

Human reproduction and eugenics as a public issue: The contemporary reception of a German standard textbook on racial hygiene 1921-1941

Michael 2006;3:7–23

Summary:

Based on contemporary book reviews, the author analyses the reception of and impact exerted by the German standard textbook of eugenics in the inter-world-war period, the two-volume “Human Heredity” (“Menschliche Erblchkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene”, München: Lehmanns, 1921-1940) written by Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer and Fritz Lenz. Probably, this book consolidated racial hygiene as a scientific discipline and provided an important background legitimating both racial politics and legislation during the National Socialist regime in Germany.

Introduction

Even prior to Plato writing his “Republic”, “human reproduction“ has been a public issue to some extent in the western world. The idea of controlling human breeding for the sake of a state or of future generations seems to have haunted people throughout history. However, this idea remained rather abstract until the nineteenth century. During this century the abstract vision merged with modern statistical, evolutionary and genetic theories. Out of the fusion the eugenics movement was born, leaving no aspect of human reproduction private anymore. Based on the concept of improving mankind with the help of positive and negative eugenics, eugenicists all over the world made human reproduction a public issue. “Positive eugenics” was intended to support the procreation of individuals with allegedly desirable hereditary traits, whereas “negative eugenics” sought to prevent people with alleged negative hereditary traits from breeding.¹

¹ For an introduction on eugenics see e.g. Paul, Diane: “Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present”, Humanities Press International, Atlantic Highlands, NJ:1995, pp. 1-21.

In Germany eugenicist ideas were popularised from the beginning of the 20th century under the term “Racial Hygiene” and these ideas were to become fundamental in the ideological foundations of the National Socialist regime.

The history of the German Racial Hygiene movement has been analysed in various aspects.² Different approaches guiding research thereby lead to differentiating interpretations of the development, institutionalisation and realisation of eugenicist thoughts in Germany. Whereas previous works concentrated on how the history of ideas related to eugenics, recent literature has added aspects of social and of political history as well as aspects of the scientific theory.³

Although the focus of research has shifted and older viewpoints had to be revised, all the authors agree on the importance and significance of one book on the German Racial Hygiene Movement: the two-volume book

² A bibliography listing works on the history of Racial Hygiene and Eugenics in Germany has been published by Beck. Beck, C.: „Sozialdarwinismus, Rassehygiene, Zwangssterilisation und Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens. Eine Bibliographie zum Umgang mit behinderten Menschen im „Dritten Reich“ – und heute“ 2. Auflage Psychiatrie Verlag: Bonn 1995.

Detailed monographic works were published by: Becker, Peter E.: „Zur Geschichte der Rassenhygiene: Wege ins ‚Dritte Reich‘“ Thieme: Stuttgart 1998 und „Sozialdarwinismus, Rassismus, Antisemitismus und Völkischer Gedanke: Wege ins Dritte Reich, Teil II“ Thieme: Stuttgart 1990; Proctor, Robert N.: „Racial Hygiene: medicine under the Nazis“ Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1988; Schmuhl, Hans-Walter: „Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie: von der Verhütung zur Vernichtung „lebensunwerten Lebens“, 1890-1945“ (Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, Bd. 75). 2., durchges. Auflage, Göttingen 1992; Weindling, Paul: „Health, race and German politics between national unification and Nazism, 1870-1945“ Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1989; Weingart, Peter; Kroll, Jürgen; Bayertz, Kurt: „Rasse, Blut und Gene: Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland“ Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a. M. 1992.

Shorter works are among others: Lilienthal, Georg: „Rassenhygiene im Dritten Reich. Krise und Wende“, *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 14 (1979), S. 114-134; Mann, Gunter: „Neue Wissenschaft im Rezeptionsbereich des Darwinismus: Eugenik – Rassenhygiene“, *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 1 (1978), S. 101-111; Weindling, Paul: „The „Sonderweg“ of German Eugenics: Nationalism and Scientific Internationalism“, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 22 (1989), S. 321-333; Weingart, Peter: „German Eugenics between Science and Politics“, *Osiris* 5 (1989), 2nd series, S. 260-281; Weiss, Sheila Faith: „The Race Hygiene Movement in Germany“, *Osiris* 3 (1987), 2nd series, S. 193-236.

³ For a short historiographic overview see Kröner, Hans-Peter: „Von der Rassenhygiene zur Humangenetik: das Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik nach dem Kriege“, G. Fischer: Stuttgart 1998, S. 9-13. An older but still classical analysis is to find at Farrall, Lyndsay: „The history of eugenics: a bibliographical review“, *Annals of Science* 36 (1979), 111-123.

“Human Heredity” (“Menschliche Erblchkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene”) by Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer and Fritz Lenz. In the historiography, this book is considered to be the contemporary “standard textbook” of German Eugenics.

