed.²⁸

Haiselden considered his legal vindication a powerful victory for eugenics. "Eugenics? Of course it's eugenics," he told one reporter. On another occasion he remarked, "Which do you prefer—six days of Baby Bollinger or seventy years of Jukes?"²⁹

Emboldened, Haiselden proudly revealed that he had euthanized other such newborns in the past. He began granting high-profile media interviews to advertise his determination to continue passively euthanizing infants. Within two weeks, he had ordered his staff to withhold treatment from several more deformed or birth-defected infants. Haiselden would sometimes send instructions via cross-country telegraph while on the lecture tour that arose from his eugenic celebrity. Other times he would handle it personally, like the time he left a newly delivered infant's umbilical cord untied and let it bleed to death. Sometimes he took a more direct approach and simply injected newborns with opiates.³⁰

The euthanasia of Allan Bollinger may have begun as one doctor's controversial professional decision, but it immediately swirled into a national eugenic spectacle. Days after the inquest ruling, *The Independent*, a Hearst weekly devoted to pressing issues of the day, ran an editorial asking "Was the Doctor Right?" *The Independent* invited readers to sound off. In a special section, *The Independent* published supportive letters from prominent eugenicists, including Davenport himself. "If the progress of surgery," wrote Davenport, "is to be used to the detriment of the race . . . it may conceivably destroy the race. Shortsighted they who would unduly restrict the operation of what is one of Nature's greatest racial blessings—death."³¹

Haiselden continued to rally for eugenic euthanasia with a six-week series in the *Chicago American*. He justified his killings by claiming that public institutions for the feeble-minded, epileptic and tubercular were functioning as lethal chambers of a sort. After clandestinely visiting the Illinois Institution for the Feeble-minded at Lincoln, Illinois, Haiselden claimed that windows were deliberately left open and unscreened, allowing drafts and infecting flies to swarm over patients. He charged that Lincoln consciously permitted "flies from the toilets, garbage and from the eruptions of patients suffering from acute and chronic troubles to go at will over the entire institution. Worse still," he proclaimed, "I found that inmates were fed with the milk from a herd of cattle reeking with tuberculosis."³²

At the time, milk from cattle with tuberculosis was a well-known cause of infection and death from the disease.³³ Lincoln maintained its own herd of seventy-two cows, which produced about 50,000 gallons of milk a year for its own consumption. Ten diseased cows had died within the previous two years. State officials admitted that their own examinations had determined that as many as half of the cows were tubercular, but there was no way to know which ones were infected because "a tubercular cow may be the fattest cow in the herd." Lincoln officials claimed that

their normal pasteurization "by an experienced employee" killed the tuberculosis bacteria. They were silent on the continuous handling of the milk by infected residents.³⁴

Medical watchdogs had often speculated that institutions for the feeble-minded were really nothing more than slow-acting lethal chambers. But Haiselden never resorted to the term *lethal chamber*. He called such institutions "slaughterhouses."³⁵

In tuberculosis colonies, residents continuously infected and reinfected each other, often receiving minimal or no treatment. At Lincoln, the recently established tuberculosis unit housed just forty beds for an estimated tubercular population of hundreds. Lincoln officials asserted that only the most severely infected children were placed in that ward. They stressed that other institutions for the feeble-minded recorded much higher mortality rates, some as high as 40 percent.³⁶

Eugenicists believed that when tuberculosis was fatal, the real culprit was not bacteria, but defective genes. The ERO kept special files on mortality rates resulting from hereditary tuberculosis, compiled by the Belgian eugenicist Govaerts and others.³⁷

Tuberculosis was an omnipresent topic in textbooks on eugenics. Typical was a chapter in Davenport's *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (1911). He claimed that only the submerged tenth was vulnerable. "The germs are ubiquitous. . . . Why do only 10 percent die from the attacks of this parasite? . . . It seems perfectly plain that death from tuberculosis is the result of infection added to natural and acquired non-resistance. It is then highly undesirable that two persons with weak resistance should marry. . . ." Popenoe and Johnson's textbook, *Applied Eugenics*, devoted a chapter to "Lethal Selection," which operated "through the destruction of the individual by some adverse feature of the environment, such as excessive cold, or bacteria, or by bodily deficiency."³⁸

Some years earlier, the president of the National Conference on Charities and Correction had told his institutional superintendents caring for the feeble-minded, "We wish the parasitic strain. . . to die out." Even an article in *Institution Quarterly*, Illinois's own journal, admitted, "it would be an act of kindness to them, and a protection to the state, if they could be killed."³⁹

No wonder that at one international conference on eugenics, Davenport proclaimed without explanation from the podium, "One may even view with satisfaction the high death rate in an institution for low grade feeble-minded, while one regards as a national disaster the loss of. . . the infant child of exceptional parents."⁴⁰

Haiselden himself quipped, "Death is the Great and Lasting Disinfectant."⁴¹

Haiselden's accusations of deliberate passive euthanasia by neglect and abuse could neither be verified nor dismissed. Lincoln's understaffed, overcrowded and decrepit facility consistently reported staggering death rates, often as high as 12 percent per year. In 1904, for example, 109 of its epileptic children died, constituting at least 10 percent and probably far more of its youth population; cause of death was usually listed as "exhaustion due to epileptic seizures." Between 1914 and 1915, a bout of dysentery claimed eight patients; "heat exhaustion" was listed as the cause. During the same period, four individuals died shortly after admission before any preliminary examination at all; their deaths were categorized as "undetermined."⁴²

For some of its most vulnerable groups, Lincoln's death rate was particularly high. As many as 30 percent of newly admitted epileptic children died within eighteen months of admission. Moreover, in 1915, the overall death rate among patients in their first two years of residence jumped from 4.2 percent to 10 percent.⁴³

Tuberculosis was a major factor. In 1915, Lincoln reported that nearly all of its incoming patients were designated feeble-minded; roughly 20 percent were classified as epileptics; and some 27 percent of its overall population were "in the various stages of tubercular involvement." No isolation was provided for infected patients until the forty-bed tuberculosis unit opened. Lincoln officials worried that the statistics were "likely to leave the impression that the institution is a 'hot-bed' for the spread of tuberculosis." Officials denied this, explaining that many of the children came from filthy environments, and "the fact that feeble-minded children have less resistance, account[s] for the high percentage of tuberculosis found among them."⁴⁴

