

INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM'S HOSTILITY TO CHILDBIRTH, RESPONSIBLE CHILDBEARING, AND EUGENIC REPRODUCTIVE POLICIES IN THE FIRST THIRD OF THE 20TH CENTURY*

SUSAN ZIMMERMANN

Mariahilferstrasse 49/I/17, A-1060 Vienna, Austria

Synopsis — The political alliance of the repressive wing of the eugenics movement with antiliberal forces and national socialism does not on its own explain the political demise of the more liberal, sexual reformist-inspired eugenic strategies formed in the 1920s. Under the socioeconomic and political circumstances given at the time, the more repressive concepts promised, in practice, to be far more successful in implementing the objectives common to all eugenicists, namely the qualitative (and quantitative) regulation of the production of offspring. The eugenic policies proposed by liberals and sexual reformers were based on unrealistic and abstract-idealistic notions regarding the possibility of reforming motherhood and the voluntary personal identification of the mass of the population with the achievement philosophy and achievement orientation of society during the first third of the 20th century.

Synopsis — Die politische Verbindung der repressiven Strömung der Eugenik mit anti-liberalen Kräften und dem Nationalsozialismus erklärt für sich genommen noch nicht die politische Zurückdrängung von liberaleren, sexualreformerisch angehauchten eugenischen Strategien seit den 20er Jahren dieses Jahrhunderts. Vielmehr waren unter den gegebenen sozio-ökonomischen und politischen Verhältnissen dieser Zeit die repressiveren Konzeptionen in der Praxis erfolgversprechender in Bezug auf die Umsetzung der von Eugenikern gemeinsamen Ziele der qualitativen (und quantitativen) Steuerung der Nachwuchsproduktion. Die eugenischen Politikvorschläge von Seiten der Liberalen und der Sexualreformer/innen fußten auf unrealistischen und abstrakt-idealistischen Vorstellungen über die Reformierbarkeit von "Mutterschaft" und die freiwillig-individuelle Integration der Masse der Bevölkerung in das Leistungsdenken und die Leistungsorientierung der Gesellschaft des ersten Drittels des 20. Jahrhunderts.

Eugenic theories and eugenics-oriented reproductive policies spread rapidly in the German-speaking world in the first third of the 20th century. In essence, these ideas addressed the problem of how to control the quantity, and, above all, the quality of offspring. A debate was conducted in a

spate of literature on the subject and numerous social policies and reproductive programmes and proposals were propagated. In the theory of eugenics, human fertility, and, in particular, women's childbearing capacity, specifically became the object of (self-)conscious, social, and political (state) management policies. Human reproduction was to be liberated from Nature and become a social phenomenon; at the existing "higher level

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of civilization” it had to be “subjected to the will, insight and reason of mankind” (Schreiber, 1912a, p.202).

In practical terms, reproductive policies of this kind, aiming to influence the quantity and quality of offspring, were focused in three areas of political activity. Birth regulation in the literal sense was to enable procreation to be controlled directly; once born, care and welfare was to influence the future psychological and physical development (quality) of the infant individual. On the adult side, various social policies were drawn up with a view to indirectly influencing the reproductive process.

The proposals for eugenic reproductive policies came from very different political camps and were rooted in very divergent social philosophies. There were repressive reproductive policies that were totally based on coercion and direct pressure on the individual in many different areas. These had little time for reproductive self-determination and were only marginally interested in social policies to achieve reproductive goals. But these were not the only reproductive platforms to be justified by a eugenic line of argument. Reproductive policies with a eugenic accent were also to be found in the socialist, life-liberal, and sexual reformist milieus. Here, eugenic goals and political platforms were often closely linked to personal freedoms, self-determination in the field of reproduction, and the liberation of women’s child-bearing capacity from the constraints of nature (which was [still] perceived as being largely beyond human control) and placing it under the control of the individual. The intention was not merely to successfully institute and guarantee the new reproductive policies in line with liberal and legally enforceable principles, but to underpin these policies socially by implementing a comprehensive catalogue of social legislation.

