
Useless eaters: Disability as genocidal marker in Nazi Germany

Description

Mostert, M. P.. (2002). Useless eaters: Disability as genocidal marker in Nazi Germany. *The Journal of Special Education*, 36(3), 157–170.

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“The methods used for mass extermination in the nazi death camps originated and were perfected in earlier use against people with physical, emotional, and intellectual disabilities. this article describes the historical context of attitudes toward people with disabilities in germany and how this context produced mass murder of people with disabilities prior to and during the early years of world war ii. several key marker variables, the manipulation of which allowed a highly sophisticated western society to officially sanction the murder of people with disabilities, are examined. important implications must continually be drawn from these sad events as we work with people with disabilities at the dawn of a

new century.”



Irmak, K. H.. (1998). Anstaltsfursorge fur “alterssiche” von Weimar bis Bonn (1924-1961). *Zeitschrift Fur Gerontologie Und Geriatrie*

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“The article deals with the development of institutionalized care and its overall discourse concerning the elderly sick people in germany from 1924 to 1961. this period of time embraces an ambivalent process of modernization that falls short of any unilinear success story. neither politics nor the medical sciences had the impact to make the nursing homes catch up with the advanced hospitals. they became low-grade institutions within the national welfare system. these homes evolved from poor-law houses with no specialized care whatsoever. the chronically ill and infirm old people emerged during the 19th century not as the result of straight forward professionalization. the social hygiene in the weimar period and the racist paradigm of the nazi- period turned a blind eye to the chronically ill elderly people well into the era of the murderous ‘euthanasia’. at least in the second half of world war ii chronically sick old people were increasingly regarded as so called ‘useless eaters’ and, thus, doomed to be killed or starved to death. the mortality rate remained very high after the end of the war due to

wide- spread hunger. the situation did not improve until 1948 and in the 50s this part of state welfare took advantage of the general expansion in the social and health care system."

Allen, G. E.. (1997). The social and economic origins of genetic determinism: A case history of the American Eugenics Movement, 1900-1940 and its lessons for today. *Genetica*

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"Eugenics, the attempt to improve the genetic quality of the human species by 'better breeding', developed as a worldwide movement between 1900 and 1940. it was particularly prominent in the united states, britain and germany, and in those countries was based on the then-new science of mendelian genetics. eugenicists developed research programs to determine the degree to which traits such as huntington's chorea, blindness, deafness, mental retardation (feeble-mindedness), intelligence, alcoholism, schizophrenia, manic depression, rebelliousness, nomadism, prostitution and feeble-inhibition were genetically determined. eugenicists were also active in the political arena, lobbying in the united states for immigration restriction and compulsory sterilization laws for those deemed genetically unfit; in britain they lobbied for incarceration of genetically unfit and in germany for sterilization and eventually euthanasia. in all these countries one of the major arguments was that of efficiency: that it was inefficient to allow genetic defects to be multiplied and then have to try and deal with the consequences of state care for the offspring. national socialists called genetically defective individuals 'useless eaters' and argued for sterilization or euthanasia on economic grounds. similar arguments appeared in the united states and britain as well. at the present time (1997) much research and publicity is being given to claims about a genetic basis for all the same behaviors (alcoholism, manic depression, etc), again in an economic context – care for people with such diseases is costing too much. there is an important lesson to learn from the past: genetic arguments are put forward to mask the true – social and economic – causes of human behavioral defects."

Category

1. General

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Author

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