Lincoln officials clearly accepted the eugenic approach to feeble-mindedness as gospel. Their reports and explanations were laced with scientific quotations on mental deficiency from Tredgold, who advocated euthanasia for severe cases, and Barr, who extolled the wisdom of the Kansas castrations. Lincoln officials also made clear that they received many of their patients as court-ordered institutionalizations from the Municipal Court of Chicago; as such, they received regular guidance from the court's supervising judge, Harry Olson. *Eugenical News* praised Olson for operating the court's psychopathic laboratory, which employed Laughlin as a special consultant on sterilization. Olson was vital to the movement and hailed by

Eugenical News as "one of its most advanced representatives." In 1922, Olson became president of the Eugenics Research Association.⁴⁵

Moreover, staff members at Lincoln were some of the leading eugenicists in Illinois. Lincoln psychologist Clara Town chaired the Eugenics Committee of the Illinois State Commission of Charities and Corrections. Town had helped compile a series of articles on eugenics and feeble-mindedness, including one by her friend Henry H. Goddard, who had invented the original classifications of feeble-mindedness. One reviewer described Town's articles as arguments that there was little use in caring for the institutionalized feeble-minded, who would die anyway if left in the community; caring for them was little more than "unnatural selection."⁴⁶

For decades, medical investigators would question how the death rates at asylums, including the one in Lincoln, Illinois, could be so high. In the 1990s, the average life expectancy for individuals with mental retardation was 66.2 years. In the 1930s, the average life expectancy for those classified as feeble-minded was approximately 18.5 years. Records suggest that a disproportionate percentage of the feeble-minded at Lincoln died before the age of ten.⁴⁷

Haiselden became an overnight eugenic celebrity, known to the average person because of his many newspaper articles, speaking tours, and his outrageous diatribes. In 1917, Hollywood came calling. The film was called *The Black Stork*. Written by *Chicago American* reporter Jack Lait, it was produced in Hollywood and given a massive national distribution and promotion campaign. Haiselden played himself in a fictionalized account of a eugenically mismatched couple who are counseled by Haiselden against having children because they are likely to be defective. Eventually the woman does give birth to a defective child, whom she then allows to die. The dead child levitates into the waiting arms of Jesus Christ. It was unbridled cinematic propaganda for the eugenics movement.⁴⁸

In many theaters, such as the LaSalle in Chicago, the movie played continuously from 9 A.M. until 11 P.M. National publicity advertised it as a "eugenic love story." Sensational movie posters called it a "eugenic photoplay." One advertisement quoted Swiss eugenicist Auguste Forel's warning: "The law of heredity winds like a red thread through the family history of every criminal, of every epileptic, eccentric and insane person. Shall we sit still . . . without applying the remedy?" Another poster depicted Haiselden's office door with a notice: "BABIES NOT TREATED." In 1917, a display advertisement for the film encouraged: "Kill Defectives, Save the Nation and See 'The Black Stork.'"⁴⁹

The Black Stork played at movie theaters around the nation for more than a decade.⁵⁰

Gassing the unwanted, the lethal chamber and other methods of euthanasia became a part of everyday American parlance and ethical debate some two decades before President Woodrow Wilson, in General Order 62, directed that the "Gas Service" become the "Chemical Warfare Service," instructing them to develop toxic gas weapons for world war. The lethal chamber was a eugenic concept more than two decades before Nevada approved the first such chamber for criminal executions in 1921, and then gassed with cyanide a Chinese-born murderer, the first such execution in the world. Davenport declared that capital punishment was a eugenic necessity. Popenoe's textbook, *Applied Eugenics*, listed execution as one of nine suggested remedies for defectives—without specifying criminals.⁵¹

In the first decades of the twentieth century, America's eugenics movement inspired and spawned a world of look-alikes, act-alikes and think-alikes. The U.S. movement also rendered scientific aid and comfort to undisguised racists everywhere, from Walter Plecker in Virginia right across Europe. American theory, practice and legislation were the models. In France, Belgium, Sweden, England and elsewhere in Europe, each clique of raceological eugenicists did their best to introduce eugenic principles into national life; perhaps more importantly, they could always point to recent precedents established in the United States.

Germany was no exception. German eugenicists had formed academic and personal relationships with Davenport and the American eugenic establishment from the turn of the century. Even after World War I, when Germany would not cooperate with the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations because of French, English and Belgian involvement, its bonds with Davenport and the rest of the U.S. movement remained strong. American foundations such as the Carnegie Institution and the Rockefeller Foundation generously funded German race biology with hundreds of thousands of dollars, even as Americans stood in breadlines.⁵²

Germany had certainly developed its own body of eugenic knowledge and library of publications. Yet German readers still closely followed American eugenic accomplishments as the model: biological courts, forced sterilization, detention for the socially inadequate, debates on euthanasia. As America's elite were describing the socially worthless and the ancestrally unfit as "bacteria," "vermin," "mongrels" and "subhuman," a superior race of Nordics was increasingly seen as the final solution to the globe's eugenic problems.⁵³

America had established the value of race and blood. In Germany, the concept was known as *Rasse und Blut*.

U.S. proposals, laws, eugenic investigations and ideology were not undertaken quietly out of sight of German activists. They became inspirational blueprints for Germany's rising tide of race biologists and race-based hatemongers, be they white-coated doctors studying *Eugenical News* and attending congresses in New York, or brown-shirted agitators waving banners and screaming for social upheaval in the streets of Munich.

One such agitator was a disgruntled corporal in the German army. He was an extreme nationalist who also considered himself a race biologist and an advocate of a master race. He was willing to use force to achieve his nationalist racial goals. His inner circle included Germany's most prominent eugenic publisher. In 1924, he was serving time in prison for mob action.⁵⁴ While in prison, he spent his time poring over eugenic textbooks, which extensively quoted Davenport, Popenoe and other American raceological stalwarts.⁵⁵ Moreover, he closely followed the writings of Leon Whitney, president of the American Eugenics Society, and Madison Grant, who extolled the Nordic race and bemoaned its corruption by Jews, Negroes, Slavs and others who did not possess blond hair and blue eyes. The young German corporal even wrote one of them fan mail.⁵⁶

