

counterproductive but unnecessary. It was not even needed as a justification for reparations, for Germany had already accepted these in the pre-Armistice Agreement of November 5<sup>th</sup>. The third is that early debt relief by the United States would have eased the reparations demands, but there is nothing new in that.

There is some special pleading in this book, especially by the more ardent defenders of Wilson. The passage of time between the conference and publication has rendered some of the attempts to draw lessons for the 1990s obsolete. One reads with surprise in 1999 that America's post-cold war hegemony is being "undermined by her relative economic decline" (Steel, 23). But overall it is a challenging book with formidable intellectual qualities. It is nicely produced, but could, at very little cost, have been even more reader-friendly. A list of abbreviations would have been helpful, as would a text of the treaty and a short *dramatis personae*.

Werner Brill, *Pädagogik im Spannungsfeld von Eugenik und Euthanasie: Die "Euthanasie"-Diskussion in der Weimarer Republik und zu Beginn der neunziger Jahre. Ein Beitrag zur Faschismusforschung und zur Historiographie der Behindertpädagogik* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 1994)

#### Review by Sheri Berman, Political Science, Princeton University

In June 1989 Peter Singer, the Australian philosopher, was invited to speak in Marburg at a European symposium entitled "Bioengineering, Ethics, and Mental Disability." The invitation created an uproar in Germany, as intellectuals and organizations across the political spectrum protested Singer's visit. Vehement attacks on him were published in many major German news organs (an article in *Der Spiegel*, for example, compared his views to those of the Nazis), and other attempts to hold conferences on bioethics and euthanasia were met with charges that the organizers were promoting "fascism" and "modern mass extermination." Because of the furor, the invitation to Singer was withdrawn and the symposium at which he was invited to speak canceled.

Because the reparations could be collected only with the cooperation of Germany, every German government had an incentive to default.

There was, however, a further defect in the treaty. It was not suited for the one purpose that above all the French and British delegations wanted to use it for, that of settling the "German Question." The delegates could not decide, in the words of John Pierpont Morgan, "whether they wanted a weak Germany who could not pay, or a strong Germany who could pay." As it turned out, they had no choice. As J. C. Smuts pointed out at an early stage, since "Germany was the most formidable of European powers ... there could not be a stable Europe without a stable Germany." Keynes thought much the same. He was not as silly as most of the contributors paint him. Any hope on the part of the French delegates that the balance of power could be restored to pre-1870 terms would be short-lived. Sooner or later Germany was bound to recover—in resentment, as it turned out, rather than conciliation.

That leaves the question of the quality of statecraft shown by the participants at the Paris Peace Conference. Detailed research generally modifies earlier black-and-white pictures. As a result, Wilson emerges as less of the naïve missionary of popular caricature, Lloyd George as being statesmanlike as well as frivolously two-faced, and Clemenceau as a dove in comparison with his French colleagues. Wilson's main problem was that he pursued too many incompatible ideals, and the problem of some of his defenders is that they protest too much. Are we really to believe that his ideas of self-determination contained "no connotation of ethnicity" or that covenants openly arrived at were compatible with diplomacy conducted behind closed doors (Keylor, 474f)? Could these men have done better? As more than one contributor points out, timing was against them. There was strong pressure to complete a treaty quickly, but that meant working in an atmosphere still loaded with resentments.

On the basis of these 636 pages, three conclusions present themselves to this reviewer. The first is that a moderate reparations demand embodied in the treaty would have saved much of the later wrangling and bad blood. The Allies refused, hoping that later might mean more money. But that, as we have seen, was pie in the sky. The second is that the "war guilt" clause, which caused so much sanctimonious foaming at the mouth in Germany, was not only

Singer, now a professor at Princeton University (where his appointment has also generated substantial controversy), is probably most famous in the United States for his advocacy of animal rights. However, he is best known in Germany for his advocacy of euthanasia and his belief that the parents of severely disabled fetuses or "new-born infants should be able to decide, together with their physician, whether their [child] should live or die."<sup>1</sup> What the "Singer controversy" revealed was that, in Germany, debating whether human lives vary in sanctity—and thus might merit varying degrees of protection—is simply taboo. Many Germans today apparently believe that simply discussing subjects such as euthanasia or bioengineering could start a renewed descent into the horrors of fascism.