The discussion on how to consciously and planfully control the quantity and, above all, the quality of society’s heirs was wide-ranging, both thematically and in terms of political thrust, while attempts to actually implement these concepts in practical political terms remained hesitant, isolated, and fragmentary.¹ At the same time, in the course of the 1920s and thereafter, the liberal and sexual-reformist eugenics-based concepts of reproductive policy lost more and more ground within the political debate and had even less to say in practical political terms. The economic crisis, the weakening of the left-wing and liberal forces at the close of the 1920s, and the advent of national socialism erased the liberal concepts, and, one after another, highly repressive elements of a eugenics-oriented reproductive policy came into force.

The political alliance of the repressive wing of the eugenics movement with antiliberal forces and national socialism does not on its own explain the political demise of liberal eugenic programmes and strategies. It must also be recognized that, whatever other differences they might have had, the eugenicists were pursuing the common goal of quantitatively and qualitatively controlling human procreation and the concepts of the repressive wing proved to be the more realistic given the socioeconomic and political liberation of motherhood and procreative production under the given industrial-capitalist conditions and relied, both in social and material terms, on the ability of the system to integrate the mass of the population.

An analysis of the theoretical and practical social relevance of the reproductive policies put forward by the different wings of the eugenics movement may serve to elucidate this proposition. What logic was thought to underlie human reproduction and motherhood in the modern civilized states according to the

theories of eugenics? What social realities were cited in what way to explain the quantity and quality of reproduction that actually existed? And how did the various (repressive or liberal) proposals for reforming reproductive policies tie up with the implicit or explicit perception of human reproduction as a social process?

However, before examining the various eugenic logics as exemplified in their approach to birth regulation in its strictest sense,² I will give a brief outline of the fundamental principles that were common to all eugenic theories.

THE THREE STEPS IN THE EUGENIC LINE OF REASONING

The theoretical framework of eugenics (Bock, 1986) rested on a three-step line of argument from which it was ultimately deduced that reproductive policy had to be fundamentally rethought to the extent of elaborating a completely new historical concept.

First, it was assumed that, while still at the lower stages of civilization, humanity had been totally at the mercy of the laws of nature. Reproduction of the species was thought to have been governed by the natural mechanisms of selection and sexual choice. Natural selection had ensured that only the fitter, stronger individuals survived to reach sexual maturity and be capable of reproducing. Once mature, the natural law of sexual choice ensured that the superior individuals had a greater chance of reproduction. It was the combination of these two mechanisms that had guaranteed the improvement of the species during this phase of human development.

In the second step, it was maintained that the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of modern civilization since the 19th century had divorced human beings from the natural laws as far as reproduction was concerned. Society had emancipated itself from the laws of nature, transcending them.

Modern civilization (industrialization, urbanization, social policies, etc.) had thus brought about a situation that allowed "all kinds of deficient to remain alive" and reach sexual maturity "who would have been eliminated under natural circumstances" (Reche, 1925, p. 3). Thus, natural selection had been replaced by a tendency towards counterselection, which inhibited the continued improvement of the species. And sexual choice, too, was "such among the modern civilized peoples that it in no way compensated for the restrictions placed on natural selection by civilization" (Schallmeyer, 1914, p.281). For many reasons, fitness in the broadest sense had long ceased to be the basic criterion for people's choice of partner. Yet ultimately this had sealed not only the tendency inhibiting the improvement of the species, but also the degeneration and ultimate decline of civilized humanity. This perception of the manner in which the reproductive process was organized clearly expressed certain social trends on an ideological plane. The principle of assessing performance, work, production, etc., with the aid of an abstract, universally applicable yardstick that made everything comparable with everything else (quite irrespective of any concrete, unique qualities of its own) was extended to apply to measuring the value of human procreation. Even life itself was valued in this way. Conversely, it was an attempt to interpret the wreckage capitalist exploitation had wrought on the concrete lives of the mass of the population since the transition to developed industrial capitalism without actually questioning the system.