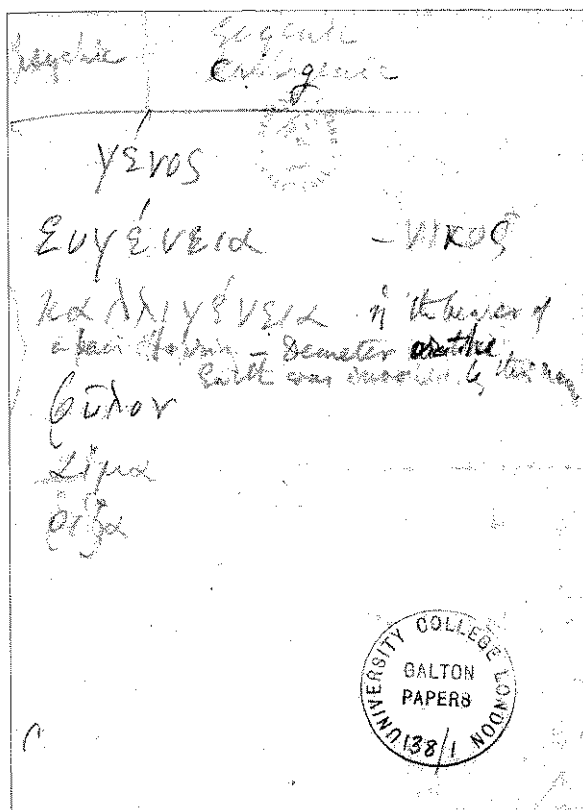
In *The Passing of the Great Race*, Madison Grant wrote: "Mistaken regard for what are believed to be divine laws and a sentimental belief in the sanctity of human life tend to prevent both the elimination of defective infants and the sterilization of such adults as are themselves of no value to the community. The laws of nature require the obliteration of the unfit and human life is valuable only when it is of use to the community or race."⁵⁷

One day in the early 1930s, AES president Whitney visited the home of Grant, who was at the time chairing a eugenic immigration committee. Whitney wanted to show off a letter he had just received from Germany, written by the corporal, now out of prison and rising in the German political scene. Grant could only smile. He pulled out his own letter. It was from the same German, thanking Grant for writing *The Passing of the Great Race*. The fan letter stated that Grant's book was "his Bible."⁵⁸

The man writing both letters to the American eugenic leaders would soon burn and gas his name into the blackest corner of history. He would duplicate the American eugenic program—both that which was legislated and that which was only brashly advocated—and his group would consistently point to the United States as setting the precedents for Germany's

actions. And then this man would go further than any American eugenicist ever dreamed, further than the world would ever tolerate, further than humanity will ever forget.

The man who sent those letters was Adolf Hitler.⁵⁹



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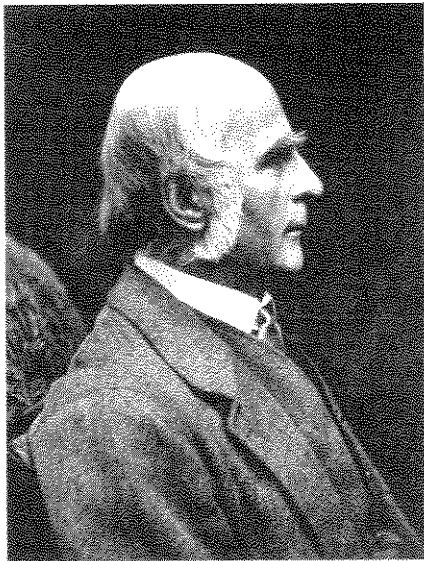
Francis Galton's original scrap of paper inventing the term *eugenics*. UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON ARCHIVES

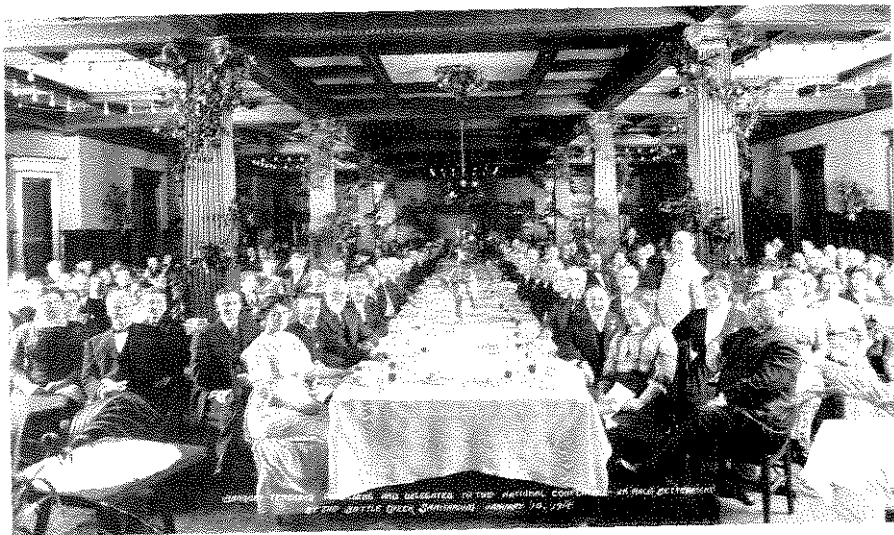
BOTTOM LEFT

Gregor Mendel, discoverer of the principles of heredity. AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

BOTTOM RIGHT

Francis Galton, father of eugenics. UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON ARCHIVES





First Race Betterment Conference Banquet, 1914. AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

THE CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE:

**He's Going to Let Her Baby Die;
This Woman Says "It's for Best."**



DR. H. F. HAISELDEN

MRS. ANNA ROLLINGER

**DOES HUMANITY DEMAND THE
SAVING OF DEFECTIVE BABIES?**

**DOCTOR TO LET
DEFECTIVE BABY
EXPIRE UNAIDED**

**Mother Approves Surgeon's Re-
fusal to Prolong Life of
Malformed Infant.**

(Continued from first page.)

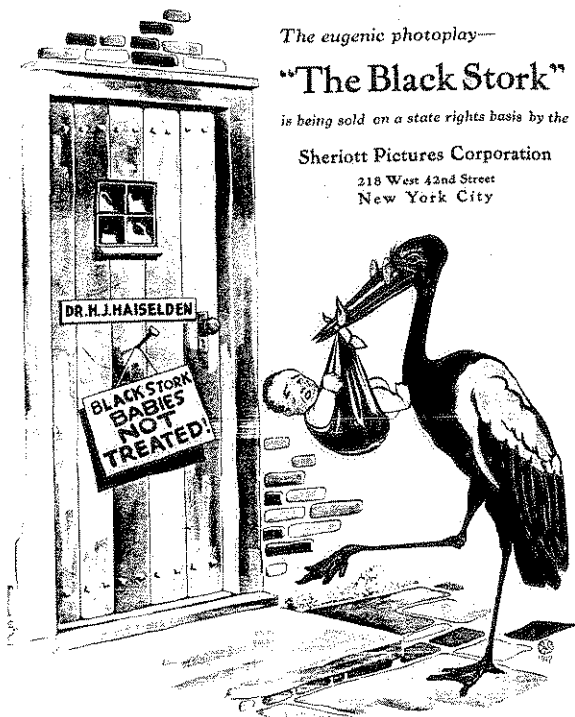
allowed to die by not tying the umbilical cord. If the cord, which must be severed at birth, is not tied immediately after, the infant will die of loss of blood. I do not mean to say that children are permitted often to die by their physicians. But such deaths are not infrequent.