Werner Brill's *Pädagogik im Spannungsfeld von Eugenik und Euthanasie* provides much-needed context for this issue and sheds light on whether the fears raised during the "Singer controversy" are realistic. Scholars who study Hitler's rise to power have long debated whether Nazism is best viewed as an outgrowth of earlier German history or as a fundamental break with the past. Those who study Nazi euthanasia and eugenics policies have reproduced this controversy on a smaller scale, debating whether the Nazis simply adopted (and perhaps radicalized) ideas and policies that were widely accepted in pre-1933 Germany or whether they devised something new and terrible on their own. Brill's book, an encyclopedic treatment of debates about euthanasia and eugenics during the first third of the twentieth century with a shorter section on the contemporary era, enables readers to move beyond such stark oppositions. Although more a work of compilation than of analysis, it should prove extremely valuable because it is comprehensive, detailed, and reviews a wide range of primary source material.

Brill traces the evolution of thinking among German political and intellectual elites as well as among health care professionals and advocates of the handicapped and retarded. He establishes that from the turn of the century on, but especially after 1918, "societal" engineering and euthanasia came to be seen as valuable and even necessary by a wide range of Germans. Indeed, the degree of acceptance is astounding, and many groups and individuals who might have been expected to resist such policies apparently supported or at least acquiesced in them. Some Jewish professionals and academics, for

example, were vocal advocates of euthanasia and eugenics. Brill recounts how after the Nazi seizure of power, the *Internationale Ärztliche Bulletin* published by Jewish doctors and Social Democrats in exile in Prague criticized the Nazi sterilization law of July 1933 not on principled grounds, but rather on political ones: "such a law was being misused as an instrument of power in a capitalist state ... only after the social revolution would the scientific and social preconditions for a 'true' eugenics be created." (25) Eugenics and euthanasia also enjoyed widespread support among those who worked closely with handicapped and retarded individuals in institutions, homes, and schools. Some of these caregivers, Brill shows—and even some of the handicapped themselves—tried to make distinctions between those with particular disabilities (such as the blind and the deaf) and a broader category of the *Schwachen* (weak) or *Minderwertigen* (inferior). But relatively few objected to such broad categorizations in the abstract or to the policies that followed from them. Brill also confirms something other scholars have stressed recently, namely, that the left was not immune to the allure of euthanasia and eugenics. Many within the SPD in particular looked favorably on both,<sup>2</sup> and it was a Social Democrat, Alfred Grotjahn, who occupied the first chair in "social hygiene" in Berlin.

It was not the mere discussion or even approval of eugenics and euthanasia that paved the way for Nazi practices, however, but rather the mixture of such acceptance with two other factors: a belief that national or communal goods trump individual ones and a toleration of coercive methods to achieve such goals. Brill shows that most pre-Nazi German discussions about euthanasia and eugenics were premised on the belief that the ultimate goal of state policy should be the good or health of the nation. Especially after 1918, euthanasia and eugenics policies were often justified by the need to counter a supposed "*Untergang des deutschen Volkes*" (decline of the German people). National interest was deemed more important than individual interests; the primary aim of social and health policy was considered to be the improvement of the nation or collectivity. Viewing German society as an organism or even a collective body, many argued that increasing its health required decreasing the number of its "defective" components (that is, the so-called *Minderwertigen*). During this era many believed that "the German people,

viewed as an organic whole, were involved in a competition with other people and threatened by destruction; the most important internal reason for this was the *Minderwertigen*, or rather their tendency to reproduce." (174)

What made such reasoning dangerous was that it implied a need for state intervention to fix the problem and could easily validate coercion. Once individual human lives were judged primarily on the basis of their value to the nation rather than on their own merits or potential, the state was effectively authorized to do what was necessary to improve the situation: individuals could be sterilized, forced to get abortions, blocked from receiving adequate health care, or worse. Even before the Nazis came to power, therefore, Germany may indeed have been on the upper reaches of a somewhat slippery slope.