In the third step of their argument the eugenicists then sought a way out of this dilemma. It stands to reason that in doing so they were entirely in line with the inherent needs of the system at a time in which social tensions were increasing (at least some of the time) in view of the so-called social condition of the population. Yet, history was demanding

increased productivity and the stabilization of certain sections of the labour force. The eugenicists invariably considered themselves to be progressive and forward-looking and a return to the cruel natural laws governing reproduction (to what we would today call social Darwinism) was inconceivable, the wrong course to take. Under no circumstances did they wish to “inhibit cultural progress” — ultimately, this simply meant the industrial capitalist organization of society — or even “return to primitive conditions” (Schallmayer, 1916, p. 14). On the contrary, the danger of degeneration caused by humanity’s transcending its own nature in the field of reproduction had to be eliminated and there was no other way to achieve this than to perfect humanity’s transcendence over nature. If nature was no longer effectively regulating the reproductive process, humanity itself simply had to establish new social rules to govern the reproduction of the species and prevent degeneration by divorcing it entirely from nature. In the interests of improving the species, therefore, humanity should “directly intervene in the reproductive process” (Grotjahn, 1914, p. 17) and “replace natural selection with the gentle ministration of *conscious* selection” (Bluhm, 1908, p. 272). The process of counterselection caused by civilization should be counteracted by a well-directed process of counter-counterselection that was controlled by civilized humanity.

The desire to consciously and purposefully influence human reproduction was an aim shared by all who strove to change reproductive policies and improve the general quality of offspring,³ irrespective of whether they explicitly used the entire three-step line of argument or not. In terms of political practice, however, their ideas differed greatly. These reflected differing political positions, which, in the context of the eugenics debate, were expressed in differing perceptions as to women’s readiness to bear children under the conditions of modern civilization and the

susceptibility of childbearing patterns to political influence.

OPTIMISTS AND PESSIMISTS

Practically the entire spectrum of eugenicists agreed that the conditions of urban, industrial capitalism had placed numerous obstacles in the way of human procreation and severely impaired women’s readiness to bear children. According to the eugenicists, however, the obstacles did not so much actually stop people from breeding as lead to wrong, inferior breeding and would continue to do so as long as humanity did not control the means of steering and adjusting reproduction to these changed environmental conditions (with the aim of maintaining or enhancing quality).

This perception of the developments relating to human reproduction can be seen as the ideological reflection of the severe material and social problems experienced by the broad masses of women in having children during this period, the first golden age of eugenics. Now that the division between paid employment and working directly for one’s means of subsistence affected large sections of society, motherhood and earning a livelihood fundamentally contradicted each other in a historically new way. Other than in a peasant economy, having and keeping a child (or children) debarred the mother from earning a living. Under the conditions of industrial capitalism around the turn of the century, living standards were altogether precarious and social policies to alleviate motherhood were nonexistent or existed only in a very rudimentary form. Under these circumstances, the fundamental contradiction between motherhood and earning a living meant that, in some cases, women sought a means to limit the number of children they had, and, above all, that many pregnant women and children were exposed to extremely dire living conditions due to the total exploitation and exhaustion of women workers, lack of income,

and lack of housing. These are the true causes of what the eugenicists saw as degeneration and the inferior quality of offspring, however much they might have argued amongst themselves as to the reasons for their findings.

As for the controversy among those advocating a forward-looking reform of reproductive policy, the more liberal forces were far more optimistic as to women's readiness to bear children and the possibility of overcoming the factors militating against it than those forward-looking reformers who wished to see a stronger emphasis placed upon repressive measures.

The liberals and sexual reformers assumed that it was by no means necessary for cultural progress and a readiness to bear children to fundamentally contradict each other. Even under the changed conditions of industrial society in the 20th century, the willingness of women to assume "the responsibilities of motherhood" was only counteracted "temporarily . . . (by) all kinds of obstacles and considerations" (Misar, 1916, p. 132), for example, the wretched living conditions, the inadequate social security of motherhood, and the contradiction between women's awakening awareness of their interests as individuals and as mothers. Temporary obstacles of this kind, the optimists said, could be removed by comprehensive social reforms without relinquishing the achievements of (industrial) civilization or they could at least be minimized to the extent that the fundamental "natural willingness of women to become mothers" would assert itself to a satisfactory extent. The "urge for motherhood" (Schreiber, 1912b, p. 171) was "so deeply rooted in the heart of every healthy woman" that it might be curbed by the obstacles mentioned above "but never [could it] be suppressed" (Misar, 1916, p. 132). Thus, abandoning the rigorous pronatalist policies (the bans on abortion and sterilization and the suppression of all information concerning contraception) as the