Existing works seem to justify this assessment, but a quantifying analysis of the contemporary reception of this book, as represented in contemporary reviews, has not been performed yet. So far analyses of reviews only exist in an unsystematic, fragmented form.⁴ The aim of this study is to close this gap. After a short presentation of the book and its contents, a systematic analysis of contemporary reviews is performed. Leaving aside social, personal or political factors influencing the reviewers, the general acceptance or disapproval of the book by its contemporaries shall be quantified. In addition the public networks reviewing and thus popularising the book will be identified. Finally the process which made the book a “standard textbook” will be reconstructed.

“Human Heredity” by Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer and Fritz Lenz

On the initiative of the nationalistic publisher J. F. Lehmanns (1864-1935), Erwin Baur (1875-1933), Eugen Fischer (1874-1967) und Fritz Lenz (1887-1976) came together to publish a comprehensive textbook on Human Heredity and Racial Hygiene in 1921 (the book is named BFL in

⁴ Loren R. Graham mentions the Russian reception of the BFL (Graham, Loren R.: „Science and Values: The Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s”, *The American Historical Review* 82 (1977), S. 1133-1164).

Kröner, Toellner and Weisemann quote citing Proctor eight reviews. (Kröner, Hans-Peter; Toellner, Richard; Weisemann, Karin: „Erwin Baur – Naturwissenschaft und Politik. Gutachten zu der Frage, inwieweit Erwin Baur in die geistige Urheberchaft der historischen Verbrechen, die der Nationalsozialismus begangen hat, verstrickt war oder nicht“, Münster 1991, S. 34-37).

Lösch, who analysed Fischer’s participation in the BFL, closely looks at four reviews and cites another eight. (Lösch, Niels C.: „Rasse als Konstrukt: Leben und Werk Eugen Fischers“, (Europäische Hochschulschriften: Reihe 3, Geschichte und ihre Hilfswissenschaften, Bd. 737), Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main 1997, S. 136-151).

Proctor (footnote 2, pp. 57-59) quotes 15 reviews. One of them is not a review but an obituary by Hans Stubbe for Erwin Baur. (Stubbe, Hans: „Nachruf Erwin Baur“, *Fortschritte der Medizin* 51 (1933), S. 1143).

Weingart, Kroll, Bayertz (s. Anm. 2, S. 316-319) quote two contemporary comments on the BFL. One of them is a book review, the other is an comment taken from a short essay by Karl Saller on the „Status and Tasks of Eugenics“ (my translation). (Saller, Karl: „Stand und Aufgaben der Eugenik“, *Klinische Wochenschrift* 12 (1933), S. 1041-1044).

the following).⁵ When the book came out, it represented the spirit of the age. The public during that time showed a growing interest in eugenicist questions and the process of institutionalising Racial Hygiene as an academic discipline was about to start.⁶

Erwin Baur was an internationally recognised researcher in the field of breeding. By the time the book was published he was Director of the first German University Institute for the Theory of Heredity in Friedrichshagen.⁷ The anthropologist Eugen Fischer had become famous with his research work on South African “half-breeds” (Rehobother Bastards) with which he claimed to have verified of Mendel’s laws in human beings.⁸ Fritz Lenz had held a professorship for hygiene since 1919, and became the first associated professor for Racial Hygiene in Munich in 1923.⁹ For the first time a geneti-

⁵ Letter by Fritz Lenz to his wife. Transcript kindly offered by his son H. Lenz.

On the life and works of J. F. Lehmanns see e.g. Stark, Gary D.: „Der Verleger als Kulturunternehmer: Der J. F. Lehmanns Verlag und Rassenkunde in der Weimarer Republik“, *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 15 (1976), S. 291-318 and Thomann, Klaus-Dieter: „Dienst am Deutschtum - der medizinische Verlag J. F. Lehmanns und der Nationalsozialismus“ in: Bleker, Johanna; Jachertz, Norbert (Eds): „Medizin im ‚Dritten Reich‘“, pp. 54-69, 2., erweiterte Auflage, Thieme: Köln 1993 (1985, 1993). Special aspects and facets in the publishing policy of Lehmanns and a detailed analysis of the popularisation of Racial Hygiene in Germany by Lehmanns are given by Stöckel, Sigrid (Ed.): „Die ‚rechte Nation‘ und ihr Verleger. Politik und Popularisierung im J. F. Lehmanns Verlag 1890-1979“, *Lehmanns Media Berlin* 2002

⁶ See footnote 2.

