

PROTO-EUGENIC THOUGHT AND BREEDING UTOPIAS IN THE UNITED STATES BEFORE 1870

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Human breeding utopias seem to have become socially acceptable again. The intellectual steps, from promoting to creating “elites” and from promoting to creating “healthy” babies, have already been taken. During the past fifteen years, the new challenges posed by prenatal diagnoses, the human genome project, and the debates around cloning have resulted in a veritable flood of publications on eugenics after a period of waning academic interest in this branch of the history of ideas. Investigations of the intersections between formulations of moral and legal norms and scientific standardization are now enjoying renewed attention among historians of science.¹ By contrast, the response of general historians has been marked by caution and restraint (except for a few publications on institutional and gender history). If the subject of eugenics has been addressed at all, it has been mainly in the context of forced sterilization and euthanasia during the era of National Socialism.²

In the Anglo-Saxon world, by contrast, the historical horizon was extended early on by dating the beginning of modern eugenics to around 1880, when society underwent a “scientific turn,” that is, a turn toward the description of the social and the historical using methods derived from the natural sciences.³ The instances in which this extension was pushed back to even earlier historical periods were rare and exerted little influence.⁴ This restraint also results from a very narrow definition of eugenics, which postulates certain scientific or surgical techniques for palpable intervention into individual bodies, thus restricting the sense of the term to so-called “negative” eugenics, describing measures such as sterilization or euthanasia, while “positive” eugenics generally is understood as the effort to increase the production and survival of healthy offspring by indirect means, such as marriage restrictions. This normative distinction, though, seems to be of little analytical help.⁵

Understanding eugenics primarily as a theoretical framework or set of social goals—and only secondarily as concrete efforts to widen the state’s sphere of influence into actual reproduction—broadens the per-

spective and helps to anchor twentieth-century eugenic policies in their historical background. At the same time, the Enlightenment is still widely considered as the foundation of secular ethics and the "sanctification" of human life (the abolition of torture and the death penalty, as well as the "invention" of human and civil rights) without taking into account the ambiguity of the widespread intellectual ideal of perfecting societies and their people.⁶

Outside the disciplinary realm of the history of science, the hermeneutical power and social authority of the avant-garde natural sciences post-1750 are largely underestimated. This is particularly true for the perception of the role of politically, socially, and philosophically engaged physicians.⁷ Since the middle of the seventeenth century, newly emerging scientific journals published lively discussions among physiologists, natural philosophers, and "anthropologists" who argued over competing theories of procreation (monogenists vs. polygenists) and heredity, especially the hereditary transmission of disabilities and diseases,⁸ and the origins of so-called "freaks of nature" and "degenerate" peoples and races.⁹ Competing explanations were now based "empirically," i.e., on case studies collected all over Europe, and no longer on tracts by classical authorities. Such scientific exchange laid the basis for establishing norms of normalization and pathologization and provided ammunition for heated debates about the hereditary transmission of physical as well as moral dispositions.

Since the mid-seventeenth century, many utopists proposed science as the prime mover of societal progress.¹⁰ Such beliefs were particularly strong in Central Europe, especially in the German lands, because it took them more than one hundred years to recover from the extreme population losses of the Thirty Years' War. France, Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia had also suffered continuously due to a constant state of war since the sixteenth century. Comparatively early discussions in France about the qualitative improvement of the "nation" (health, beauty, intelligence) supplemented widespread European discussions about its quantitative (procreation) improvement.¹¹ Such conversations began decades before the French Revolution and led to the development of measures to rationally control biological reproduction.¹²

In German-speaking states, similar concepts of meliorism (i.e., human improvement as a metaphysical goal given by nature that had to be deliberately fostered) appeared not only in the work of Johann Peter Frank (1779), the "founder" of social medicine who was active and well known throughout Europe, but also in many of his fellow reformers' works about "medical police."¹³ Long before the "invention" of eugenics as a modern science (c. 1880), concepts of "human breeding" and of the "perfection of the human race" started circulating throughout Western

Europe.¹⁴ Yet these concepts have attracted little attention so far,¹⁵ just as little attention has been paid to the sustained influence of Lavater's physiognomics (in its elaborated form of phrenology and craniology) on European and North American proto-eugenic thinking.¹⁶ Whereas in several German-speaking states, a few U.S. states, and France and its colonies medical theories about the definition of the human and its hierarchical classification (to mark "freaks of nature" and "inferior races") resulted in legislative measures,¹⁷ British discussions about marital hygiene and population politics were *not* reflected in laws or administrative precepts prior to the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the success story of eugenics in the sciences and in the larger public began in England and the United States around 1880.¹⁹ Unlike the scientific legitimization of racial discrimination, which has been a subject of intense study in the United States since the 1960s, and the latest research in "disability studies," *the path* that led to early and extreme forms of eugenic legislation and practices still remains in the academic dark. The fact that a statistical avantgardist like William Farr thanked God for epidemics because they regularly eliminated the "degenerate," and demanded lifelong incarceration of all "insane" people and "criminals" in order to prevent them from procreating, has so far been widely ignored.²⁰

The underlying notions of physical and mental perfection—or their reverse: "degeneration" due to hereditary pathologies—in pre-twentieth-century learned discourses are often dismissed today as pre- or unscientific fashions. Yet such dismissals emanate from an anachronistic concept of science, and overlook the fact that these theories were vigorously promoted during the age of degeneration hysteria in order to advance the "breeding" of social elites and healthy citizens.²¹

Since the mid-1840s the brothers Lorenzo and Orson Fowler used their influential *American Phrenological Journal* as well their marriage guidebooks to spread the mantra of racial improvement: "Progression is a law of man's very being [. . .]." Consequently, their only goal was: "Perfecting our Race!"²² Vague as to whom this would apply the Fowlers never addressed the question of race in relation to phrenology. Their personal convictions can nevertheless be deduced from the fact that they published excerpts from articles and reviews of books dealing with the supposed superiority of the "Caucasian race."²³

Although phrenology was generally rejected by mainstream British academia early on, a particular variety of phrenology enjoyed public success among the white middle class, especially in the United States between the 1830s and 1860s.²⁴ Widely read men of letters like Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe were influenced by those ideas.²⁵ Also around 1860, several of the uniquely American Christian-utopian communities experimented with ideas of selective breeding. Best known and

most influential in its practices was the Oneida Community, but similar ideas also dominated the Mormons.²⁶ During the 1850s, the infamous “freak shows” and “baby shows” organized by Phineas Taylor Barnum were an early form of popularizing such standards of a white, middle-class (classical Greek) body aesthetics among the working classes.²⁷ This tradition was revived in the 1920s by several state governments and even implemented in their childcare programs.²⁸ Another form also marketed by P.T. Barnum was the public display of black slaves as the “man monkey” and “missing link” between apes and (white) humans, a result of the emerging discourse on evolution during the early 1860s.²⁹

The aim of my research project is to compare the evolution of early breeding utopias in Germany and the United States against the background of the better researched medical, demographic, and economic discourses in France and Great Britain. The meta-question is not whether “Nazi eugenics were created in the US,” as biologist Garland E. Allen entitled his review of Edwin Black’s book *War Against the Weak* some years ago.³⁰ Instead, my study deliberately focuses on the early period, beginning with the publication around 1750 of the first and central French works by Antoine Le Camus (*Médecine de l’esprit*), Charles-Augustin Vandermonde (*Essai sur la manière de perfectionner l’espèce humaine*), and Benedicte-Auguste Morel (*Traité des dégénérescences*) and ending around 1870, when Francis Galton triggered an avalanche, not so much by coining the term “eugenics” (which happened only in 1883), but through the surprisingly positive reception of his *Hereditary Genius*.