sine qua non of a eugenics-oriented reproductive programme and eugenically responsible reproductive behaviour would *not* lead to a further reduction in the birth rate if combined with comprehensive measures to both socially and politically ameliorate the conditions of motherhood. Nor would reforms promoting voluntary, self-determined motherhood automatically lead to eugenically irresponsible attitudes towards childbearing. For the optimism of the liberal and sexual-reformist eugenicists with regard to the readiness-to-bear-children issue was accompanied by their general idealism as far as the individual's capacity for development and the effectiveness of public enlightenment were concerned. They assumed that information and education would induce the broad mass of the population to voluntarily accept procreative responsibility as defined by the principles of eugenics. The "necessity" of spreading the "awareness" among the people that the "reproduction of hereditary defects" has to be prevented and that those who were "tainted" had to "learn to recognize it as their duty *not* to reproduce" (Müller-Lyer, 1912, P. 148) and other demands of this kind were of central importance within the more liberal-minded eugenicist camp. The belief in a fundamental readiness to bear children, even under industrial capitalist conditions, and the belief in the voluntary acceptance of eugenic responsibility by the individual were the two main pillars upon which the optimists based their practical political ideas.

The more repressively oriented spectrum of eugenicists, on the other hand, was deeply influenced by a fundamentally pessimistic attitude, as far as the reconciliation of modernity and cultural progress with the readiness to bear children was concerned. They ultimately stated that under the conditions of modern civilization, which they essentially affirmed, it was absolutely impossible to expect voluntary acceptance of

procreative responsibility to produce qualitatively and quantitatively satisfactory offspring. It was argued, for instance, that "individual interests [were] subordinate to procreative interests" in nature "as required by the survival of the species," whereas "human intelligence" had recognized the contradiction between the two and "intellectually determined aspirations and actions had gained ascendancy over the instinctive and habitual." "Civilization," therefore, had an overall inherent "anti-childbearing tendency" and "if the 'longing for a child' did exist it was the result of preconceptions and suggestion" (Schallmayer, 1914, p. 28; cf. Schallmayer 1909, p. 404).

This was then the attitude with which the eugenicists in the pessimistic camp substantiated their exception to a eugenically motivated programme of comprehensive social reform. For whatever measures one took to socially alleviate motherhood at the stage of civilization humanity had already reached, it would have little effect on women's reduced readiness to bear children. Conversely, however, pessimistic views of this kind could hardly move eugenicists to support the continuance of a rigid pronatalist policy for all women so as to thus enforce a greater readiness to bear children by coercive means. Whatever obstacles modern civilization might place in the way of childbearing, it was still absolutely necessary to provide access to methods of regulating childbearing and birth control because this was the only way to gain the conscious and goal-oriented control over the reproductive process that was required to counteract counterselection and degeneration. In the pessimist camp, this issue, coupled with a deep-seated and fundamental lack of faith in the voluntary acceptance of eugenic (self-) responsibility on the part of the mass of the population, yielded the ideological basis for an extremely repressive concept of eugenically oriented reproductive reform.

EUGENIC BIRTH REGULATING POLICIES

Not only did the controversies between optimistic and pessimistic eugenicists regarding their perceptions of the social realities of human procreation (the readiness to bear children, eugenic self-responsibility) affect their attitudes to social reform or to expanding the areas of social legislation relating to reproductive policy, they also markedly influenced their proposals for a direct policy of birth regulation, the key issue of all eugenic reproductive reform. The common denominator among all trends within the birth regulation movement was their desire to influence the reproductive process in such a way as to ensure that now humanity, rather than nature, guaranteed the improvement of the species. To combat counterselection and the damaging effects of a sexual choice process that had gone off the rails, it was necessary to promote the reproduction of high-quality women (or parents) and individuals who were generally considered to be the guarantors of quality and quality breeding (pronatalism) while preventing inferior offspring or offspring in an inferior milieu (antinatalism). Along with marriage guidance, health certificates, and many other similar devices, the principal methods available for the implementation of pronatalist and antinatalist strategies with regard to direct birth control policies were contraception, abortion, and sterilization. The availability of these means of birth control was to be controlled politically to enable, indeed to enforce, (goal-oriented) childbearing or nonchildbearing, while the nonavailability of such means, so the eugenicists thought, should at least tendentially lead to an increase in the birth rate. So, ultimately, the discussions on the quality of offspring were about who was to have access to which methods of birth control, who was to administer access to them, and whether or not their use was to be subject to

su-praindividual coercion in some form or another.