⁷ On Erwin Baur see: Charles Coulston Gillispie, ed., *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, 18 vols. (New York 1970-1990), vol 17, Suppl. 2, 1990); Reimar Gilenbach, “Erwin Baur, eine deutsche Chronik,” in *Arbeitsmarkt und Sondererlaß: Menschenverwertung, Rassenpolitik und Arbeitsamt*, ed. Götz Aly, Matthias Hamann, Susanne Heim, Ahlrich Meyer (Beiträge zur nationalsozialistischen Gesundheits- und Sozialpolitik, Bd. 8, Berlin, 1990), pp. 184-197; Rudolf Hagemann, “Zum 100. Geburtstag des Genetikers Erwin Baur,” *Leopoldina*, 1978 (1975), 21: 179-187; Hans-Peter Kröner, Richard Toellner, Karin Weisemann, Erwin Baur – Naturwissenschaft und Politik. Gutachten zu der Frage „inwieweit Erwin Baur in die geistige Urhebererschaft der historischen Verbrechen, die der Nationalsozialismus begangen hat, verstrickt war oder nicht“ (Köln: MVR Druck, 1994); Baur’s style of scientific thought and his life are described by Harwood, Jonathan, “Styles of Scientific Thought: The German Genetics Community 1900-1933”, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, London 1993, pp. 228-273

⁸ Detailed biographies of Fischer are to be found by Lösch (s. footnote 4) and Gessler, Bernhard: „Eugen Fischer (1874-1967): Leben und Werk des Freiburger Anatomen, Anthropologen und Rassenhygienikers bis 1927“ (Tröhler, U./ Leven, K.-H. (Eds.): *Medizingeschichte im Kontext Band 4*), Peter Lang: Frankfurt 2000.

⁹ On Fritz Lenz see: Peter Emil Becker, *Zur Geschichte der Rassenhygiene*, pp. 137-218 and Renate Rissom, *Fritz Lenz und die Rassenhygiene* (Univ. Diss., University of Mainz, 1982) also (*Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften*, H. 47, Husum, 1983), also Proctor (s. footnote 2)

cist, an anthropologist and a hygienist had joined forces to give a synopsis over the current knowledge about human heredity and racial hygiene.

Their textbook consisted of two volumes and five different editions were published between 1921 and 1940.¹⁰ The fifth edition was never finished. The published section was the second half of the first volume, which had been compiled by even more authors.¹¹ In the first volume the authors intended to give a scientific basis for their second volume which was dedicated to the political issues of “practical racial hygiene”.¹² While the first volume consisted of chapters written by Baur, Fischer and Lenz, the second volume was the single work by Fritz Lenz.

To open the first volume, Erwin Baur presents an overview of the general theory of inheritance. He gives an introduction to Mendel’s laws and explains Morgan’s experiments on *Drosophila melanogaster* (fruit flies) whilst mentioning his own experiments on *Antirrhinum majus* (snapdragon). Following this, Fischer describes the varying characteristics of human beings, applying anthropological criteria. On this basis he classifies different human races. It is an important fact that he points out hereditary criteria in characterising races in contrast to the classical anthropology which merely used to compare anatomical proportions.¹³

¹⁰ Baur, Erwin; Fischer, Eugen; Lenz, Fritz: „Grundriss der menschlichen Erblchkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene“.

Band 1: „Menschliche Erblchkeitslehre“, 1. Auflage München 1921, 2. Auflage München 1923, 3. Auflage München 1927, „Menschliche Erblehre“, 4. Auflage, München 1936.

Band 2: „Menschliche Auslese und Rassenhygiene“, 1. Auflage München 1921, 2. Auflage München 1923, 3. Auflage München 1931, 4. Auflage (unveränderter Nachdruck der 3. Auflage) 1932.

5. Auflage: 1. Band 2. Hälfte „Erbpathologie“, München 1940.

¹¹ Warwas and Lohff found that there was a general breakdown in the number of eugenics literature published by J. F. Lehmanns after 1940. Facing these data they are of the opinion that the publishing house concentrated on literature important for the war. Maybe this is the reason why a fifth edition of the other parts of the BFL has never been realised. Lohff, Brigitte; Warwas, Roman: „’Man brauchte sich nicht umzustellen...’. Die Monographien im J. F. Lehmanns Verlag von 1933-1945.“ In „Die ‚rechte Nation‘ und ihr Verleger : Politik und Popularisierung im J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1890-1979“ edited by Sigrid Stöckel, 207-239. Berlin 2002, pp. 207-239, see footnote 5.

¹² Preface BFL 1st edition, 1st volume, p. 2; 3rd edition, 2nd volume, p. VIII

¹³ Positive comments on this “modern” view of anthropology are given by e.g. Max Marcuse, Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft, 1921, 8: 232-7; A. Harrasser, Der Gerichtssaal, 1936, 108: 286-8; Agnes Bluhm, Die Naturwissenschaften, 1937, 25: 335-6; Otmar von Verschuer, Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie, 1937, 36: 362

Lösch, Leben und Werk (footnote 4) considers this to be the main attribute of Fischer’s anthropology, which makes it stand out against the purely measuring, anatomical proportions comparing, classical anthropology.