The purpose of my GHI-NEH-Visiting Fellowship at the GHI was to systematically search for relevant primary source material from American publications of the aforementioned period dealing with the medicalization of demography and human reproduction.³¹ Preliminary research had shown that numerous articles in medical, surgical, and scientific journals addressed the subject of improving the “quality” of “human stock,” triggered at the latest by Robert Malthus’s *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), the first chapter of which praised the “perfectibility of man and of society.”³² Whereas Malthus had prioritized “checking” population growth due to looming food shortages in the near future,³³ medical men discussed physical and mental degeneration as a result of hereditary weakness of large portions of their populations, leading to the “general enfeeblement” of the respective nation.

But Malthus was not the first to tackle such issues from a scientific rather than philosophical point of view; indeed, his book was a reaction to prior theses of other English and French philosophers and mathematicians such as William Godwin and the Marquis de Condorcet. As mentioned before, especially in France, there was a lively debate about disas-

trous population growth and the future development of society decades before the French Revolution.³⁴ Despite significant demographic interest by political economists, physicians were the most ambitious profession with regard to developing *practical* means of tackling social problems related to demographic issues. This interest among physicians was connected to the emergence of the “medical police” in France and Germany. Physical and hygienic problems resulting from wars, mass migration, and industrialization developed from squalor, chronic diseases, and epidemics. The situation grew more and more acute in many countries throughout Europe from the 1780s on and throughout the nineteenth century, eventually reaching the United States. Feelings ran high among Europe’s intellectuals, especially physicians, about whether there was a quantitative or qualitative lack in the population.

Nevertheless, the involvement of the physicians should not be misconstrued as mere philanthropy. Instead, it must also be understood as a strategic means to improve the medical profession’s uncertain status in society.³⁵ When physicians in different countries addressed the question of enhancing the physical quality of soldiers (mainly in size and strength), this patriotic subject exemplifies their effort to prove their services as an essential profession to their governments. The idea of enhancing military or economic power by deliberately breeding a “race” of soldiers or, similarly, of farmers, already discussed by enlightened European physicians in the eighteenth century, came to American physicians’ minds only during and after the Civil War.³⁶

Apart from personal or professional motivations, several broader questions might be raised: Were the American medical doctors who served on advisory public health commissions prior to the Civil War already participating in the relevant European scientific discourses? Or is Charles E. Rosenberg correct that, prior to the 1860s, American medical discourse was limited to moral and educational prevention, i.e. the notion that better hygiene and nourishment would reverse physical and mental degeneration within one generation?³⁷ One subsequent question, then, is: How did scientists approach the prevention and “cure” of physical and moral “degeneration,” and at what point did they turn to proto-eugenic measures in order to (re-)establish public health and national strength? What was their position in the contemporaneous debate about birth control that evolved around 1830 in both Britain and the United States?

In order not to overrate the role of the medical profession in the discourse, it is also necessary to incorporate related discursive platforms, such as agricultural periodicals and animal breeders’ publications, which regularly reported on “selective breeding” in domesticated animals, as well as religious journals. For the same reason—that is, to assess the physician’s range of influence in the non-medical and non-professional

public sphere—the study also examines the impact of the academic discussions. To what extent did popular magazines engage in similar discussions about the self-perceived task of “improving the American race”? Last but not least, to what degree did pamphlets and popular books like marriage manuals and domestic advisors echo, or even trigger, such debates?³⁸ What was the ideological and scientific background of their authors?

This study was able to draw upon a wide range of potential source material. This included a vast number of periodicals, of both major and minor prominence and from all fields, collected in the databases “American Periodicals Series Online” (APS) and “Early American Newspapers,” both accessible by full-text search in the Library of Congress, beginning in 1740 and 1690 respectively. In addition, the National Library of Medicine (NLM) in Bethesda has made available a vast collection of medical journals, tracts, books, and pamphlets. Although most of the material has yet to be analyzed in detail, preliminary findings indicate several general trends regarding the topics addressed by scientists involved in the issue of “improving” the human and/or “American race.” The major topics dealing with proto-eugenic questions are briefly introduced below.

General Observations

Before the 1830s, intellectuals in the United States, including writers, theologians, physicians, lawyers, and politicians, seem not to have taken much notice of the French and German discourses about active breeding control. After the 1830s, articles in American medical journals dealing with “laws of inheritance” in general, or with case studies of inherited diseases like blindness, deafness, “supernumerary fingers and toes,” or “madness” and “idiocy,” were rare, and mostly translated from British and French journals. I found this rather surprising because influential American physicians like Charles Caldwell, Samuel Gridley Howe or John C. Warren did publish reviews of British and French works such as James Cowles Prichard’s *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* (1813), William Lawrence’s *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man* (1819), George Combe’s *Constitution of Men* (1828), and Alexander Walker’s *Laws Regulating the Resemblance of Progeny to Parents* (1833). All of the reviewed authors advocated a concept of human nature that distinguished hierarchically not only between ethnicities but also between more or less useful classes of “human stock.” Reviews of many other related German, French, and British anthropological and medical books were published in important periodicals like *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, *The Ohio Medical and Surgical Journal*, and *The North American Medical and Surgical Journal*, but also in Timothy Flint’s *Western*

Monthly Review, The Literary Journal and Weekly Register of Science and the Arts, and other more general magazines.

Most of these reviews and commentaries were published anonymously, presumably because they often contained blunt statements about highly sensitive moral and political issues. Statements in anthropological texts such as, "If men, in the affair of marriage, were as much under management as some animals are in the exercise of their generative functions, an absolute ruler might accomplish, in his dominions, almost any idea of the human form," surely had their effect on the American audience.³⁹ In addition, the popularity of the theory of the hereditary transmission of acquired characters and its later endemic use as a major argument for eugenic measures derived from the early dissemination of opinions such as the following: "The hereditary transmission of physical and moral qualities, so well understood and familiarly acted on in the domestic animals, is equally true of man. A superior breed of human beings could only be produced by selections and exclusions similar to those so successfully employed in rearing our more valuable animals."⁴⁰ Readers commented on reviews dealing with such topics, and even local journals like the *Raleigh Register* or the *North-Carolina Gazette* published their first articles about "frequent intermarriages [. . .] among the members of a particular class, as nobility or royalty," reflecting about ensuing "deterioration of mental and physical energies" around 1830, and complaining about such degenerative tendencies in the marriage policy of southern plantation holders.⁴¹ Thus they transferred a common discourse about the British or other European nobility dating back to the War of Independence to their own communities.

It was not only the leading American physicians who became fervent partisans of phrenology and demographic surveillance empirically supported by the new science of statistics. Many of their lesser-known colleagues also began collecting material on diverse issues, publishing their findings in the growing number of medical and surgical journals. Despite the early reflections on demography and the "quality" of the nation's "stock," the majority of morally concerned physicians viewed initial efforts to deal with birth control publicly, especially among the lower classes, with criticism, mainly from a religious standpoint.⁴²

Unlike the social, medical, and demographic discourses in continental Europe and Britain, up to the 1830s the North American debate remained confined to moral, social, and hygienic improvement. Earlier authors preferred to write under a pseudonym, even when merely summarizing arguments made by others concerning physical degeneration as a result of unhealthy lifestyles and bad habits, such as consuming coffee and meat. Some of these anonymous authors criticized slavery as "a prolific source of indolence and dissipation" only leading to "moral and

physical degeneracy."⁴³ Not until the 1850s was public opinion about demographic doom deliberately fueled by blunt pamphlets camouflaged as reviews, e.g. in the *New York Times*. In such articles, "race and nation" appeared marked by physical "degradation," became more and more "physically contemptible," "doomed to decline."