Optimistic and pessimistic pronatalism

The diverging assessments of women's readiness to bear children are mirrored particularly clearly in the different strategies followed by optimists and pessimists in the area of pronatalism. The debate here essentially revolved around the question of whether high-quality women were also to be allowed access to at least some of the birth control methods on a self-determined basis that they themselves controlled, despite the fact that it was fundamental to the whole logic of eugenics that precisely these women were predestined to have children as a matter of principle. However, because inferior women were to be granted access to the means of birth control in any case in the furtherance of the antinatalist cause (whatever the concrete regulations might actually be), the basic question was, in fact, access to birth control for all, or, on principle, only for some?

All those who were convinced that the objective of obtaining a sufficient number of high-quality births could be achieved even if the high-quality women were allowed access to at least some of the methods of birth control on an individual, voluntary basis that was not under the direct control of the state or the medical profession, were to be found in the optimistic camp. After all, the optimists assumed that high-quality women — indeed, they in particular — would also voluntarily assume the task of motherhood. To them it was inconceivable that they would misuse their new freedom (to make a personal decision for or against having a child) in a way that ran counter to the objectives of eugenics. As Oda Olberg put it:

The unmarried may be allowed to induce a miscarriage if they so wish: those who are fit ... will draw the social consequences of their freedom of choice . . .

and their children will enhance the race. (Olberg, 1926, p. 49)

However, optimism with regard to women's readiness to bear children by no means automatically resulted in the demand for equal access to all or only certain methods of regulating births. In fact, even many of the more optimistically minded eugenicists considered the introduction of a graduated system officially excluding high-quality women from access to such methods to be a prudent way of securing their aims. This applied in particular to those who were engaged in the realm of *Realpolitik* and realistic enough to be sceptical as to the possibilities of actually implementing the concomitant radical social-political upgrading of motherhood which this would necessarily involve, and to those whose interest had always been focused more on what was achievable — undoubtedly the cheaper birth regulation policy. In pursuance of their pronatalist goals, the left-liberal idealists, on the other hand, believed more firmly (and abstractly) in a combination of social welfare and the liberal approach to birth control as the best means of overcoming degeneration. In Helene Stocker's words:

The total deregulation of the use of contraceptives as well as the general legalization of terminating a pregnancy — *at least up to the beginning of the sixth month* — are necessary . . . It is only by the positive means of a constructive population policy and eugenics that we will be able to overcome the great dangers threatening the life of our people today in the form of destitution and misery, on the one hand, and backward laws on the other! (Stöcker, 1924, reprinted in Janssen-Jurreit, 1986, p. 246)

The pessimists assumed that, however many social reforms were introduced, on principle none would serve to induce the

modern-day, high-quality woman to give birth to and bring up a sufficient number of children. They were equally principled in rejecting the idea of allowing high-quality women any kind of individual and voluntary access to methods of birth control. Yet, in order not to jeopardize their antinatalist aims for the other women, they drew up exclusively selective models of access to the means of birth control: inferior women should be given the opportunity not to have children, high-quality women should have no opportunity not to have children. While it was comparatively easy to draw up and implement models of this kind as far as abortion and sterilization were concerned, the practical problems confronting this kind of selection with regard to contraception were very complex. Under the circumstances it was, in fact, entirely impracticable to exclude one section of the population from access to contraceptives by legal, formalized means while allowing another section of the population access to them. Proposals such as that made by Agnes Bluhm to simply maintain the status quo as far as the question of contraceptives was concerned clearly reflected the pessimist's dilemma:

In all classes of the population it is always the more intelligent and morally superior elements . . . who make use of the knowledge they have been given . . . to the detriment of the race . . . Those, however, who are earnestly persuaded that they have a right to sexual enjoyment but no right to have children already have adequate opportunity to find out about the ways and means to achieve their goal without public propaganda. (Bluhm, 1909, p. 123)

This problem of the pessimistic wing of eugenics was also one of the roots of their opposition to what was described as the "neo-Malthusian tendency" (Hirsch, 1914, p. 153), that is, the movement to deregulate birth

control. From the perspective of the pessimist eugenicists, the (supposed) general and widespread "propaganda for the use of contraceptives" could only be seen as "not only not eugenic, but positively dysgenic" (Bluhm, 1909, p. 268; cf. Schallhnayer, 1914, p. 282), while to the liberals propaganda of this kind was nothing less than a prerequisite for any kind of eugenics to be successful (which is also why liberal eugenics and neo-Malthusianism merged into one and the same thing, at least in part).