All of the subsequent chapters were written by Fritz Lenz, and they could stand alone as a book in their own right. The core of his work in the first volume is a chapter about hereditary illnesses which grew from edition to edition and was kept up-to-date over the years. This encyclopaedic collection of all known hereditary diseases at that time, was extended from 93 pages in the first edition to 512 pages in the fifth edition. It is followed by a section on “Hereditability of intellectual gifts”. In this chapter Lenz follows a strategy that Garland Allen has described as the usual argumentation of eugenicists. Lenz forms a hierarchy of taxonomically defined human races (see Fischer’s chapters) based on “cultural value”. “Cultural value” was measured by him according to the prejudices in the contemporary German middle class.¹⁴ Thus he develops a value-oriented hierarchy on the basis of a taxonomic hierarchy.¹⁵ As proof for his theses he refers to the results of intelligence tests, biological data and observed living conditions, which he interprets in a biological way. He considers them to be genetically determined.¹⁶

In the second volume Lenz exposes the eugenicist theories of biological and sociological selection and degeneration. He suggests measures for private and public racial hygiene. On the basis of the biological data given in the first volume, Lenz outlines the complete program of racial hygiene aimed at the improvement of man. Measures he depicts range from education, influencing world views and tax politics to sterilisation, abortion, and the prohibition of marriages.

¹⁴ See e.g. Weiss, Sheila F.: “Race and Class in Fritz Lenz’s Eugenics”, *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 27: 5-25 (1992)

¹⁵ On the eugenic praxis of abusing different hierarchies for reasoning their hypotheses see Allen, Garland E.: “The Misuse of Biological Hierarchies: The American Eugenics Movement, 1900-1940”, *History and Philosophy of Life Sciences* 5: 105-128 (1983)

¹⁶ This praxis has already been criticised by contemporaries. Hankins, (Hankins, Frank H. Review in the *American Sociological Review* 3 (1938), pp. 147-8): „As a whole the work is useful for its summaries of numerous researches on human inheritance, being more comprehensive in this respect than any single work in English. Its value, however, is seriously marred by its frequently uncritical acceptance of genealogical data...” or Muller (Muller, Hermann J.; Review in the *Birth Control Review* 17 (1933), pp. 19-21): „Intelligence quotients, which are now known to be strongly influenced by training, serve as their courts of highest appeal. In addition, they twist the records of history and anthropology so as to favor the preconceptions born of their own egotism.”, see also Zurukzogl (Zurukzogl, Stavros; Review in *Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv* 21 (1931), p. 471; Fetscher (Fetscher, Rainer; Review in *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft* 14 (1927), p. 91 and Martin (Martin, Rudolf; *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* 15 (1923), pp. 322-28.

The reviews

As the BFL is said to be one of the books that had an important impact on the racial hygiene movement, it is attempted here to assess the opinions held by Baur's, Fischer's and Lenz's contemporaries. Especially its popularisation and acceptance in different public circles will be reconstructed. A systematic review analysis served as a tool.¹⁷ The acceptance or rebuttal of the book and, of course, the idea of making human reproduction a public issue (as expressed in the book) will be quantified by this means.

It was possible to trace a total of 325 book reviews on Baur, Fischer and Lenz's publication. 28 of these were published in other languages than German. In order to harmonise the sample for the reconstruction of the circles involved in the popularisation of the BFL, the non-German reviews were excluded from the sample. All the reviews had been published between 1921 and 1940. The major source was the review section (section C) of the "International Bibliography of Periodical Literature".¹⁸ This is an extensive and comprehensive bibliography of the leading German and foreign journals of various fields of knowledge and science.¹⁹ Therefore, the bibliography offers an adequate instrument to assess the German and foreign ac-

¹⁷ The method is discussed in Fangerau, Heiner: "Making Eugenics a Public Issue: The Construction of a Standard Textbook by Reviews, 1921-1940", *Science Studies* 18 (2): 46-66.

¹⁸ Felix Dietrich, ed., *Bibliographie der Deutschen Rezensionen mit Einschluß von Referaten und Selbstanzeigen, 1.1900-77.1943* (Osnabrück, 1900-1943; reprint, New York, 1962). (*Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriftenliteratur [IBZ] aus allen Gebieten des Wissens Abt. C: Bibliographie der Rezensionen und Referate*).

This is section C of an international bibliography called "Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriftenliteratur". Felix Dietrich, ed., *Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriftenliteratur*, 128 vols. (Osnabrück, 1896-1964). Reviews, reports and abstracts are included in this section C.

¹⁹ In the year 1896 the bibliography contained 8500 articles which had been published in about 275 mostly scientific German journals. (Dietrich Abt. A., 1.1896). The list of included periodicals was expanded over the years and suggestions for journals to be added were considered and accepted. According to the editors the bibliography strived for „most possible completeness“ with respect to what seemed necessary and possible to record. This had the effect that in the year of the BFL's first edition 2000 different German and from the year 1925 on more than 1200 foreign periodicals had been registered. (Dietrich Abt. C, 1921, 1925/26 „List of journals“). Concerning the foreign journals the editors tried to achieve most possible completeness in the inclusion of publications listed in the "Total-Catalogue of foreign Journals" ("Gesamtverzeichnis der ausländischen Zeitschriften"). (Dietrich Abt. C, vol. 44, 1925/26)

An Index like the *Index medicus* (*Index medicus*. A monthly [1921ff.: quarterly] classified record of the current medical literature of the world, (New York et al., 1897-1927 and continuation) was not appropriate for this research project because it does not include book reviews.

ceptance of the theses given in the BFL. Furthermore the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the critiques makes it possible to reconstruct the separate stages on the book's way to become a corner stone of the racial hygienist's propaganda.