"Instead of struggling to save deformed children and those marked plainly for insanity and uselessness," the surgeon continued, "physicians should have only the fit. I have thought over this problem for years.

"There are no defectives among the Japanese. The surgeons of Nippon often fail to tie the umbilical cord. As a result, the Japanese are a wonderfully vig-

Chicago Tribune report of Dr. Harry Haiselden's infant euthanasia, November 1915.

COURTESY OF MARTIN PERNICK



TOP

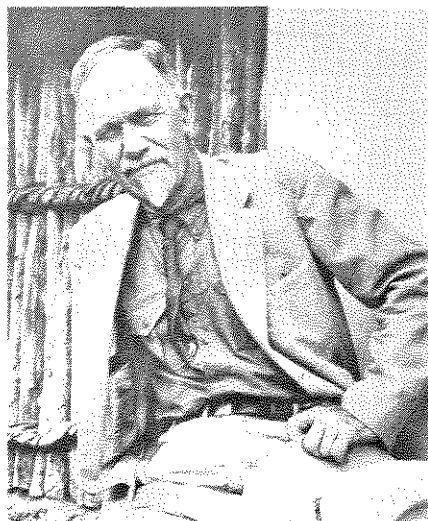
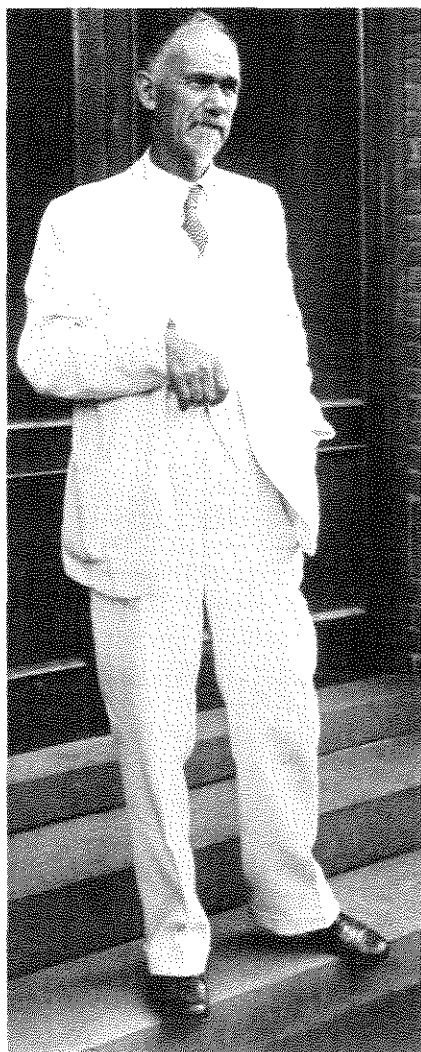
Movie industry ad for
The Black Stork, April 1917.

COURTESY OF MARTIN
PERNICK

BOTTOM

Image from *The Black Stork*
depicting a euthanized baby
floating to Jesus. "ARE YOU
FIT TO MARRY" PRESERVATION
FUNDED BY THE UNIVERSITY
OF MICHIGAN HISTORICAL
FILM COLLECTION; COURTESY
OF MARTIN PERNICK AND
JOHN ALLEN

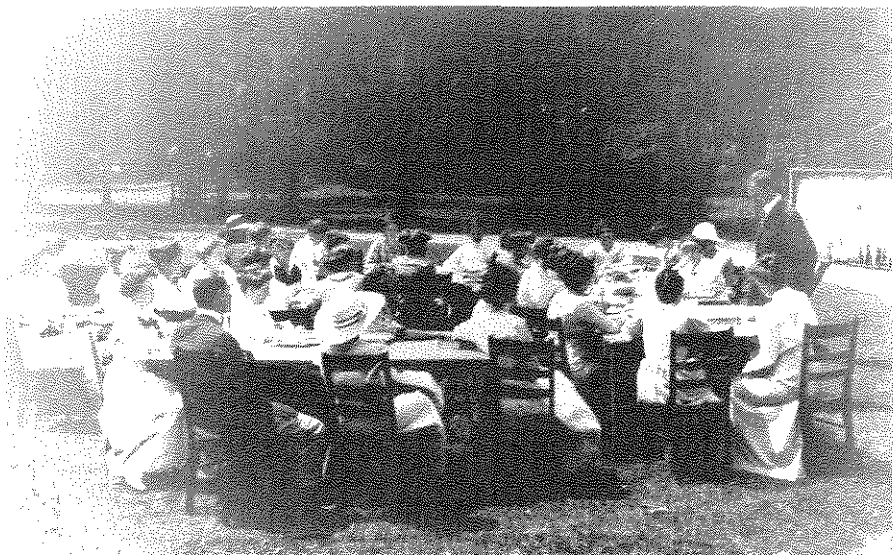




LEFT AND ABOVE
Charles B. Davenport
 AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

RIGHT
Harry H. Laughlin
 PICKLER MEMORIAL LIBRARY





Charles B. Davenport leads a training session with field workers at the ERO, 1913.