It was undoubtedly far easier to arrange to exclude the high-quality women from access to abortion and sterilization. The pessimistic wing of eugenics was agreed that "generative ethics" ought not to leave the "destruction of embryonic life" to the "discretion of the mother" and should thus "abide by the fundamental liability of abortion to criminal prosecution"; only if "an abortion . . . is . . . plainly necessary . . . in the interests of eugenics," for example, "if one or other of the parents (were) tubercular, syphilitic, mentally ill, an alcoholic or something of that kind" or if confinement "would be accompanied by severe disadvantages for the mother and child" should abortion "not be denied moral protection", should it "not be subject to the same punishment as crimes that endangered the public well-being or were committed for base motives" (Bluhm, 1909, p. 127; *Resolutions*, 1916, p. 14). As time passed, ideas such as these, designed as they were to exclude the high-quality women, were moulded into all kinds of plans for allowing abortion in certain specifically defined cases, so called *indication solutions*. Control over women's access to these indications was generally placed in the hands of doctors, experts, and commissions. One example is the model drawn up by Julius Tandler, "Red Vienna's" Minister of Health and Social Services during the interwar years. He wanted to see abortion exempted from criminal prosecution by way of medical, social, and

eugenic indications, with the latter two indications being designed to “safeguard the interests of society in a *selective sense* by eliminating the minus variants; a commission of “representatives of society” was to conduct “official investigations (to establish) . . . the living conditions of the mother (and) existing children” so as to prevent those who might be expected to produce high-quality offspring from slipping through the loophole of the social indication (Tandler, 1924, p. 375, 377).⁴

Optimistic and pessimistic antinatalism

The common denominator among all tendencies within the eugenic movement with regard to antinatalist birth regulation was to provide and implement birth control techniques with a view to preventing the conception and birth of the inferior.

Even the optimistic eugenicist’s liberal demands for free and equal access to contraceptives or legal abortion for all women (within a fixed term) had a *selective* antinatalist character of this kind. The literature demanding the legalization of “the use of contraceptives” or an end to the legal protection of “embryonic life” within a certain time limit, almost invariably made a point of stating that it was “first and foremost” a question of “preventing the conception of tainted, incurably sick children” or ensuring that the state should incur “no loss as a result of eliminating a potential life that had been conceived under the worst of conditions,” one “of which it may safely be predicted that, once born, it would increase the population of sick, weak, morally depraved people who are unable to earn their own living” (Schreiber, 1919, p. 235; Streitberg, 1904, p. 162; both reprinted in Janssen-Jurreit, 1986). On the other hand, however, making the means of birth control available to inferior women by no means guaranteed that they would then, of their own accord, actually make use of these new possibilities of preventing children — and, after all, it was only this that would make

the eugenicists’ antinatalist calculation work out. In this respect, the optimists relied heavily on fostering the necessary sense of (self-)responsibility among broad sections of the population. However, despite all their liberality, they too accepted that the antinatalist primacy of eugenics would have to be enforced compulsorily as the *ultima ratio* for those who could not be expected to exercise reproductive self-determination of this kind. Adele Schreiber says:

We must . . . prevent the procreation of alcoholics, imbeciles and the abnormal who can never be educated to possess the strength of mind required for using contraceptives by the means of legally enforced sterilization. (Schreiber, 1912a, p. 215; cf. Stöcker, 1913, p. 597)

The selective antinatalist content of the projects and programmes developed by pessimistic-repressive eugenicists was revealed from the outset in their intrinsically selective proposals for regulating access to the means of birth control, such as those described above. On the few occasions upon which pessimists called for access to the means of birth control on a basis that was not intrinsically selective, it in no way envisaged reproductive self-determination, but was exclusively concerned with the realization of selective antinatalist goals. In 1911, the eugenicist Max von Gruber, who may undoubtedly be regarded as belonging to the repressive right wing, declared that contraceptives should be permitted for the purpose of enabling the “voluntary sterility of the mentally and morally inferior” (Gruber & Rudin, 1911, p. 178). However, the pessimists had little faith in the development of eugenic self-responsibility among the broad masses and they aimed to extend the powers of the supra-individual, state, and medical authorities to prevail upon people to abstain from child-bearing in the antinatalist