Physicians observe, from lustrum to lustrum [i.e. every five years], a gradual increase and exacerbation of diseases which spring from unhealthy and disproportionate stress from the brain and nervous system, and correspondent neglect of the health of the other framework of the body—of the muscular or respiratory or digestive systems. Apoplexy, they say, and paralysis, and the fatal darkness of insanity, are yearly more frequent, and most frequent among the most active and laborious classes of our populations. Our blood, even, [. . .] is absolutely corrupt.⁴⁴

Marriage and Phrenology

In the 1830s, European developments in phrenology began to attract increasing attention in the United States.⁴⁵ In 1830, *The American Lancet* reprinted a series of lectures by Johann Gaspar Spurzheim, the famous phrenologist, originally published in the *London Lancet*.⁴⁶ As early as 1833, the *Ladies' Magazine and Literary Gazette* published an anonymous article about one of Spurzheim's American lectures, focusing on the "laws of hereditary descent." The summary of its argument was:

The disposition to various disorders, as to gout, scrofula, dropsy, hydrocephalus, consumption, deafness, epilepsy, apoplexy, idiotism, insanity, etc., is frequently the inheritance of birth. Children born of healthy parents and belonging to a strong stock, always bring into the world a system formed by nature to resist the causes of disease, while children of delicate, sickly parents, are overpowered by the least unfavorable circumstance.⁴⁷

Messages of this kind might have planted the seed for later developments. In 1838, the aforementioned Lorenzo and Orson Fowler, America's most engaged proponents of Spurzheim's phrenology, founded the *American Phrenological Journal*, and soon also a very influential publishing house.⁴⁸ In 1839, Horace Greeley, a prominent editor, social reformer, and molder of public opinion, who had already published George Combe's lectures on phrenology in their entirety in his weekly *The New Yorker* in 1833, printed a similar series of lectures given by Combe after his tour through the United States in 1838–1839.⁴⁹ From the 1840s onwards, one can observe a sharp increase in more explicit contributions from a physi-

ological standpoint on the issue of preventing further “degeneracy” and “improving” the nation. In 1840, George Combe published a treatise called *Moral Philosophy and the Duties of Man Considered in His Individual, Social, & Domestic Capacities*, in which he focused on the role of heredity and the danger emanating from marrying close relatives or those possibly carrying physical or mental diseases. He called for a law that would require anybody intending to marry to take a course in anatomy and physiology so that they would be optimally prepared for marital choice.⁵⁰ This text became gospel for the Fowlers and their few but vociferous epigones.

Still, before the 1850s, the so-called “phrenological Fowlers” seem to have been virtually the only intellectuals who spread the message of careful procreation, not only through public lectures, but also through numerous advertisements in related journals. The real boom in medical self-help literature did not start until after 1850. This included dozens of tracts dealing either with birth control or the opposite, i.e., optimizing procreation.⁵¹ The Fowlers surely began it all, starting in the early 1840s with various similarly titled marriage manuals such as *Matrimony; Or, Phrenology and Physiology Applied to the Selection of Congenial Companions For Life, Including Directions to the Married for Living Together Affectionately and Happily*, which went through sixty-one revised editions between 1841 and 1851 alone, and grew from fifty to about a hundred and fifty pages. Another one was called *Love and Parentage, Applied to the Improvement of Offspring, Including Important Directions and Suggestions to Lovers and the Married Concerning the Strongest Ties and the Most Momentous Relations of Life*, which was reprinted forty times before 1855.⁵² All of their marriage manuals used section headings such as “Perfecting our Race!” or “Who should not marry?” Even in the 1870s and 1880s, the Fowlers continued to publish new marriage guides specifically promoting “scientific selection” of spouses.⁵³ In the meantime, most of their books had grown to be thick volumes consisting of up to seven hundred pages featuring charts and phrenological portraits.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, they were sold at prices between one to three dollars, and thus were affordable for the masses.

In 1843, Orson Fowler tried to ignite a more scientific debate, originally triggered by Combe, by publishing his book on *The Laws of Hereditary Descent* (second edition, 1848), which he simultaneously published as a lecture series in his *Journal*. From the very beginning, these texts not only dealt with appropriate lifestyle, diet, and the correct nursing of infants, as other domestic or sexual guidebooks did; in addition, they focused directly on “the Improvement of the Race; including Causes of its Degeneracy,” as the title frankly stated.⁵⁵ In 1846/47, the Fowler brothers published another series of eleven extensive articles in their *Journal* focusing on “Progression—a Law of Nature” and “Its Application to Hu-

man Improvement, Individual and Collective." Part Six was dedicated to the "Increase of Population" and aimed to trigger an international debate, "... throughout all ages and nations, for perfecting mankind physically, intellectually, and morally."⁵⁶

Orson Fowler, as a former theologian, referred repeatedly in all his writings to religious norms, which he equated with the laws of nature. Over and over again, he dedicated special articles in the early years of the *Phrenological Journal* to the relation between phrenology and religion. In the tradition of the moral physiology of enlightened medicine, he held every individual responsible for his own health, but due to the newly discovered laws of heredity now also for the fate of future generations. The universal applicability of phrenology, similar to the ancient system of humoralism, made it easy to be consistent with norms of the Old Testament, as well as to meet conditions of modern overpopulated metropolises like New York: "Mankind should know that sickness and death in the prime of life, are only the penalties of violated physical laws, and therefore *morally wrong*."⁵⁷ Fowler dedicated an extra issue of Volume V (1843) of the *Phrenological Journal* to discussing the specific influence of each parent's sex on the offspring, explaining how the embryo inherited the "mental condition" of the mother, describing the responsibility of parents for "marks, deformities, and monstrosities" in their infants, and claiming that older parents produced smarter children.

Such convictions were still not outdated in the United States in the 1860s. Physician and self-declared sexual advisor James Ashton warned against too frequent intercourse as causing "feeble children" due to men's "thin and watery semen," and carefully categorized and grouped matching and non-matching couples according to their temperaments.⁵⁸ Moreover, New York businessman Asa J. Soule tried to sell his contraceptive pills by insisting, "There are many, also, who *ought* not to become parents" because they "transmit hereditary diseases" or produce only "puny, sickly thing[s]."⁵⁹

The Fowlers complained about the lack of marriage laws that would prohibit the procreation between persons with certain defects:

If this [voluntary restraint from defective procreation] were the case, each generation would be an improvement on preceding ones. At present, however, the majority of society, from all appearances, live only for selfish purposes, regardless of the consequences to posterity; and thus, the improvement of the race is much retarded, man is degraded, and God dishonored.⁶⁰

Careful "matrimonial selection" was every citizen's moral duty, but even the middle class and the wealthy cared more about family names and the financial background of a candidate than about the health of future gen-

erations. Consequently, the Fowlers proposed the establishment of a "Matrimonial Intelligence Office [. . .] to promote introductions and facilitate a right matrimonial choice. Not one based on dollars, but on all matrimonial qualifications." Selection should of course follow phrenological guidelines:

And the Fowlers owe it to the public and their own position to lead or second some such movement. And they yet will. The progressive spirit of the age will not long allow so pressing a human need to go unsupplied. All required to secure patronage is to propound a judicious plan. And its patrons could afford to pay well to be thus enabled to select a better matrimonial partner than they otherwise could.⁶¹

Although the Fowlers and their phrenology business flourished among artists, lawyers, and politicians for more than two decades, it is remarkable how weak the immediate responses were to their constant appeal to "selective human breeding." In vain, they repeatedly called for the establishment of the above-mentioned federal marriage agencies, which would also provide obligatory physical checks before issuing marriage permits.