Still, finding oneself at the top of a slippery slope is not the same thing as sliding down it to the bottom. To put it another way, the pro-Nazi German debate may have been a necessary cause for the horrors that emerged under Hitler's regime, but it was not a sufficient one. In retrospect, one can say that at least the initial Nazi forays into euthanasia and eugenics were probably facilitated by the widespread acceptance of such things before and during the Weimar era. But without the Nazi factor, these same policies and ideas would never have been implemented in such cruel and dramatic ways. Here the recently much-discussed Swedish case may be instructive. Seeking to improve the "quality" of Swedish citizens and the "health" of Swedish society, the Swedish Social Democrats supported eugenics policies after they came to power in the early 1930s. Yet however horrible and unjust these policies appear in retrospect, they were never characterized by the racism or extreme coercion of their German counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, many left-wing and SPD advocates of euthanasia and eugenics rejected the use of coercive state policies. Furthermore, the SPD tried to differentiate "negative" eugenics (that is, avoiding the birth of "defective" individuals), which was favored, from "positive" eugenics (that is, cultivating "high value" types), which was not.

What, then, of the contemporary debate? Is there indeed a parallel between the views of people like Singer and those of the Nazi's precursors, or even the Nazis themselves? And are all discussions of euthanasia or bioethics the first step on the slippery slope down to perdition? The answer is "no" to both questions, because the truly

dangerous elements in the earlier mindset were the glorification of entities such as the nation or the collectivity and the concomitant lack of respect for individual interests and values, and the acceptance of coercive state intervention into private spheres, none of which is being advocated today.

It is true that some participants in contemporary arguments over euthanasia and related issues do not consider all human lives equally sanctified. Singer, for example, believes that the quality of human life varies markedly based on "ethically relevant considerations like the capacity for enjoyable experiences, for interacting with others, or for having preferences about continued life."<sup>4</sup> (This same principle forms the basis of Singer's advocacy of animal rights.<sup>5</sup>) Those who possess such capacities, he argues, do indeed merit different treatment from those who do not. Singer thus feels it is legitimate for parents to consider, when deciding on an abortion, whether the fetus has defects that will dramatically lessen the quality of its life if carried to term. But since his analysis is based on a consideration of the quality, value, and potential of individual lives, it seems far removed from the debates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and highly unlikely to lead to the horrible policies pursued by the Nazis.

Singer would give parents the right to abort severely handicapped fetuses, for example, not require them to do so, and he would not discriminate against handicapped individuals later on in life:

It is one thing to argue that people with disabilities who want to live their lives to the full should be given every possible assistance in doing so. It is another, and quite different thing, to argue that if we are in a position to choose, for our next child, whether that child shall begin life with or without a disability, it is mere prejudice or bias that leads us to choose to have a child without a disability.... We show no prejudice against disabled people if we prefer, whether for ourselves or for our children, not to be faced with hurdles so great that to surmount them is in itself a triumph.<sup>6</sup>

On similar quality of life considerations, he would permit terminally ill patients or those in irreversible comas to have their lives ended swiftly and painlessly. This is nothing like what the Nazis advocated, as Singer himself has pointed out:

The Nazis did not have a euthanasia program, in the proper sense of the word. Their so-called euthanasia program was not motivated by a concern for the suffering of those killed.... Nazi 'euthanasia' was never

*The Challenge of Globalization for Germany's Social Democracy: A Policy Agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Dieter Dettko, ed. (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 1998)

