

## Book Reviews

The Nazis were able to capitalize on this authoritarian conception, just as they were able to play on the differences between the more conventionally authoritarian and scientific supporters of racial hygiene and the radical anti-Semites and racists. Just as Weindling provides a more complex understanding of the German *Sonderweg*, so he demonstrates that the most extreme Nazi measures of forced sterilization, euthanasia, and mass murder cannot be comprehended from simple “intentionalist” or “functionalist” perspectives, but rather in terms of the interaction between the actions taken by doctors, scientists and lower-level Nazis, on the one hand, and the will and decisions of Hitler and his top leaders, on the other. Thus, while there were severe tensions between many doctors and scientists and the regime, medicine was nevertheless “integral to the final solution”, (p. 552) and the traditions of German genetics, scientific professionalism as it had developed in that country, and a goodly amount of personal ambition and opportunism had promoted this involvement. Real science could go on, as the genetic studies of Otmar von Verschuer and even his infamous student, Josef Mengele, demonstrate. Verschuer, who was rehabilitated after the war, joined other colleagues in arguing that they were true scientists victimized by radical Nazis. Weindling demonstrates in this fine book that this was not only a specious argument in terms of their personal histories, but even more importantly that it was precisely the authoritarian professionalism and pretentious claims of such “true scientists”, as they had developed since the nineteenth century, that were the problem.

Gerald D. Feldman, University of California, Berkeley

RICHARD A. SOLWAY, *Demography and degeneration: eugenics and the declining birthrate in twentieth-century Britain*, Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 1990, 8vo, pp. xix, 443, \$49.50.

The history of English eugenics has been blessed with a mass of fine scholarship over the last decade, perhaps not surprisingly. Today's developments in genetic engineering keep the subject controversial; moreover, the Eugenics Society's papers form a fascinating collection easily accessible at the Wellcome Institute Contemporary Medical Archives Centre. Earlier work by Lyndsay Farrall, Geoffrey Searle, and Greta Jones was capped in 1985 by Daniel J. Kevles's comprehensive *In the name of eugenics. Genetics and the uses of human heredity*. Was there scope for another general account?

Readers of Richard Soloway's characteristically fluent and subtle survey will probably conclude that there was. There is much in his account that casts doubt on Greta Jones's claim that eugenics became a powerful weapon in ruling-class politics from the Edwardian age onwards. Reaffirming what is generally becoming the authorized version, Soloway demonstrates that eugenics failed to generate a truly wide appeal. The membership of the Eugenics Education Society (later, the Eugenics Society) was barely two thousand. Of these, the active and vocal core included few major public figures, scientists or politicians: the Society's long-serving leader, Leonard Darwin (who thought eugenics good common sense, rather like stock-breeding), always fought a losing battle in trying to convince such front-rank scientists as Karl Pearson and Ronald Fisher, while jousting with unwanted allies like Marie Stopes (target of a notably jaundiced portrait from Soloway), and trying to placate the “better dead” brigade amongst the membership.

Long before the rise of the Nazis, eugenics was too hot a potato to stand much prospect of incorporation into the programme of any political party or church. No less concerned by “national deterioration” than the eugenists, public health spokesmen looked instead to environmental and social improvements as the way forward; and the medical profession chose to keep as quiet about eugenics as about all other aspects of that embarrassing subject, sex. In short, so Soloway convincingly demonstrates, quite apart from its shortcomings as science, eugenics was maladroit as a movement, a pressure group uncertain and divided as to what it was trying to achieve.

Was it worth another book? Does Soloway significantly modify the received view? Yes, because, in great detail and with surer steps than previous scholars, Soloway traces the ripples of

## Book Reviews

eugenics from the 1930s (by which time it had effectively lost steam as a campaign) to the age of the Pill and legalized abortion. He traces the highjacking of the cause by younger researchers, above all, David Glass, who used its good offices, and its funds, for social science investigation into demographic problems. By demonstrating that, with an ageing workforce, Britain's problem was likely to be under- rather than over-population, Glass, Eversley and Titmuss mined the basic premisses of the movement.

Soloway also elegantly suggests that the British refuted the need for "eugenics", in their bedrooms. They stood by the nuclear family, took to contraception, and reliably produced 2.4 children per couple. With growing prosperity, they were visibly healthier than the "unfit" specimens over whom early eugenicists had fretted.

Eugenics has now been comprehensively surveyed by Kevles and Soloway. To prevent overpopulation, responsible scholars should now exercise voluntary restraint.

Roy Porter, Wellcome Institute

FRANK HONIGSBAUM, *Health, happiness, and security: the creation of the National Health Service*, London and New York, Routledge, 1989, 8vo, pp. xv, 286, £35.00.

Anyone who knows Honigsbaum's book on *The division in British medicine* is already familiar with his thorough scholarship. His new volume dealing with the role of civil servants in the creation of the National Health Service is yet another example of his careful research and analysis.

Honigsbaum chronicles a battle from 1936 to 1948 between two opposing factions whose ideologies stemmed from different social standpoints. The most significant theme in his story is the influence of the British social class system lurking behind all negotiations surrounding the NHS. On one side there were Oxbridge-educated, distinctly upper-class civil servants imbued with the highest ideals of service and *noblesse oblige*. On the other was the general-practitioner stratum of the medical profession, whose history of commercial competition had turned them, in the eyes of the civil servants at least, into tradesmen. The chief civil servants, above all Sir John Maude, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Health from 1941 to 1945, were horrified by this degradation of what should have been the most noble of professions and sought to elevate doctors to gentlemen by making them salaried employees in a government service. General practitioners, however, protected their economic and occupational independence more jealously than anything else and believed they had witnessed its diminution, first by club practice, and later, most seriously, by the introduction of National Insurance in 1911.

Municipal administration of the system was logical to tidy-minded civil servants. To GPs, however, who hated the sight of Medical Officers of Health for encroaching upon their territory and stealing their business with their municipal child and maternity clinics, it was an anathema. The aloof Maude was surrounded by "yes-men" within his department and those who did try to communicate the mood of the profession to him, like the C.M.O. Sir William Jameson and Charles Hill, the president of the BMA, were either ignored or despised. The strategy of the profession was to move the battle-ground to institutions outside the Ministry, such as the BMA's representative committee. They succeeded in sending the planning process into a state of disarray until Maude's successor at the Ministry, Sir Henry Willink, conceded almost all of the doctors' demands.

Perhaps the most interesting portrait amongst many here is that of Aneurin Bevan. Honigsbaum describes Bevan's acute political judgement as a mixture of pragmatic flexibility, creative genius, and Machiavellian cunning, which brought the government back from the brink of total surrender to the medical profession in 1945. The Labour radical kept socialism in his back pocket while he played off the aims of Lord Moran's consultant service against those of the GPs, offering sticks and carrots to bring the profession into the scheme. According to Honigsbaum, Bevan's trump card was the nationalization of the hospital service, which eliminated the ferocious battle over municipalization overnight. The profession coalesced, the