Results

Due to the structure of the book as a two-volume work, reviews were published either on the first, the second or both volumes. Most of the 297 German (language) reviews critiqued the 3rd edition of the BFL. 96 of them had been published on this edition between 1927 and 1931. An English translation of the first volume of the BFL titled "Human Heredity" was published in 1931.²⁰ One German review on this translation could be traced (12 English). In 1932, only one year after the third edition, the fourth edition of the second volume was made available as a reprint. As such it only received two reviews. The most frequently reviewed single volume was the first volume of the fourth edition with 73 reviews.

In accordance with the works by Günther²¹ and Kroll²², the number of reviews per edition seems to reflect the status of the institutionalisation of racial hygiene in Germany. There was an increase in reviews until the third edition (1927/ 1931) - the time when the eugenics movement in Germany had reached the zenith of its institutionalisation, as demonstrated in the foundation of the "Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics". With the declining need for institutionalisation the number of reviews decreased (table 1).

Table 1: Number of reviews per edition

	1 st edition (1921)	2 nd edition (1923)	3 rd edition (1927/1931)	4 th edition (1932/1936)	5 th edition, 1 st vol. 2 nd half (1940)
Both volumes	11	19	2	0	0
1st volume	14	15	46	73	39
2nd volume	12	16	47	2	0
Human Heredity	0	0	1	0	0
Total	37	50	96	75	39

²⁰ Paul, Eden, Paul, Cedar: „Human Heredity“, New York 1931.

²¹ Günther, Maria: „Die Institutionalisierung der Rassenhygiene an den deutschen Hochschulen vor 1933“ Univ. Diss. Med. Fak. Mainz 1982, (see diagram on p. 63).

²² Kroll, Jürgen: „Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung einer naturwissenschaftlichen und sozialpolitischen Bewegung: Die Entwicklung der Eugenik/ Rassenhygiene bis zum Jahre 1933“ Univ. Diss. Tübingen 1983.

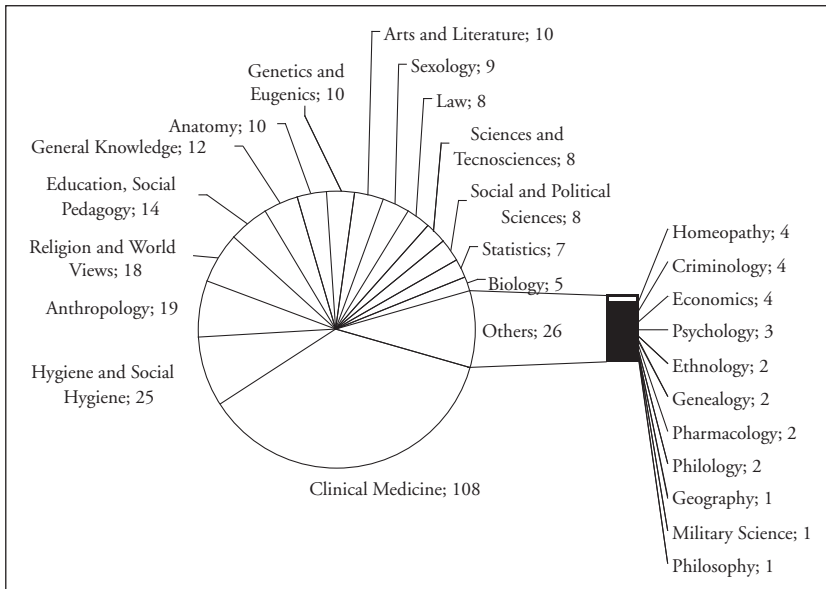


Figure 1: Number of journals covering different subject areas in the reception of the BFL

As the racial hygiene movement originated from different theories as a conglomeration of distinct sciences and humanities,²³ reviews had been published in multiple journals of miscellaneous orientation. However, (clinical-)medical journals predominated in reviewing the BFL (n=108). Without counting the hygiene-related and anatomical publications as medical periodicals, they add up to more than one third of all journals (table 2).

To make a deeper analysis of the book's acceptance within different disciplines - and thus different publics - possible, the identified 26 disciplines of the journals were grouped in six categories (see table 2). The categories were formed according to the faculties listed in the common German directory of academic institutions and academic personnel of the years 1928/29 (Kürschners Deutscher Gelehrten-Kalender 1928/29).²⁴

²³ E.g. Hans-Walter Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene* (n. 2), pp. 70ff., Kroll, J. *Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung* (n. 23) p. 22

²⁴ Lüdtke, Gerhard: „Kürschners Deutscher Gelehrten-Kalender 1928/29“, 3. Ausgabe, Berlin und Leipzig 1928/1929.