The only other early fervent adherent of such convictions was Hester Pendleton, herself an ardent phrenologist and president of the short-lived New York Free Medical School for Women.⁶² In addition to books about child care and nursing, Pendleton also published three popular marriage guidebooks. It even seems that Orson Fowler copied her ideas. For Pendleton's first book, which she "dedicated to the intelligent mother" and released anonymously in 1843 and 1844 through Winchester Publishers in New York, already dealt "phrenologically" with the risks of procreation. *Facts and Arguments on the Transmission of Intellectual and Moral Qualities from Parents to Offspring* consisted of about two hundred pages that must have been closely studied by the Fowlers. Although in 1841 Orson Fowler made only a lukewarm recommendation that some excerpts had been pre-printed in the *Mother's Magazine*,⁶³ he clearly recognized Pendleton's promising synthesis of public education on marriage issues, the propagation of "his" new science, and, last but not least, business. After revising the content slightly, Pendleton reissued the book as *The Parents' Guide for the Transmission of Desired Qualities to Offspring; Or, Human Development through Pre-Natal Influences and Inherited Tendencies* (1848). This time it came out under Pendleton's own name, but much more importantly, it was now printed and marketed in the Fowlers' publishing house. It sold very well, and went through several editions well into the 1870s. Encouraged by this success, Pendleton published another marriage manual with a third publishing house (Carleton) in

1863. *Husband and Wife, Or, The Science of Human Development through Inherited Tendencies* was neither published anonymously nor under her name, but under the revealing pen name of "the Author of 'The Parent's Guide.'" This book saw only one edition, perhaps due to protest by the Fowlers because the content was exactly the same as that of Pendleton's other book, on their backlist. Again, the whole issue centered on the "laws of inheritance." Pendleton stated frankly, practically quoting William Lawrence in her first chapter:

It cannot be denied that if the same amount of knowledge and care which has been taken to improve the domestic animals, had been bestowed upon the human species, during the last century, there would not have been so great a number of moral patients for the prisons, or for the lunatic asylums, as there are at present. That the human species are as susceptible of improvement as domestic animals, who can deny? Then is it not strange that man, possessing so much information on this subject, and acknowledging the laws, which govern such matters, should lose sight of those laws in perpetuating his own species? Yet, how extremely shortsighted is that individual who, in forming matrimonial connection, overlooks the important consideration of the quality of the physical and mental constitution which his children will be likely to inherit?⁶⁴

Hereditary Predispositions

Insanity, often called idiocy, had always been a central element of all concepts dealing with the brain or hereditary transmission, like those of Lavater, Gall, Spurzheim, Combe, and Spencer. From the mid-nineteenth century on, the topic of idiocy attracted scientists' attention all over Europe, especially in France and Germany.⁶⁵ In the United States, the debate was given a stronger foundation in 1848, when Samuel Gridley Howe, soon to become the director of the "Massachusetts School for Idiotic Children," published a "Report upon Idiocy" for the Senate of Massachusetts. Its hundred pages were not based merely on vivid descriptions of cases and wild speculation, but also for the first time on multiple detailed statistics drawn from systematic research, demonstrated in forty-six pages of tables and questionnaires. Howe, head physician of the Commission, tried also to "shed some light" on the origins of insanity to "deduce general laws," by comparing his results with earlier French findings. He made his stance on the topic quite clear from the beginning, when he stated, "Nature, outraged in the persons of the parents, exacts her penalty from the parents to the children."⁶⁶ In subsequent years, the

report was not only reviewed enthusiastically in almost every American and European medical and anthropological journal, but was also endlessly quoted and used as evidence for the necessity and legitimacy of anti-marriage laws, especially in the United States.⁶⁷ The Commission's findings not only changed traditional treatments of "madmen" fundamentally. They also triggered an international wave of efforts to discover the relationship between "laws of inheritance" and the prevention of madness.⁶⁸

Howe, often celebrated as an abolitionist and reformer of mental asylums, spoke openly only in foreign journals:

It may be assumed as certain, that in all cases where children are born deformed, or blind, or deaf, or idiotic, or so imperfectly and feebly organized that they cannot come to maturity under ordinary circumstances, or have the seeds of early decay, or have original impetuosity of passions that amount to moral insanity—in all such cases the fault lies with the progenitors.⁶⁹

At the same time, Howe was convinced that deteriorated "parental stock" could be improved if all "violation of natural law" was strictly checked "for two or three generations." Thus, all physical and mental defects would be "totally removed from any family, however predisposed to insanity, or idiocy, [and] all possibility of its recurrence" would be inhibited.⁷⁰ This also accounted for one of the most common origins of begetting "feeble" or "idiotic" children, i.e., the misuse of "distilled and fermented liquors." Physicians were now also discussing the teratogenic effect of caffeine, which led to "debility of constitution in both sexes [. . .] enfeebling both parents and children."⁷¹

Until well into the 1860s, the deterioration of the American "stock" seems to have been viewed as reversible if dealt with appropriately, quickly, and, above all, strictly. But the tone became increasingly dramatic and apocalyptic. Those who were especially interested in the moral instruction of adults and/or the education of "imbecile and idiotic children" began to emphasize a connection between poverty, criminality, and the production of "imbecile offspring." Official commissions, like that of Massachusetts, stated: "We regard idiocy as a diseased excrescence of society; as an outward sign of an inward malady." They therefore demanded that society "seek for the *sources* of the evil" in order "to lessen such evils in coming generations."⁷² The Commission's report, and similar complaints published after 1850, are littered with derogatory remarks about those who recklessly spread "physical deterioration and mental and moral darkness" all over the country. This change in language from compassion to contempt and disgust may have facilitated the slow but

palpable turn from assistance to elimination between the 1850s and the 1870s.

Phrenologists and alienists of other scientific backgrounds shared the notion of physiognomic signs that enabled the trained professional to distinguish those with a problematic disposition from those without one. Beginning in the 1860s, more and more physicians in metropolises like London, Paris, Chicago, and New York described an increase in cases of insanity and imbecility, especially among the poor. Well into the 1870s, an astonishing number of anonymous articles complained in dramatic language about that specific variety of "degeneration" and vividly described the ill-favored physiognomy of those incriminated. Sub-discourses dealt with the controversial question of an above-average rate of insanity among Jews, the blind and "deaf-mute," and other invalids.⁷³ A parallel discourse concerning the deaf, the "dumb," and especially the "deaf-mutes," widely considered incapable of reasoned thinking, was carried on in legal journals, and dealt solely with their legal rights. The majority of those texts focused on questions about their mental capacities: whether they could testify in courts, sign contracts of any kind, bequeath, inherit, or vote.⁷⁴ Surprisingly, the question of their right to marry was hardly touched upon.⁷⁵ In fact, hundreds of couples of "deaf-mutes," having graduated from US schools "for the deaf and dumb," had married as a matter of course during the 1820s to the 1850s, the ceremonies mostly done in sign language. In most cases, both parties had been "deaf-mute," and obviously nobody had cared about it.⁷⁶

Still, leading figures of American psychiatry like Pliny Earle, Edward Jarvis, or Abner Otis Kellogg, after returning from tours of European institutions, focused on the treatment of idiocy and insanity (often treated as the same thing, with the terms used synonymously). Like the famous French alienist Jean E. D. Esquirol, these Americans viewed insanity as "a disease of civilization." Yet they perceived insanity in most cases as an acquired defect that could be mitigated or even prevented by proper education and lifestyle.⁷⁷ Only a few physicians seem to have been interested in its prevention from a trans-generational perspective. Many of these focused more on idiocy as a brain defect, which they tried to distinguish from insanity as either a mental or a brain defect. Even fewer dared to mention a physiological relationship between poverty and insanity, or that certain immigrants seemed to be more prone to such diseases than others.⁷⁸

Not until the 1850s did more elaborate works appear, such as New York physician John Ellis's *The Avoidable Causes of Disease, Insanity, and Deformity*. Unlike many other physicians and clergy, who concentrated on neglected child care and a debauched lifestyle, he wrote at length about the danger of inherited mental defects. His book closed with an elaborate

chapter about "Marriage and its Violations," which he later also published separately.⁷⁹ Around the same time, several of his colleagues proposed castration for the first time as a way not only to cure insanity, but also to prevent its further transmission.⁸⁰ Finally, in 1884, the same John Ellis wrote *Deterioration of the Puritan Stock and its Causes*, a religious pamphlet complaining about deteriorating birth rates among whites, their sinful habits, and the fatal effects of the women's movement on female health. He called the descendants of the first white immigrants "natives" and mourned their imminent extinction. His example shows how the same person could develop increasingly extreme positions over two to three decades, participating in an elite medical but religiously fueled discourse, that was already becoming part of a much more aggressive, Galtonian movement.⁸¹