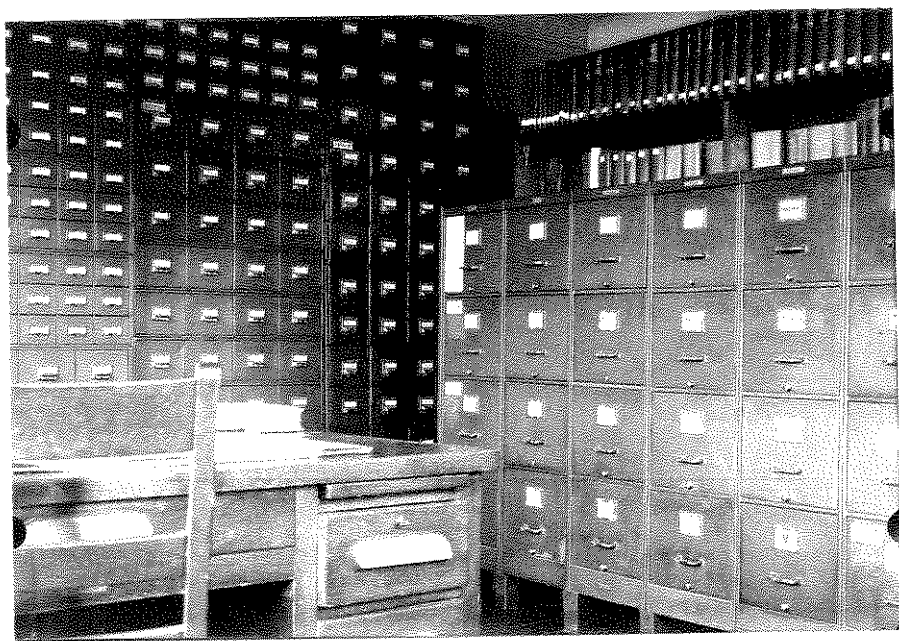
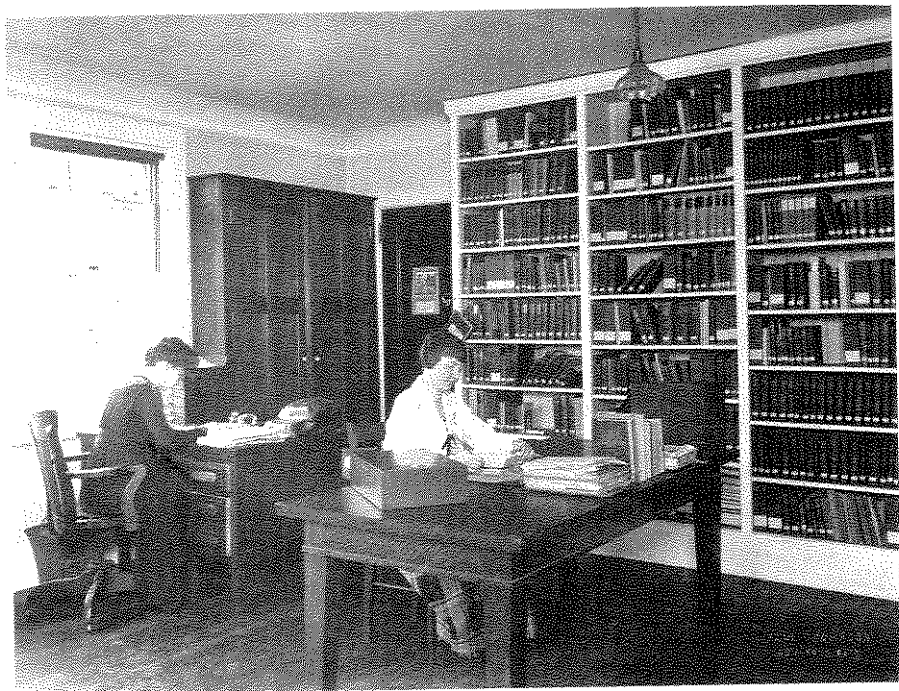
COLD SPRING HARBOR LABORATORY ARCHIVE



Eugenics Training Class 1914

Harry H. Laughlin and Charles B. Davenport pose with ERO field workers, 1914.

COLD SPRING HARBOR LABORATORY ARCHIVE



Eugenics Record Office files. COLD SPRING HARBOR LABORATORY ARCHIVE

THE TRIP OF JOHN

6. GROUP OF BISPHENATES

FOUND IN INDIANA KENTUCKY OHIO ILLINOIS
MISSOURI AND IOWA

GOOD PERSONS IN 1930
10,000 IN 1927

下場EY 大舞台

PAUPERS BEGGARS AND THIEVES
CRIMINALS PROSTITUTES WANDERERS

地址：中国·天津·河西区·广安道·广安里2号天津泰达

THEY HAVE BEEN FREE IN THE PRISON SINCE INVESTIGATION.

DOMK HAVL FISHING, 00000, 0000000000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage in the 1990s*, Table 1.1, p. 10.

grapefruit juice, 206
guar gum, 207

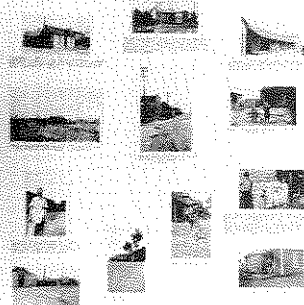


Exhibit poster showing dwellings of the so-called Tribe of Ishmael.

AMERICAN
PHILOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY

Exhibit: "Some people are born to be a burden on the rest," circa 1926.

AMERICAN
PHILOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY

**Some people are born to
be a burden on the rest.**

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

Every 16 seconds
a person is born in the
United States.

Chlorophyll *a* fluorescence

Every talented, high grade person is born in the U.S. & must well have abilities to do creative work & be fit for leadership. About 47% of all Americans - one out of two - are

MARRIAGES.- FIT AND UNFIT

1. PURE - PURE -

CHOLDFORD 2001:104

ANATOMICAL + ANTHROPOLOGY

Case: 2:23-cv-00001 Document: 1-1 Filed: 07/11/23 Page: 1 of 1

3. Protein + Amino Acids

CHALKEN SCHOOL HAT TAINTED.

SPRUE LIANNNINGHED AERIFORM.

4. UNITED & ANONYMOUS : letter

CHILDREN - 1/2 NORMAL BUT TRIMED

2017年12月15日

20 * FINE

CHIEF OF THE POLICE

Abstract

ED + TAINTED

CHILDREN OF EXILE: FARM, LAND, AND

1 THE ABOVE, NO. 2 TAINTED,

PAGE : Number Total no. pages **NATIONAL**

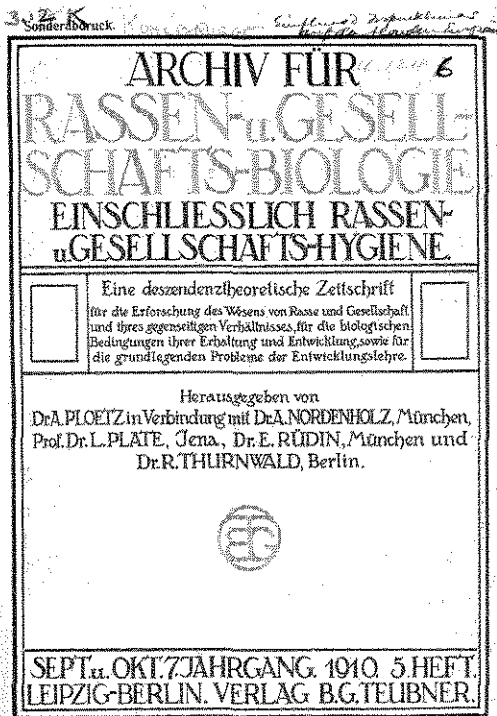
[illegible]

HOW LONG

ARE WE AMERICANS TO
BE SO CAREFUL FOR THE
PEDIGREE OF OUR PIGS
AND CHICKENS AND
CATTLE,— AND THEN
LEAVE THE ANCESTRY
OF OUR CHILDREN
TO CHANGE, OR TO
"BLIND" SENTIMENT?

