Understanding Nazi Racial Hygiene: International Acclaim and Criticism of Hitler’s Eugenics

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Understanding the ways in which racism has been justified and practiced throughout history compels today’s intellectuals to evaluate modern discrimination. This thesis argues that foreign intellectuals showed more fascination than repulsion by the Nazi racial hygiene project, which was justified in the international discussion of biology. Primary source research—namely correspondence from health and hygiene conference—informed this argument as these events allowed for intellectuals from around the world to exchange ideas regarding eugenics and gave foreign intellectuals the first hint that German eugenicists practiced eugenics in a radically more extreme and racist manner. Minimal criticism in the sources from this international community of professionals and intellectuals indicates more intrigue by outsiders when observing Nazi racial hygiene. This knowledge forces today’s historians to reckon with the ways in which modern communities of intellectuals place trust in other discourses, such as the law, to more legitimately define populations and races.

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