Intermarriage: Hybrid Vigor vs. Breeding-In-and-In, and the Issue of Miscegenation

Although phrenology played a major role in relation to intelligence during these decades—thousands of Americans from all classes had their heads and those of their offspring measured by the Fowlers and their epigones—the proto-eugenic aspect of phrenology was not taken up by a broader audience. The only parallel discourse to be found in other medical and scientific journals from the 1850s on were complaints about "intermarriage" among close relatives. The growing debate about the question of the intermarrying of relatives, mainly first cousins, resulted in an attempt to ground the highly sensitive issue on a statistical base. This promised to lead to a more objective evaluation about hereditary mechanisms. The issue of "intermarriage" definitely dominates the range of topics dealing with the improvement of the nation's "stock" over the time period investigated. Every author openly demanded a law that would forbid this practice once and for all. Their main argument was the apparently disproportionate number of "deaf", "dumb" and "blind" children resulting from such matches.

After Alexander Walker's above-mentioned bestseller *Intermarriage* (1838) and Julius Steinau's *Pathological and Philosophical Essay on Hereditary Diseases* (1843), which also focused on intermarriage, the subject exploded around 1850. Reputable physicians like Samuel Merrifield Bemiss, the editor of the *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal*, and Nathan Allen, member of the State Board of Health in Massachusetts, sedulously preached the dire consequences of this all too widespread practice. They drew directly on agricultural arguments for or against "breeding in" or "out," also referring to those in favor of "breeding in-and-in." This meant breeding from a male and female from the same parentage in order to

strengthen wanted qualities, here of wealthy and influential family networks. Physicians interested in heredity obviously followed agricultural journals like the monthly *Farmer's Register*, which published "Rules for Breeding" as early as 1840. These directly compared human to animal breeding, quoting authorities like Franz Joseph Gall and Alexander Walker and promoting phrenological criteria for selection.⁸²

By 1854 it was possible to call for a master race under one's own name in the Vermont *Farmer's Herald*: "A superior breed of human beings could only be produced by selections and exclusions similar to those so successfully employed in rearing our more valuable animals." Unfortunately this urgent necessity was permanently and deliberately "overlooked" by "the rulers," the author complained.⁸³ Experienced breeders knew that selective breeding always had been a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the most successful British sheep and cattle breeders spoke in favor of "breeding-in-and-in," while on the other hand, experience since ancient times taught that this bore the risk of hereditary defects after three or four generations at the latest. Race was openly debated by physicians as well as by self-proclaimed population experts. For many, the "white" race was superior to all other colors, especially the "negro race" and the "Indians." Among the whites, the "Anglo-Saxon" stood above all, and for many the "Dutch-Irish" represented the lowest type. The Germans were placed somewhere in between. Such reflections contained the first romantic notions of racial purity, professionally labeled "purebreds," and the concomitant fear of uncontrolled immigration.

Nevertheless, such notions did not yet make racial purity appeal to all their contemporaries.⁸⁴ Some physicians drew the opposite conclusion, arguing that only deliberate racial intermarriage, representing the most extreme form of "breeding out," namely out of the "racial stock," would improve every nation. In their opinion, "hybrids" generally seemed to be stronger and healthier, as well as morally superior to those bred within the same stock: "When the people of these United States become a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, Germans, and French, will they exhibit a strength of body and intelligence of mind, a true inborn energy and moral power, which do not equally signalize either of the nations from whom they sprang?" Many gave an affirmative answer to this question, which was raised by a theologian on one of the many public occasions when such topics were debated amongst intellectuals of different professions.⁸⁵ "Hybrid vigor" in plants and many animals had been widely recognized since antiquity.⁸⁶

Others became fervent crusaders against marriage between whites and blacks—among them Josiah C. Nott, a physician from Mobile, Alabama, who relied on skull studies made by Samuel George Morton. This camp frantically published dozens of texts about the physical and mental

inferiority of the “mulatto,” based on the theory that human races stemmed from different origins (polygenesis) and thus did not match.⁸⁷ (The coining of the term “miscegenation” in 1863, meaning interracial marriage, goes back to an anonymous pro-intermarriage pamphlet that promoted the opposite position. Shortly after its first publication in New York City it was debunked as a political hoax defaming abolitionists).⁸⁸ Not until the mid-1860s did suggestions “to improve the breeds of men” become as blunt as the Fowler brothers and Hester Pendleton had been twenty years earlier:

To know how to generate rightly is as much the duty of a man [. . .] as to know how to be regenerate. Men and women are as much to blame for begetting *sickly*, ugly, malformed children—children of ill disposition and perverse in bad temper—as they would be were they to train them badly after birth. And the reason why they are responsible is, because they can avoid all such results if they will. . . . The whole subject of breeding children must come up for discussion as fully and freely as it has already done in regard to animals.⁸⁹

Writers began mentioning blood more frequently now, though it still was only loosely connected to the transmission of inherited traits. Generally, it was the mother that “should be of *better blood*” than the father, due to her greater role in the physical development of the offspring during pregnancy and nursing.⁹⁰ Blood as a powerful symbol had not yet made its way into medical rhetoric, although it had been used in popular texts, e.g., the *New York Times*.⁹¹

* * *

These preliminary observations neglect the decisive political and economical changes and challenges of the turbulent decades between 1840 and 1870. The texts need to be analyzed in more detail and also situated in their broader historical context in order to answer the major question resulting from the observation of competing or even contradictory theories: Why did the faction supporting racial purity, medical marriage control, sterilization, and imprisonment prevail for nearly the next hundred years, while those favoring free marital choice, the melting pot ideal, social and health reforms, and trust in nature’s healing capacities (stillbirths, miscarriages, and sterility) failed? Perfection of human physicality as a divine purpose was beyond doubt for both parties. This normative starting point, too, deserves closer observation.

Notes

¹ See Doris Kaufmann, "Wissenschaftliche Ideen, Diskurse und Praktiken. Kommentar," in *Ideen als gesellschaftliche Gestaltungskraft im Europa der Neuzeit: Beiträge für eine erneuerte Geistesgeschichte*, ed. Lutz Raphael, Heinz-Elmar Tenorth (Munich, 2006), 521–24.

² From outside Germany: Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge, 1989).

³ See Lutz Raphael, "Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22 (1996): 165–193. Peter Weingart et al., *Rasse, Blut und Gene: Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), particularly 66–67, 139–141, hold the same opinion.

⁴ Fink, *Causes of Crime: Biological Theories in the United States, 1800–1915* (Westport, Conn., 1938/1985); Victor Hiltz, "Enlightenment Views on the Genetic Perfectibility of Man," in *Transformation and Tradition in the Sciences: Essays in Honor of I. Bernard Cohen*, ed. Everett Mendelson (Cambridge, 1984); and Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848–1918* (Cambridge, 1989), Ch. 1 dealing with the theory of degeneration by Benedict Augustin Morel (1857); as well as William Frederick Bynum, *Time's Noblest Offspring: The Problem of Man in the British Natural Historical Sciences, 1800–1863* (Cambridge, 1975); Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1984); and Pascal Grosse, *Kolonialismus, Eugenik und Bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1850–1918* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000). Finally, Elof Axel Carlson, *The Unfit: A History of a Bad Idea* (New York, 2001), chap. 1. Tina Maranto's *Quest for Perfection: The Drive to Breed Better Human Beings* (New York, 1996) is of little academic value, not only due to its sometimes false generalizations of pre-twentieth-century developments. It is mainly a compilation and does not contain any primary source study.