Table 2: Disciplines grouped according to Kürschners Gelehrtenkalender

Discipline	Number of reviews
Clinical Medicine	108
Theoretical Medicine (Homeopathy; Pharmacology; Hygiene and Social Hygiene; Anatomy; Sexology)	50
(Natural) Sciences (Anthropology; Biology; Genetics and Eugenics, Statistics, Sciences and Tecnosciences)	49
General Public Knowledge General Knowledge; Genealogy; Geography; Arts and Literature; Religion and World Views)	43
Social Sciences, Economics and Humanities Psychology; Education, Social Pedagogy; Social and Political Sciences; Economics; Philosophy)	30
Law and others Military Science; Criminology; Law; Ethnology; Philology	17

Here again “Clinical Medicine” is dominating the field. It is still the discipline with the highest number of reviews.

The medical dominance becomes even clearer taking into account the reviewers themselves. The allotment of medical doctors as a proportion of all verified reviewers – all of them academically trained authors²⁵- is more than 50% (table 3). The reason for that is that medical doctors published their critiques in both medical and non-medically orientated journals.

The dominance of medicine reflects the high interest doctors had in eugenics. This interest was partly grounded in the widening of the nosological spectrum, by the identification of hereditary diseases, and partly due to the fact that eugenic measures were considered as prophylactic therapeutic interventions.

The large number of reviews does not allow for a detailed description of single reviews. However trends in the evaluation of the BFL by the identi-

²⁵ A list of the reviewers who were traceable with short biographies as well as a list of all reviews is given by Fangerau, Heiner: „Etablierung eines rassenhygienischen Standardwerkes 1921-1941: Der Baur-Fischer-Lenz im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen Rezensionsliteratur“ (Marburger Schriften zur Medizingeschichte Bd. 43), Peter Lang: Frankfurt a. M. 2001.

Table 3: Subject specialties and academic training of the reviewers

Specialty	N
Medical Doctors	97
Natural Scientist(1) Zoologist (7), Botanist (3), Geneticist (1), Biologist (1), Chemists (1)	15
Anthropologists (5 of them MDs)	14
Lawyers	5
Pedagogues	5
Sociologists	4
Statisticians	2
Psychologists	1
Others: Vicar (1), Writer (1), Philosopher (1)	3

fied subject categories can be analysed and quantified. Two categories help to characterise the reviews:

1. Orientation of the reviews in content:

In reference to the content of the BFL, the reviewers concentrated on special topics of the book according to their interest. Roughly four different focal points could be traced:

- a) Reviews concentrating on aspects of racial hygiene, race theory, racial anthropology and racial ideology.
- b) Reviews focusing on hereditary diseases or human heredity in general. They are mostly emphasizing the reviewer’s special field and are, therefore, called “concentrating on subject specific issues”.
- c) Reviews combining aspects a) and b).
- d) Reviews not fitting in any of the categories above.

2. Evaluation:

Five levels of agreement were defined schematically by looking at the reviews in terms of their position in relation to BFL. They range from full agreement (positive review) to total refusal (negative review) of the book. Undecided reviews could be found in the middle of this scale. Reviews not evaluating the book at all were given a separate grouping.

The analysis of the reviews according to the given categories reveals that the majority of the reviewers focused on questions surrounding racial hygiene-racial theory and that the vast majority evaluated the book positively (table 4). Although there are slight differences in the acceptance of the book in the identified disciplines the general evaluation is positive in all disciplines.

Table 4: Quantitative analysis of the reviews according to three categories defined above (all data in %)

Discipline	Content	Total	+	(+)	+/-	(-)	-	Ø
General Public Knowledge	Concentrating on Subject Specific Issues	7,0%	4,7%	2,3%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Combining both aspects	7,0%	7,0%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Concentrating on Racial Hygiene	72,1%	46,5%	16,3%	4,7%	0,0	0,0	4,7%
	Neither	14,0%	11,6%	2,3%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Total	100,0%	69,8%	20,9%	4,7%	0,0	0,0	4,7%
Social Sciences, Economics and Humanities	Concentrating on Subject Specific Issues	3,3%	3,3%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Combining both aspects	13,3%	6,7%	6,7%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Concentrating on Racial Hygiene	83,3%	53,3%	16,7%	3,3%	3,3%	6,7%	0,0
	Neither	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Total	100,0%	63,3%	23,3%	3,3%	3,3%	6,7%	0,0
Law and others	Concentrating on Subject Specific Issues	11,8%	11,8%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Combining both aspects	23,5%	11,8%	5,9%	5,9%	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Concentrating on Racial Hygiene	58,8%	58,8%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Neither	5,9%	5,9%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Total	100,0%	88,2%	5,9%	5,9%	0,0	0,0	0,0
Clinical Medicine	Concentrating on Subject Specific Issues	27,8%	15,7%	7,4%	1,9%	0,9%	0,9%	0,9%
	Combining both aspects	17,6%	13,9%	2,8%	0,9%	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Concentrating on Racial Hygiene	36,1%	27,8%	6,5%	0,9%	0,0	0,0	0,9%
	Neither	18,5%	16,7%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9%
	Total	100,0%	74,1%	16,7%	3,7%	0,9%	0,9%	3,7%