sector. The less they were willing to rely on voluntary eugenic behavior on the part of the inferior, the less sense they saw in organizing voluntary access to birth control, even on a selective basis, and the more they become aware of the danger that even such selective programmes could be used as a loophole by high-quality women in order to avoid childbirth. The less pessimistic eugenicists believed in a voluntary readiness to bear children on the part of the high-quality individuals and voluntary "abstention from childbearing" on the part of the inferior, the more they endeavoured to restrict the numbers of those who were to be allowed to "choose" at all at both ends of the scale. In national socialist birth regulating policy this finally led to the demand for the direct "primacy of the state over life" altogether (Wilhelm Frick, quoted in Bock, 1986).

Both the liberal-optimistic and the repressive-pessimistic concepts of a eugenically motivated birth regulating policy were fairly consistent within themselves. The fact that the more repressive concepts gradually gained predominance both theoretically and in social practice can be explained by the fact that their underlying ideological assumptions regarding women's voluntary readiness to bear children and voluntary abstention from childbearing more realistically reflected the prevailing social conditions of reproduction. As a result their political proposals for a eugenic reform of birth regulation policy in the narrow sense promised to be more successful. By the end of the 1920s, if not before, it was obvious that it would be impossible to implement comprehensive social reforms to improve the status of motherhood and thus the temporary obstacles to child-bearing that existed on the present level of civilization remained insurmountable. The reconciliation of (self-determined) childbearing and capitalist working and living conditions remained an illusion, at least in the heyday of classical

eugenics. This also secured the political success of birth-regulating concepts based on high-quality women's unsatisfactory readiness to bear children. The same applied to the basic assumption that the broad masses would voluntarily assume eugenic self-responsibility. Being structurally incapable of (fully) guaranteeing the material and social integration of the broad masses, the capitalist mode of production lacked the preconditions necessary to win over the hearts and minds of the people to voluntarily accept the eugenic demands of achievement-oriented society. Yet, on the other hand, not only were there increasing social, political, and economic pressures to somehow, at least partly, minimize or repair the effects on the mental and physical quality of the people and their offspring caused by the exploitation of labor and the capitalist reorganization of their living conditions, but in certain areas the quality requirements placed on labour by the capitalist work process were gradually increasing, too. It is against the backdrop of these social realities that the repressive eugenic concepts gained importance over the liberal eugenic proposals and eugenically oriented birth regulation reform became more socially acceptable, as well as more relevant in practical political terms.

Both wings of the eugenics movement were the apologists of a historically new, abstract-comparative *valuation of life* (Bock, 1986) and the resulting policy of planned (individual and social, voluntary and compulsory) regulation of human procreation. Yet the liberal wing with its strategy of socially and politically upgrading (i.e., raising the quality) as much life as possible (and consequently reducing the proportion of inferior life) was unsuccessful. What remained and finally won the day were repressive eugenic policies that focused on tampering with and invading the human body itself in a historically new manner and far more comprehensively than envisaged by any of the liberal concepts.

ENDNOTES

1. The social policies adopted by the city of "Red Vienna" in the interwar years were among the most advanced as far as the practical implementation of eugenic objectives was concerned (cf. Lehner, 1989).

2. For more details on the eugenic philosophy behind welfare and social policies for children and adults, see Zimmermann, 1988.

3. The demand for "preventive reproductive selection by increasing responsibility towards offspring" according to an individual's "value" was raised even by those who sharply criticised such concepts as "artificial selection" and "elimination" (cf. Goldscheid, 1909). The discussion on "quantity" that was closely linked to these discussions on "quality" will not be systematically investigated in the following.

4. For details, see Lehner, 1989. Both the problems encountered by the pessimists with regard to controlling the availability of contraceptives and the controversy surrounding the best method of selectively excluding high-quality breeding stock from abortion became apparent time again in the debates on birth regulation policy conducted by legislators and experts towards the end of the Weimar Republic and at the beginning of National Socialism. For more on this and on the related controversy surrounding the "best" repressive antinatalist policy, see Bock, 1986, and Csarnowski, 1985.

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