⁵ As Martin S. Pernick put it: "The terms 'positive eugenics' and 'negative eugenics' also conflate quantitative and qualitative distinctions. In a purely arithmetic sense, 'positive' means adding to, 'negative' means subtracting from the existing population. In an evaluative sense, 'positive' means 'good', 'negative' implies 'bad'. However, the quantitative and qualitative meanings don't necessarily coincide. Techniques to encourage more reproduction are not inherently morally superior to methods for reducing fertility." Martin S. Pernick, "Taking Better Baby Contests Seriously," *American Journal of Public Health* 92 (2002): 707–708.

⁶ As an early exception, see Hiltz, "Enlightenment."

⁷ For an early recognition of this phenomenon, see Hedwig Conrad-Martius, *Utopien der Menschenzüchtung: Der Sozialdarwinismus und seine Folgen* (Munich, 1955), here 13–58; as well as Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Peter McLaughlin, and Staffan Müller-Wille, in their introduction of MPIWG, *Conference I. From the point of view of the history of literature*: Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago, 2001).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Although the term "race" was already used in its ethnic sense, i.e. distinguishing groups of people by skin color or anatomical differences, it also was still widely used across language borders well up into the mid-nineteenth century as a general term for labeling any group like a nation, or even a regional population. For example, the British founder of medical statistics William Farr used the term for social classes. Due to environmental differences, such as working habits, nourishment, and exposure to pollution, wealth and poverty entailed physical differences. See John M. Eyler, *Victorian Social Medicine: The Ideas and Methods of William Farr* (Baltimore, 1979), 155–156. For Germany, see Sara Eigen, "Policing the 'Menschen=Racen,'" in *The German Invention of Race*, ed. Sara Eigen, Mark Larrimore (Albany, 2006), 185–201.

¹⁰ Since early modern times, philosophers and theologians who developed elaborate and detailed schemes of future societies have been called "Utopists."

¹¹ For Germany, from a strictly legal historical view, lacking any socio-cultural context, see Martin Fuhrmann, *Volksvermehrung als Staatsaufgabe? Bevölkerungs- und Ehepolitik in der deutschen politischen und ökonomischen Theorie des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn, 2002).

¹² See Michael E. Winston, *From Perfectibility to Perversion: Meliorism in Eighteenth-Century France* (New York, 2005); as well as Andrew Curran, *Sublime Disorder: Physical Monstrosity in Diderot's Universe* (Oxford, 2001); Anne Carol, *Histoire de l'Eugénisme en France: Les Médecins et la Procréation, XIXe-XXe Siècle* (Paris, 1995); and lastly Sean M. Quinlan, *The Great Nation in Decline: Sex, Modernity, and Health Crises in Revolutionary France, c. 1750–1850* (London, 2007).

¹³ Frank's multi-volume *Medizinische Polizei* (Medical Police) was translated into Italian and Dutch and was republished over several decades. For an overview, see Caren Möller, *Medizinalpolizei: Die Theorie des staatlichen Gesundheitswesens im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005).

¹⁴ Weingart et al., *Rasse (71–72)* are mistaken when they attribute Friedrich Nietzsche's proposals for population politics to the influence of Francis Galton and not to Johann Peter Frank. See Markus Pieper, "Der Körper des Volkes und der gesunde Volkskörper: Johann Peter Franks 'System einer vollstaendigen medicinischen Polizey'", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 46 (1998): 101–119, as well as Christian Barthel, *Medizinische Polizei und medizinische Aufklärung: Aspekte des öffentlichen Gesundheitsdiskurses im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), 85–87; Möller, *Medizinalpolizei*, 98–116.

¹⁵ This will be the focus of the other half of a larger comparative research project.

¹⁶ See Victor Hiltz, "Obeying the Laws of Hereditary Descent: Phrenological Views on Inheritance and Eugenics," *Journal of the History and Philosophy of the Behavioral Sciences* 18 (1982): 62–77; Robert A. Nye, "Sociology and Degeneration: The Irony of Progress," in *The Dark Side of Progress*, ed. J. Edward Chamberlain, Sander L. Gilman (New York, 1985), 49–71; the explanations in Michael Hagner, *Geniale Gehirne: Zur Geschichte der Elitegehirnforschung* (Göttingen, 2004), particularly Ch. 2. In keeping with his time, Lavater related his standards to ancient aesthetics. On this, see David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the 18th Century* (London, 2002).

¹⁷ For the US, see Jennifer M. Spear, "Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in French Louisiana," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60 (2003): 75–98; Matthew J. Lindsay, "Reproducing a Fit Citizenry: Dependency, Eugenics, and the Law of Marriage in the United States, 1860–1920," *Law & Social Inquiry* 23 (1998): 541–585. For the French colonies, see Quinlan, *Great Nation*, 87–109.

¹⁸ John C. Waller, "Ideas of Heredity, Reproduction and Eugenics in Britain, 1800–1875," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 32 (2001): 457–489.

¹⁹ For Britain, see Lyndsay A. Farrall, *The Origins and Growth of the English Eugenics Movement, 1865–1912* (New York, 1985), as well as Pauline Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics, and Human Failing: The Eugenics Society, Its Sources and Its Critics in Britain* (London, 1992); and Cooter, *Cultural Meaning*. For the early developments in the US, mainly see Mark Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, 1963); Ian R. Dowbiggin, *Keeping America Sane: Psychiatry and Eugenics in the United States and Canada, 1880–1940* (Ithaca, 1997).

²⁰ See Eyler, *Victorian Social Medicine*, 156, 158.

²¹ Pick, *Faces*, reconstructs how general fears were transformed into a biological argument that proliferated in learned and popular milieus.

²² Quoted from Orson Squire Fowler, *Love and Parentage, Applied to the Improvement of Offspring, Including Important Directions and Suggestions to Lovers and the Married Concerning the Strongest Ties and the Most Momentous Relations of Life*, 40th ed. (New York, 1855), 108.

²³ E.g. Anon., "The Superiority of the Caucasian Race," *American Phrenological Journal* 3 (1841): 124–126. Excerpt from the *Western Journal of Medicine and Surgery*. In the same volume: "The Negro and Caucasian Brain Compared," 282–284.

²⁴ Charles Colbert, *A Measure of Perfection: Phrenology and the Fine Arts in America* (Chapel Hill, 1997); Richard Twine, "Physiognomy, Phrenology and the Temporality of the Body", *Body and Society* 8 (2002): 67–88.

²⁵ John D. Davies, *Phrenology, Fad and Science: A Nineteenth Century American Crusade* (New Haven, 1955), 118–125; Arthur Wrobel, "Whitman and the Phrenologists: The Divine Body and the Sensuous Soul," *PMLA* 89 (1974): 17–23; Nathaniel Mackay, "Phrenological Whitman," *Conjunctions* 29 (1997): 231–251. Concerning Poe, see Erik Grayson, "Weird Science, Weirder Unity: Phrenology and Physiognomy in Edgar Allan Poe," *Mode* 1 (2005): 56–77; and Elise Lemire, 'Miscegenation': *Making Race in America* (Philadelphia, 2002), 87–114.

²⁶ Martin Richards, "Perfecting People: Selective Breeding at the Oneida Community 1869–1879 and the Eugenic Movement," *New Genetics and Society* 23 (2004): 49–73; Bruce Burgett, "On the Mormon Question: Race, Sex, and Polygamy in the 1850s and the 1990s," *American Quarterly* 57 (2005): 75–102; and B. Carmon Hardy, Dan Erickson, "'Regeneration, Now and Evermore!': Mormon Polygamy and the Physical Rehabilitation of Humankind," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 40–61.

²⁷ See the documents under "The Lost Museum" of the American Historical Society Project (The Graduate Centre, City University of New York/Centre for History and New Media, George Mason University): <http://www.lostmuseum.cuny.edu/archives/babyshow.htm>.