Discipline	Content	Total	+	(+)	+/-	(-)	-	Ø
Theoretical Medicine	Concentrating on Subject Specific Issues	8,0%	8,0%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Combining both aspects	10,0%	2,0%	6,0%	2,0%	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Concentrating on Racial Hygiene	54,0%	32,0%	4,0%	2,0%	8,0%	2,0%	6,0%
	Neither	28,0%	20,0%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	8,0%
	Total	100,0%	62,0%	10,0%	4,0%	8,0%	2,0%	14,0%
(Natural) Sciences	Concentrating on Subject Specific Issues	16,3%	8,2%	8,2%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Combining both aspects	20,4%	12,2%	6,1%	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0%
	Concentrating on Racial Hygiene	46,9%	26,5%	16,3%	2,0%	2,0%	0,0	0,0
	Neither	16,3%	14,3%	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0%
	Total	100,0%	61,2%	30,6%	2,0%	2,0%	0,0	4,1%

Reviews orientated towards issues surrounding racial theory were dominating in all subject categories. The highest proportion of these “eugenic reviews” was reached within the field of the “Social Sciences and Humanities” (83,3%). The lowest amount of these reviews is given within the Clinical-medical field (36,1%). Clinical-medical reviews concentrate on subject specific issues surrounding questions of hereditary diseases. Reviewers focusing on aspects of racial theory more often commented directly on the BFL than reviewers concentrating on subject specific issues.

According to the structure of the BFL the second volume received more reviews concentrating on aspects of racial theory and racial hygiene, whilst the first volume received more subject specific reviews. The fifth edition (1st vol., 2nd half) being mostly an encyclopaedia of hereditary diseases (as the parts of Baur and Fischer are missing) received 26 (66.6%) reviews concentrating on subject specific issues.

This analysis of the German speaking evaluation of the BFL revealed that amongst the reviewers there was an overwhelming acceptance of the book: 260 reviews with a positive tendency (87.5%) as opposed to 11 negative (3.7%) reviews. The most positively evaluating disciplines were the ones categorised as “Law and others”, whereas the (yet still small) highest amount of negative reviews was to be found within the Social Sciences and Theoretical Medicine. The ratio of positive and negative reviews remains basically the same from edition to edition. Whilst one might expect a shift

towards more positive evaluations following 1933 (when the national socialist regime began), this was not evident from the analysis; Levels of acceptance of the book remained the same, either side of this event.

How did the BFL become the “standard textbook”?

That the BFL could become a “standard textbook” of its time was not only due to the economic instinct or the political commitment of its publisher, or due to the scientific reputation of the three authors, but was also a result of the large number of positive reviews popularising the work. In the act of promoting the book, it was of great importance that the reviewers (like the authors) brought to bear their scientific reputation and their social prestige: By supporting this publication, they advocated racial hygiene.

The method of how journals reviewing the “Textbook on Human Heredity and Racial Hygiene” made it a standard work, seems to accord to a pattern: Step by step, from edition to edition, it was promoted as “recommended in general” right through to “outstanding”, “a masterpiece” and “the standard work”. Honorary titles like “our Baur-Fischer-Lenz” did more than was necessary to let the book seem accepted and favoured by experts and specialists.

In one of the first critiques dealing with the first edition, Otmar von Verschuer called the first volume “a valuable book”.²⁶ The contents of the same was labelled “a thorough piece of work” by Ernst Rüdin.²⁷ (Otmar von Verschuer should become a co-author of the later fifth edition). The anthropologist G. Kraitschek praised the second edition as “an exquisite work”.²⁸ The third edition subsequently received the attribute “standard work/treatise/compendium” 15 times and Eugen Bleuler characterised it as “... the systematic basis for human heredity and racial hygiene in general ...”.²⁹ Viktor Lebzelter noted, whilst talking about the fourth edition that the book “... almost has an official character in Germany ...”³⁰ before Karl Thums addressed the fifth edition as “standard treatise”, “our Baur-Fischer-Lenz” and a “classical one and only work in the medical world’s literature”.³¹

²⁶ Otmar von Verschuer, *Akademische Blätter*, 1921, 36: 150

²⁷ Ernst Rüdin, *Münchener medizinische Wochenschrift*, 1921, 68: 1297-99

²⁸ Gustav Kraitschek, *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, 1922, 54: 144

²⁹ Eugen Bleuler, Review in *Münchener medizinische Wochenschrift*, 1927, 74: 1287-8

³⁰ Viktor Lebzelter, Review in *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, 1936, 67: 124-5

³¹ Karl Thums, Review in *Münchener medizinische Wochenschrift*, 1941, 88: 658

In 47 of the 325 analysed reviews the title “standard work” was awarded to the BFL. As early as in 1922 this term had been used for the first time by the dermatologist E. Meirowsky when he gave a report on the first edition.³² The shortened form “Baur-Fischer-Lenz” which became a standard, labelled with attributes like “the great”,³³ “the well-known”³⁴ or “the classical”³⁵, had been used for the first time in a review on the 2nd edition given by the “Zeitschrift für Kinderforschung” in 1924.³⁶

Conclusion

This quantitative analysis of reviews on the “Baur-Fischer-Lenz” does not say much about the political reception of the book. Neither does it give information about the personal views of single reviewers on the book, nor is it able to give details on single aspects of agreement or criticism.³⁷ But this analysis is able to give an overview of the general acceptance of the book among its contemporaries, as it is reflected in reviews from a clearly defined collective of reviewers. Furthermore, the public within which the work was popularising can be clearly identified in terms of academic disciplines.