Exhibit poster:
"Marriages, Fit
and Unfit."

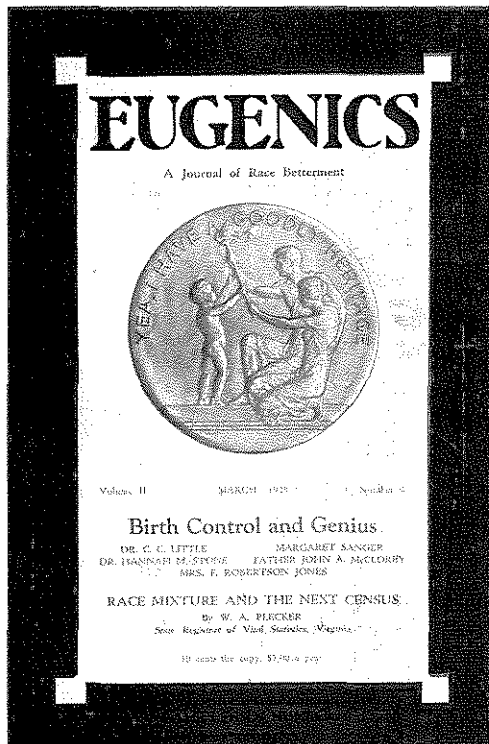
AMERICAN
PHILOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY

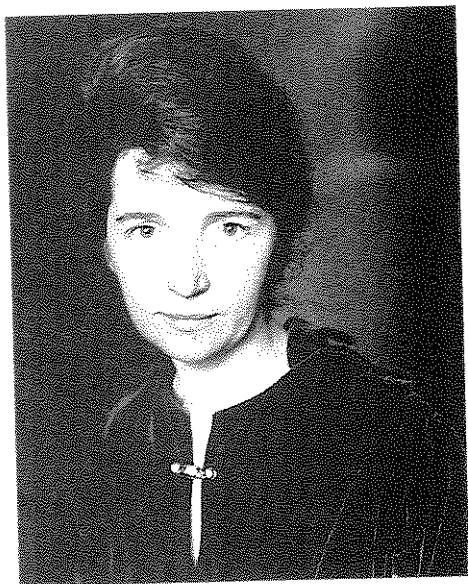


ERO copy of the September 1910 edition of *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie*, featuring articles by German eugenics founding father Alfred Ploetz, Ernst Rüdin (who later became president of the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations), and Roderick Plate (who would become a demographic and statistical expert for Nazi killer Adolf Eichmann). AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Eugenics, March 1929 edition, featuring articles by Virginia racist Walter Plecker and birth control advocate Margaret Sanger.

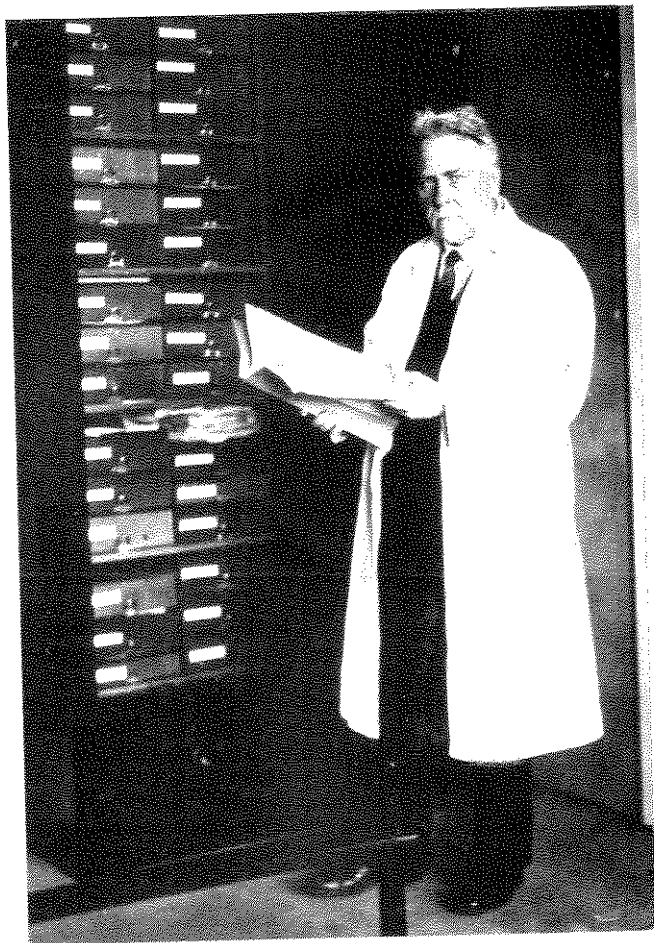
VERMONT STATE PUBLIC
RECORDS DIVISION





TOP LEFT
Margaret Sanger
PLANNED PARENT-
HOOD FEDERATION

TOP RIGHT
ERO's copy of
German eugenicist
Erwin Baur
photograph.
AMERICAN
PHILOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY



BOTTOM
Ernst Rüdin,
director of the
Kaiser Wilhelm
Institute for
Anthropology,
Human Heredity
and Eugenics. MAX
PLANCK INSTITUT
FÜR PSYCHIATRIE,
HISTORISCHES
ARCHIV DER KLINIK



Edwin Katzen-Ellenbogen at Buchenwald with a warm hat he claimed he never wore.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

EUGENICAL NEWS

CURRENT RECORD OF HUMAN GENETICS AND RACE HYGIENE

GERMAN POPULATION AND RACE POLITICS.*

AN ADDRESS BY DR. FRICK, REICHSMINISTER FOR THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE FIRST MEETING OF THE EXPERT COUNCIL FOR POPULATION- AND RACE-POLITICS HELD IN BERLIN, JUNE 28, 1933.