²⁸ Anna Minna Stern, "Making Better Babies: Public Health and Race Betterment in Indiana, 1920–1935," *American Journal of Public Health* 92 (2002): 742–752; Erica Bicchieri Boudreau, "'Yea, I have a goodly heritage': Health Versus Heredity in the Fitter Family Contests, 1920–1928," *Journal of Family History* 30 (2005): 366–87; Laura L. Lovett, "'Fitter Families for Future Firesides': Florence Sherbon and Popular Eugenics," *The Public Historian* 29 (2007): 69–85.

²⁹ See "The Lost Museum": "The What Is It? Archive": <http://chnm.gmu.edu/lostmuseum/searchlm.php?function=find&exhibit=what&browse=what> and <http://chnm.gmu.edu/lostmuseum/lm/131/>.

³⁰ Garland E. Allen, "Was Nazi Eugenics Created in the US?" *EMBO reports* 5 (2004): 451–452. Online: <http://www.nature.com/embor/journal/v5/n5/full/7400158.html>.

³¹ Medicalization is understood here as the expansion of medical authority into other domains of life by treating all physical and behavioral conditions as medical issues.

³² Pp. 5–12. See also Brian Dolan, ed., *Malthus, Medicine, & Morality: Malthusianism after 1798* (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA, 2000).

³³ "If the premises are just, the argument is conclusive against the perfectibility of the mass of mankind." Malthus, *Principle*, Chap. 1, 23.

³⁴ See in particular William Coleman, "Inventing Demography: Montyon on Hygiene and the State," in *Transformation and Tradition in the Sciences: Essays in Honour of I. Bernard Cohen*, ed. Everett Mendelsohn, (Cambridge, 1984), 215–235; and recently, Quinlan, *Great Nation*.

³⁵ This decisive strategic factor for medical commitment seems never to have been scrutinized until recently. Sebastian Berger, *Ärztliche Denkstile, Standespolitik und gesellschaftliche Utopien in der 'Medizinischen Polizey' der Spätaufklärung* (master's thesis, Univ. of Hamburg, 2008).

³⁶ E.g. Anon., "How War Degenerates the Human Race," *Advocate of Peace* 15 (1864): 20; S., "The Physique of Federal Soldiers," *The Monthly Religious Magazine* 5 (1864): 332; or Nathan Allen, *Physical Degeneracy* (New York, 1870), 19.

³⁷ Charles Rosenberg, "The Bitter Fruit: Heredity, Disease and Social Thought in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Perspectives in American History Vol. VIII*, ed. D. Fleming, Benjamin Bailyn (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 189–235, here 200–203, 206.

³⁸ Alexander Walker, *Intermarriage; or, The Mode in Which and the Causes Why, Beauty, Health and Intellect, Result From Certain Unions, and Deformity, Disease and Insanity From Others* (London, 1838/New York, 1839), was the first genuine American publication of that kind,

with editions in 1840, 1841, and 1853. It also saw several editions in the British market before 1866.

³⁹ Quote from William Lawrence, *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man, Delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons* (London, 1819), 454.

⁴⁰ Lawrence, *Lectures*, 459.

⁴¹ See e.g. RR: Thursday, May 20, 1830, Iss. 1, 400; NCG: Thursday, May 27, 1830, Iss., 677. See also John Neal, "From the Portland Yankee: General View of Society in England," *Salem Gazette* 6, no. 21 (1828): 1.

⁴² Robert Dale Owen, son of the utopian socialist Robert Owen, *Moral Physiology* (1830) and Charles Knowlton, *Fruits of Philosophy* (1832) recommended several methods of contraception, among them coitus interruptus, vaginal sponges, the condom, and post-coital vaginal rinses with spermicidal solutions. James W. Reed, *From Private Vice to Public Virtue: The Birth Control Movement and American Society since 1830* (New York, 1978), chap. 2.

⁴³ "A Friend to Mankind," *The Philosophical Monitor: Being an Investigation of the Causes which Diminish the Moral and Physical Perfection of Human Society in which many Hereditary Popular Customs Generally Supposed Innocent are shewn to be Productive of Indigence, Disease and Premature Termination of Live* (Published in the United States for the Benefits of the Public, 1818), quote 28–29.

⁴⁴ From one of the most fervent early and extraordinarily long harangues, "The Health Question," *New York Daily Times* (November 27, 1855): 2, dealing with Catherine Beechers, "Letters to the People on Health and Happiness." The NYT is plastered with similar tirades over the next twenty years.

⁴⁵ See in general John van Wyhe, *Phrenology and the Origins of Victorian Scientific Naturalism* (Aldershot, 2004).

⁴⁶ *The American Lancet*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 (August–December, 1830). Spurzheim died in Boston in 1832 on this first American lecture tour through New England.

⁴⁷ Anon., "Hints about Phrenology," *Ladies' Magazine and Literary Gazette*, 4, nos. 6 and 10 (1833): 279.

⁴⁸ In the 1840s and 1850s multiple prominent Americans flooded to New York to have the Fowlers analyze their heads. See Davis, *Phrenology*; Madeleine B. Stern, *Heads and Headlines: The Phrenological Fowlers* (Norman, Okla., 1971).

⁴⁹ Horace Greeley, "Lectures on Phrenology and its Application," *The New Yorker* 7 (1839). Online: The Lost Museum <http://chnm.gmu.edu/lostmuseum/lm/97/>.

⁵⁰ Hiltz, "Obeying," 70–71.

⁵¹ Janet Farrell Brodie, *Contraception and Abortion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, 1994), 180–203.

⁵² In 1859, they bound three similar volumes in one, *Matrimony or Love Selection, Courtship, and Married Life; Love and Parentage, and Children and Home as Expounded by Physiology and Phrenology*, and called it *The Family in Three Volumes*. For the 1869 edition, they added a 280-page (!) supplement: *Offspring, and their Hereditary Endowment*.

⁵³ O.S. Fowler, *Amativeness: Embracing the Evils and Remedies of Excessive and Perverted Sexuality, Including Warning and Advice to the Married and Single* (New York, 1889).

⁵⁴ O.S. Fowler, *Creative and Sexual Science, or, Manhood, Womanhood, and Their Mutual Interrelations: Love, its Laws, Power, etc., Selection, or Mutual Adaptation, Courtship, Married Life, and Perfect Children, Their Generation, Endowment, Paternity, Maternity, Bearing, Nursing and Rearing, Together With Puberty, Boyhood, Girlhood, etc., Sexual Impairments Restored, Male Vigor and Female Health and Beauty Perpetuated and Augmented, etc., as Taught by Phrenology and Physiology*.

⁵⁵ O.S. Fowler, *American Phrenological Journal* 5 (1843): 641–651 (reprinted 1844 and 1848).