The group of reviewers is, as far as their level of education is concerned, a relatively homogeneous group. Taking into account that most of them were educated medical doctors, the group becomes even more homogeneous. All of them belong to the collective dealing with Racial Hygiene and one can expect that they were the ones dominating the discourse on eugenics in Germany. Among this group a controversial discussion about the BFL did not take place. A vast acceptance of the theses lined out by Baur, Fischer and Lenz in their book is to be found. Critical comments were rare and the vast majority welcomed the book and its theses. Thus, the first question of this paper whether the BFL can be considered as an important book for the German Racial Hygiene movement can be – taking the large number of reviews analysed – answered positively.

A further hypothesis one might derive from the given data, is that the collective of reviewers willingly made the BFL a standard textbook to foster professionalisation and institutionalisation of their field - knowing that

³² Emil Meirowsky, Review in *Dermatologische Wochenschrift*, 1922, 74: 120-3

³³ A. H., Review in *Ruhr und Rhein Wirtschaftszeitung*, 1931, 12: 791

³⁴ Hans Glatzel, Review in *Kongresszentralblatt für die gesamte Innere Medizin*, 1940, 104: 673

³⁵ Berthold Ostertag, Review in *Medizinische Klinik*, 1941, 37: 339

³⁶ Walter Scheidt, Review in *Zeitschrift für Kinderforschung*, 1924, 28/ Ref.: 17-8

a “profession” ought to have a standard textbook. In accordance with this hypothesis Weingart, Kroll and Bayertz are of the opinion that, with the publication of the BFL, the racial hygiene movement had obtained its own “Charter of heredity”. The book gave contemporary account of the national and international “state of the art” of racial hygiene and human heredity and it combined the very topics related to this new discipline. Thus, it helped to immunise the racial hygiene movement against criticism of its scientific and academic nature. After the second edition of the BFL in 1923, objections could only be put forward with regard to technical aspects of eugenic measures or with regard to the current state of the art.³⁷ If one includes the direction of eugenic conclusions on the ground of genetics (e.g. criticisms inherent in the debate about “positive” or “negative” eugenics) in those “technical aspects”, the analysis of the reviews of the BFL confirms Weingart et al.’s estimation.

Furthermore, the subject categories of the journals publishing reviews on the BFL can be interpreted in accordance with the reviewer’s intention to foster professionalisation and institutionalisation of eugenics by positively evaluating the BFL. Most of the identified disciplines were linked in either way to eugenics or served as sources for eugenicists’ ideas. By reviewing the compendium on racial hygiene in these journals the reviewers tried to foster the professionalisation of the new field by demarcating its contents and its impact from the disciplines it came from. The new discipline of racial hygiene represented by the BFL should be popularised within academic circles as a new scientific specialty still linked to other scientific disciplines.

Although this paper does not say anything about the political impact of the BFL it can be argued that the acceptance of the reviewers helped the book to become an integral part in political thinking of its time. The popularisation of the book as a standard work, defining the new discipline, demarcating it from other disciplines, consolidated the BFL’s status as the book which defined Racial Hygiene and its political implications. In addition it can be said that the book and the reviewers prepared the ground for the eugenic legislation in Germany after 1933. When the plan to make reproduction a public issue was turned into practice by the new regime,

³⁷ This can be found in Fangerau, H. (see footnote 25)

³⁸ Weingart et al., *Rasse, Blut und Gene* (see footnote 2), pp. 312-319

many of the reviewers happily agreed and it was stated that the “former editions of the BFL played an essential role in forming a scientific basis for the national socialist, political and ideological upheaval in Germany”.³⁹

*Dr. Heiner Fangerau
Institute for the History of Medicine
Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf
Universitätsstrasse 1
D-40225 Düsseldorf
Abteilung für Ethik und Geschichte der Medizin,
Universitätsklinikum Göttingen
Tel.: +49 211 8113940
Fax.: +49 211 8113949
heiner.fangerau@uni-duesseldorf.de*

³⁹ Verschuer, O. v.; Review in Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie, 1937, 36: 362. (Translation by H.F. of “Die bisherigen Auflagen...hatten wesentlichsten Anteil an der wissenschaftlichen Unterbauung des nationalsozialistischen, politischen und weltanschaulichen Umbruchs in Deutschland...”)