German Men and Women:

While thanking you for your ready co-operation I take the liberty of giving you today a survey of the work which we propose to do, as well as an outline of the goal which we want to reach.

The National Socialist movement under the leadership of Adolf Hitler deserves the merit of having preserved the German nation from utter political disruption and the Reich from disorganization. It would be a great mistake to believe that now the main problem has been solved. Any one with perspicacity knows that the most difficult task has yet to be accomplished, namely to stop the national and cultural ruin. Germany is one of the countries which not only had to bear the main burden of the World War with tremendous losses of its best men and racial constituents, but it is also the one country which has been threatened (during as well as after the war) with a decreasing birth-rate. While at the beginning of this century we still had approximately two million births per year, today these only amount to 975,000. In 1900 there were

36 living births to 1000 inhabitants—this number dwindled down to about 15 in 1932. The number of children, then, is alarmingly decreasing—the post-war two-child system has been superseded; the German nation has adopted the one-child and even the no-child system.

Notwithstanding the successful results achieved in reducing mortality and lengthening the span of life by means of general hygiene, control of infectious diseases, social hygiene and medicine, the decrease in mortality is not sufficient to preserve the population as a biologic national entity. Today rough figures of births and deaths give only an inadequate estimate; in order to recognize the true situation from the standpoint of population-politics, we must carefully sift the vital details and credits by considering the age distribution of the various classes. According to the figures of the Statistical Reichsamt, the German nation with its present low birth-rate is no longer able to maintain itself by its own strength. With 13 births to 1000 inhabitants the figure falls about 30% below the increase needed to maintain the population number in the future. With the present birth-rate neither Berlin nor other large German cities, not even the medium and small towns are able to maintain their population number. Only the rural communities still have a minimal excess of births, but this is no longer sufficient to offset the loss in the German

60

EUGENICAL NEWS

and twins, and in this work there will not be investigated above interesting twins, but all twins and families of definite geographic origin must be considered. It is desirable to determine what traits of bodily and

interior is given in Fig. 3. The *Eugenical News* extends best wishes to Dr. O. Prehn van Verschuer for the success of his work in his new and favorable environment.

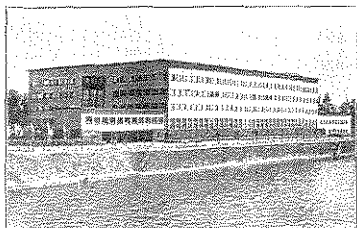


Fig. 1. Hans der Volksgesundheit (at each end of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute is shown on the second floor).

mental sport, what diseases and anomalies in character are hereditary; according to what laws they are transmitted from one generation to the other; how far external influences that may act in inhibiting or accelerating factors must be taken into consideration, and many other points.

The plan of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology and Racial Hygiene, which occupies the second floor of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute House, shows a large and a smaller lecture hall and a series of rooms for investigation, for the director and assistants, for library, for archives, for special investigations and also clinical rooms about sixty-two rooms in all, mostly, however, of small size. Some plan of the



Fig. 2. Corridor through the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute.

* Translated from the German for the *Eugenical News* by M. Hellert.

ON THE BREEDING OF ARYANS

And Other Genetic Problems of War-time Germany

TAGE U. H. ELLINGER

TOP LEFT

Nazi Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick propagandizing for forced sterilization in *Eugenical News*, March-April 1934.

AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

TOP RIGHT

Lavish praise for and photos of "Verschuer's Institute" in *Eugenical News*, June 1936.

AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

BOTTOM

Enthusiastic essay about Nazi breeding experiments in *Journal of Heredity*, 1942.

AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

DURING a visit to Germany in the winter of 1939-40, I had an opportunity to meet some of my fellow geneticists, who seemed to be working undisturbed by the campaign and the "mopping up" in Poland, and by the hectic preparations for the assaults on a great many peaceful countries such as Denmark, Norway, Holland, and Belgium. The following unpretentious notes, written for laymen, may perhaps interest some of their many American friends.

Quite a few of them were busy treating or rather mistreating the sex cells of animals and plants in order to produce new varieties. I was introduced to all kinds of extraordinary creatures produced in that way, mice without toes or with corkscrew tails, flies that violated the very definition of a fly by having four wings instead of two, funny-looking moths, and strange plants.

Radiation, especially with X-rays, is the principal means of producing such new kinds, or rather monsters, of animals and plants, and the wizard in this business was a Russian, Dr. Timofeev-Ressovsky, who has found an asylum at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research. An industrial concern has presented him with the enormous machines with which he radiates the minute sex cells of tiny little *Drosophila* flies.

Timofeev is a fanatic and an enthusiast. I was really spellbound when he gave me a three-hour lecture on his work, incessantly gesticulating as he walked up and down the floor. The German staff of the Institute looked at this strange and temperamental Russian with amusement and sincere admiration. They even granted him a freedom of speech and opinion they would deny any other human being.

Genuine German thoroughness characterized Professor Nachtsheim's elaborate experiments on the heredity of disease. Since one can not very well make human patients mate and produce numerous babies to suit the analysis of a pathological problem, he had resorted to rabbits. These obliging and fertile animals suffer from a great many troubles like our own. It was a pathetic sight to look at the hundreds of incurables in the rabbit houses. But at that, our own institutions housing people afflicted with hereditary diseases are no less disconsolate.

When I went to see the famous old "Geheimrat" Fischer at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, an S.A. man in black uniform was present during the conversation. He was introduced as Dr. Abel, and the director afterwards asked him to show me around. The result was that we spent several days together.

Twins in the "New Order"

Twins have, of course, for a long time been a favorite material for the study of the relative importance of heredity and environment of nature and nurture. It does, however, take a dictatorship to oblige some ten thousand pairs of twins, as well as triplets and even quadruplets, to report to a scientific institute at regular intervals for all kinds of recordings and tests.

I was particularly interested in the inheritance for the study of the inheritance of behavior and mental capacities. For this purpose, the twins were placed in two identical rooms, separated by a narrow corridor for the observer, who had a free view over both rooms through big windows in the walls. These, however, were fitted with that remarkable kind of glass through which you can see in one direction

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THE HUMAN BETTERMENT FOUNDATION

(A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION)

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PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

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REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE HUMAN BETTERMENT FOUNDATION, FOR THE YEAR ENDING FEBRUARY 12, 1935.