- ⁵⁶ O.S. Fowler, *American Phrenological Journal* 8 (1846): 138–188, here 188.
- ⁵⁷ Fowler, *Matrimony* (1841), 40 [original emphasis].
- ⁵⁸ James Ashton, *Book of Nature: Containing Information for Young People Who Think of Getting Married, On the Philosophy of Procreation and Sexual Intercourse; Showing How to Prevent Conception and to Avoid Child Bearing; Also Rules for Management During Labor and Child-Birth* (New York, 1865), 22, 49–50.
- ⁵⁹ J. Soule, *Science of Reproduction and Reproductive Control: The Necessity of Some Abstaining from Having Children—The Duty of all to Limit their Families according to their Circumstances Demonstrated* (New York, 1856), 5 [original emphasis].
- ⁶⁰ Fowler, *Matrimony*, (1850), 136.
- ⁶¹ Fowler, *Matrimony*, (1859), 303–304.
- ⁶² Not much is known about her besides her writings. She does not appear in any of the American biographical encyclopedias. About her presidency, see *Women Journal, Boston, Chicago and St. Louis*, May 3, 1873, 138. The School existed only between 1871 and 1877.
- ⁶³ Miscellany, *American Phrenological Journal* 3 (1841): 574.—At least four parts were published in *The Mother's Magazine* 9 (1841).
- ⁶⁴ Pendleton, *Husband and Wife*, 18.
- ⁶⁵ Ian R. Dowbiggin, "Degeneration and Hereditarianism in French Mental Medicine 1840–90: Psychiatric Theory as Ideological Adaptation," in *Anatomy of Madness*, vol. 1, ed. William F. Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shepherd (London, 1987), 188–232.
- ⁶⁶ Samuel Gridley Howe, *Report Made to the Legislature of Massachusetts, Upon Idiocy, Senate Document, No. 31* (Boston, 1848), 8.
- ⁶⁷ I found dozens of articles promoting such laws by reference to Howe's major and also later publications, which have yet to be analyzed in detail. See also Michael Grossberg, "Guarding the Altar: Physiological Restrictions on Marriage and the Rise of State Intervention in Matrimony," *American Journal of Legal History* 26 (1982): 197–226, especially 214–220, as well as Peter Taylor, "'Denied the Power to Choose the Good': Sexuality and Mental Defect in American Medical Practice, 1850–1920," *American Journal of Social History* 10 (1977): 472–489.
- ⁶⁸ See George Robinson, *On the Prevention and Treatment of Mental Disorders* (London, 1859); and multiple articles by the "founder" of American forensic psychiatry, Isaac Ray, in the 1860s in various journals, especially the *Journal of Insanity*.
- ⁶⁹ S.G. Howe, "On the Causes of Idiocy," *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* [published in London] 11 (1858): 365–395, here 368. He continued on page 369: IDIOTS OF THE LOWEST CLASS ARE MERE ORGANISMS; MASSES OF FLESH AND BONE IN HUMAN SHAPE; IN WHICH THE BRAIN AND NERVOUS SYSTEM HAS NO COMMAND OVER THE SYSTEM OF VOLUNTARY MUSCLES; AND WHICH CONSEQUENTLY ARE WITHOUT POWER OF LOCOMOTION; WITHOUT SPEECH; WITHOUT ANY MANIFESTATION OF INTELLECTUAL OR AFFECTIVE FACULTIES" [original emphasis].
- ⁷⁰ See Anon., "On the Report on Idiocy," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 39 (1848): 384.
- ⁷¹ A typical example of this theory is R.D. Mussey, "Effects of Alcoholic Liquors in Health and Disease," *Transactions of the American Medical Association* 8 (1855): 571, 586, here 582–583, referring to Howe and also quoting an early Swedish study.
- ⁷² H. P. Ayres, "Report on the Education of Imbecile and Idiotic Children," *Transactions of the American Medical Association* 13 (1860): 579–645, here 625 [original emphasis].
- ⁷³ See Anon., "Insanity among the Jews. Summary," *American Journal of Insanity* 14 (1858): 406; O.W. Morris, "An Inquiry Whether Deaf Mutes Are More Subject To Insanity Than The Blind," *American Journal of Insanity* 8 (1851): 17–35; Enos Stevens, "Marriage of Invalids: Extracted from a Manuscript Work by Enos Stevens, Examining Agent for the Massachu-

setts Commissioners for the Prevention and Restoration from Idiocy," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 41 (1849): 262–263.

⁷⁴ Harvey P. Peet, jurist and president of the "New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb" did in fact devote several pages to the marriage question, but only from the standpoint of title of inheritance, underlining that, except from medieval Papal decrees and singular court decisions, no *older* legal tradition ever generally forbade the "deaf or dumb" to marry, but that often they had to pass an examination. Only recently, countries like France, Prussia, and Switzerland had passed such laws, even applying to literate "deaf-mutes" whose mental capacities were beyond doubt. See 99, 112, and 126–127, "On the Legal Rights and Responsibilities of the Deaf and Dumb," *American Journal of Insanity* 13 (1856): 79–171.

⁷⁵ An exception was the short, anonymous account "Marriage of the Deaf and Dumb," *American Journal of the Medical Sciences* 5 (1843): 231, reporting about a Swiss court decision prohibiting the marriage of a young woman due to possible hereditary defects, hinting at the suitability of such a law.

⁷⁶ See Peet, *Legal Rights*, 131–132.

⁷⁷ Nevertheless, ever since the writings of Michel Foucault, the assumption of humanitarian reforms in the nineteenth century have been debunked as popular myths. See Philip M. Ferguson, *Abandoned to Their Fate: Social Policy and Practice Toward Severely Retarded People in America, 1820–1920* (Philadelphia, 1994).

⁷⁸ Anon., "Mental and Physical Characteristics of Pauperism," *American Journal of Insanity* 13 (1857): 309–320; M[oses] H. Ranney, "On Insane Foreigners: Read before the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, June 1850," *American Journal of Insanity* 7 (1850): 53–63. The author was superintendent of the New York City Lunatic Asylum.

⁷⁹ A volume of four hundred pages: (New York, 1860, 2d edition, 1870), subtitle: *A Book for the People as Well as for the Profession*. In 1858, he had already published a similar article of thirty-two pages that he previously had published under the signature of E. in the *Detroit Tribune*.

⁸⁰ There are several articles in the 1860s in the *Chicago Medical Examiner*, the *Medical Times and Gazette*, and especially in the *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, dealing with male and female cases. See also Frederick M. Hodges, "The Antimasturbation Crusade in Antebellum American Medicine," *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* 2 (2005): 722–731.

⁸¹ At the same time, Ellis was an ardent follower of the Swedish scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg and his "New Church," flourishing in the USA at that time, as he repeatedly states in his writings. This seems somewhat absurd given the fact that Swedenborg himself had found Africans more enlightened than Europeans and many American Church members were active in the abolitionist movement.

⁸² Anon., "Rules for Breeding," *Farmer's Register: A Monthly Publication* 8 (1840): 666.

⁸³ E[dward] J[arman] Lance, "Animal Physiology: Breeding Farm Stock," *Farmer's Herald* 24 (1854): 217. Probably reprinted from a British magazine, as the author was an English farmer and publisher of several farming manuals.

⁸⁴ See e.g. Jackson, *Beget Beautiful Children*, 2.

⁸⁵ Quote from Charles Brooks, *Laws of Reproduction Considered with Reference to the Intermarriage of Near Blood-Relations. Delivered before the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Providence, R.I., August, 20th, 1855* (Cambridge, 1856). See also Anon., "On the Psychological Progress of Nations," *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* 4 (1851): 51–82, here 57–58.

⁸⁶ See Conway Zirkle, "Early Ideas on Inbreeding and Crossbreeding," in *Heterosis: A Record of Researches Directed toward Explaining and Utilizing the Vigor of Hybrids*, ed. John Whittemore Gowen (Ames, 1952), 1–13.

⁸⁷ See Bruce R. Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass, 2002). A collection of primary texts from different countries has been

published recently: *Race, Hybridity, and Miscegenation*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, Kristie Dotson (Bristol, 2005), 3 vols. It contains several of Nott's texts. Groundbreaking in the USA: Louis Agassiz, *The Diversity of Origin of the Human Races* (Boston, 1850).

⁸⁸ For details, see Sidney Kaplan, "The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864," *Journal of Negro History* 34 (1949): 274–343. Focusing on the influence on the public, especially the writers' scene, see Lemire, *Miscegenation*.

⁸⁹ Jackson, *Beget Beautiful Children*, 2 [original emphasis].

⁹⁰ "She shapes the embryo, the fetus, the babe, the child": James Caleb Jackson, *How to Beget and Rear Beautiful Children* (Dansville, N.Y., 1868), 2 and 3 [original emphasis]. Jackson was the inventor (1863) of the granola breakfast cereal. Like the much younger John Harvey Kellogg, he was one of those many religiously inspired health reformers that sooner or later crossed the line between individual and collective physical improvement, and actively engaged in the "betterment of the race."

⁹¹ See the quote in note 45.