**Review by Thomas Banchoff, Government, Georgetown University**

Rare is the book with better timing. Conceived in 1997, *The Challenge of Globalization for Germany's Social Democracy* came out in late 1998, just as the SPD returned to power. The first two essays are written by none other than Oskar Lafontaine and Gerhard Schröder. Thirteen more follow, authored by leading politicians, policy makers, and scholars. Taken together, the chapters provide an excellent overview of the range of Social Democratic responses to globalization—from deep skepticism to enthusiastic embrace. Edited by Dieter Dettko of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Washington office, the volume succinctly sets out many of the social, economic, and foreign policy challenges facing the Red-Green coalition. It also illuminates the political tensions within the SPD that erupted more than once during its first months in office and are bound to persist into the future.

The book's unusual composition is one of its strengths. Unlike countless edited volumes on globalization by social scientists, it juxtaposes the ideas of political practitioners with those of political scientists, sociologists, and economists. Fritz Scharpf and Wolfgang Streeck, both of the Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne, provide clear and concise summaries of the scholarly globalization debate as it relates to Germany and Social Democracy. But the academic controversy is not the book's center of gravity. Rather, as the subtitle indicates, most of the assembled authors set out a policy agenda for Germany in an era of international economic, political, cultural, and technological change. What exactly globalization is—whether new or old, inexorable or avoidable—is not resolved within or across the essays. Instead, the contributors sketch possible German responses in a variety of domestic and foreign policy areas. Their dialogue and disagreement with one another provide a window on the German globalization debate.

Nowhere is this disagreement more noteworthy than in the contributions by Lafontaine and Schröder. The future (and past) finance

voluntary.... It was the Nazi belief in the importance of maintaining a pure Aryan Volk—a somewhat mystical entity that was thought of as more important than mere individual lives—that made both the so-called euthanasia program and later the entire Holocaust possible. Proposals for the legalization of euthanasia, in contrast, are based on respect for autonomy and the goal of avoiding pointless suffering.<sup>7</sup>

As is only to be expected when dealing with sensitive, complex issues of science, ethics, and public policy, many may disagree with Singer's reasoning and recommendations. But to tar it with the Nazi brush is grossly unfair, and stifles legitimate debate on important subjects.

Brill's book shows in copious detail just what the arguments were that provided an intellectual backdrop for Nazi practices in this area, and one can understand why the Federal Republic tried to inoculate itself against such thinking by writing a provision about the "sanctity of human life" into its constitution. Judging by the German reaction to Singer and those like him, however, the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction, and produced an illiberal suppression of free thought and discussion. The essence of the Nazi menace was not a differentiated view of the quality of human lives, but rather the trampling of individual autonomy by a coercive state hell-bent on pursuing its perverse vision of the collective good. Viewed in that light, Peter Singer is less of a threat to contemporary German society than those who choose to shout him down.

## Notes

1. For Singer's discussion of the controversy see the appendix to his *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge, UK, 1998), 8th edition (quote on p. 342), or Singer, "On Being Silenced in Germany," *The New York Review of Books*, August 15, 1991.
2. On the SPD see Michael Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik: Eugensische Sozialtechnologien in Debatte und Politik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, 1890-1933* (Bonn, 1995).
3. On the Swedish case see Gunnar Bröberg and Nils Röll-Hansen, *Eugenics and the Welfare State* (East Brunswick, NJ, 1996); Allan Carlson, *The Swedish Experiment in Family Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1990); and Gunnar Bröberg and Mattias Tyden, *Ömskädd I Folkhemmet* (Gidlunds, 1991).
4. *Practical Ethics*, (see note 1), 192. This same principle, interestingly, forms the basis for Singer's advocacy of animal rights.
5. Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York, 1990), especially chapter 1.
6. Singer (see note 5), 54.
7. *Practical Ethics*, (see note 1), 215-16.