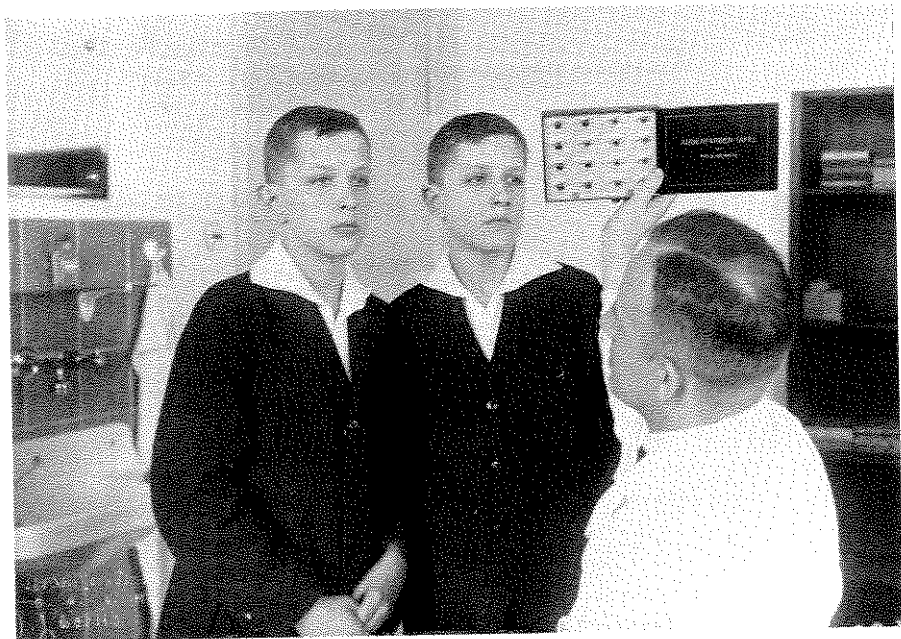
During the past year a large part of the resources of the Foundation has been devoted to a second survey of sterilization in California, in collaboration with the California Bureau of Juvenile Research. The task of collecting case histories from the state institutions was completed by the Foundation workers, and all of these were tabulated and coded. Hollerith cards were then punched for each individual, 67 facts being thus recorded for each of about 8,000 persons. These cards are now being sorted to make 1500 scatter diagrams, which will reveal the correlations of all of the facts. Males and females are tabulated separately, as are also the insane and feeble-minded. In this immense but highly important task, the staff of the Foundation has been helped by six SERA workers furnished by the Bureau of Juvenile Research. The study should be completed within the next year, and will not merely bring up to date the previous study which this Foundation made (beginning in 1926), but will extend it and result in a great deal of new and valuable information.

The Foundation had a poster exhibit in connection with the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in Pasadena in September. Frank C. Reid of the Foundation staff spent most of the time during the week in charge of this exhibit, contacting leaders in the field of public health from all over the United States. An outstanding feature of the meeting was also the eugenics exhibit of the German government, which was devoted largely to sterilization. This is recorded in complete detail in the ~~German~~ *European* *Courier*, Goethe of Sacramento, one of the members of the Foundation, wrote as follows to Mr. Gosney:

"You will be interested to know that your work has played a powerful part in shaping the opinions of the group of intellectuals who are behind Hitler in this epoch-making program. Everywhere I sensed that their opinions have been tremendously stimulated by American thought, and particularly by the work of the Human Betterment Foundation. I want you, my dear friend, to carry this thought with you for the rest of your life, that you have really jolted into action a great government of 60,000,000 people."

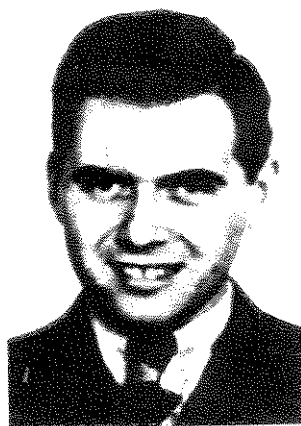
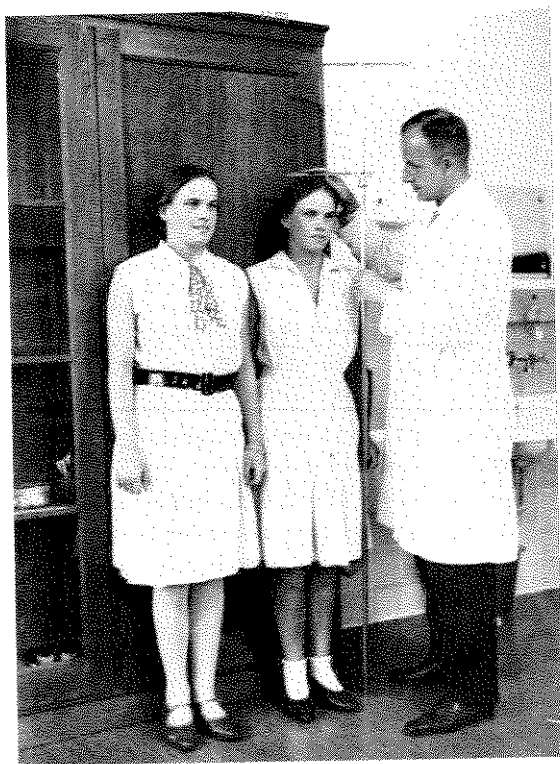
The offices of the Foundation are frequently visited by distinguished people from out of town. Among the most recent callers who were interested in eugenic sterilization were: Dr. Harry H. Benjamin of New York Dr. Wilhelm Krauss of the Institute of Race Biology, Sweden; and

Human Betterment Foundation Annual Report for 1935 citing a letter from board member C. M. Goethe to racist eugenicist E. S. Gosney, bragging: "You will be interested to know that your work has played a powerful part in shaping the opinions of the group of intellectuals who are behind Hitler in this epoch-making program. Everywhere I sensed that their opinions have been tremendously stimulated by American thought, and particularly by the work of the Human Betterment Foundation. I want you, my dear friend, to carry this thought with you for the rest of your life, that you have really jolted into action a great government of 60 million people." VERMONT STATE PUBLIC RECORDS DIVISION



ABOVE AND BELOW, LEFT

Nazi eugenicist Dr. Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer examining twins; his assistant, Josef Mengele, continued the experiments at Auschwitz. MAX PLANCK GESELLSCHAFT ARCHIV



Auschwitz's murderous doctor, Josef Mengele.
AUSCHWITZ ARCHIV