

Second World War, Verschuer frequently peppered his writings and speeches with Scriptural ‘justifications’ for sterilisation and other eugenic policies. Another leading German eugenicist, Hermann Muckermann, was a devout Catholic and apparently saw no conflict between his religious views and eugenics – Sheila Faith Weiss, *The Nazi Symbiosis: Human Genetics and Politics in the Third Reich* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010) pp. 61–6.

None of this is to say that religion should not or cannot offer important lessons for contemporary bioethics issues, but merely that the perceived dichotomy between religion and science may not be as great as these authors, and others, appear to believe. Further, the view that religious belief alone and in itself offers a special recipe for avoiding future medical and human rights abuses should be viewed with some scepticism and a great deal more historical examination. Given Rubenfeld’s emphasis on religion, an essay acknowledging and addressing the historical interplay between eugenics and faith would have been a valuable and thought-provoking addition.

Despite these relatively small issues, Rubenfeld’s book is an important work that raises many important questions for twenty-first-century readers of any background. It is perhaps most relevant to medical practitioners seeking an overview of the issues it addresses, or undergraduate students being exposed to these questions for the first time. Thanks to the short length and nature of its essays, it is easy to imagine university instructors using individual sections as reading assignments, if not the entire work as a class textbook. While not perfect, Rubenfeld’s book will no doubt have a significant resonance for years to come. The publication of a revised edition taking these considerations into account would be highly welcome.

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Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics, Modernism and...* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. xv + 189, £16.99, paperback, ISBN: 978-0-230-23085-5.

Marius Turda’s *Modernism and Eugenics* is a significant addition to an ever-expanding and evolving eugenics historiography. Turda, who is Deputy Director of the Centre for Health, Medicine and Society at Oxford Brookes University, seeks to enrich our understanding of eugenics by exploring its relationship to modernism in various European countries between 1870 and 1940. *Modernism and Eugenics* is the first volume of the series *Modernism and...*, edited by Roger Griffin, and an insightful contribution to Turda’s extensive body of work on nationalism, race and eugenics in central and southeastern Europe.

Turda significantly enhances and complicates the history of eugenics by advancing several compelling claims that engage with central historiographical themes. First, he argues that eugenics needs to be conceptualised ‘not only as a scientific narrative of biological, social and cultural renewal, but also as the emblematic expression of programmatic modernism’ (p. 2). Second, Turda suggests that eugenics was not simply a sideline to European cultures or a momentary extremist episode, but rather a central component of European modernity. He elaborates these arguments by carefully analysing the ways in which eugenics and modernist ideologies dovetailed in visions of national regeneration, and how European citizens became both perpetrators and targets of scientific regulation that blurred distinctions between the individual and collective body, and the private and public sphere. Third, he demonstrates the value of studying national eugenics within a comparative, international framework by emphasising the interplay between universal philosophies and local applications of eugenics. His multidisciplinary study, which draws on conceptual intellectual

history, works to redress the historiographical neglect of eugenics in southeastern and central Europe. It also contributes to the history of science by challenging the 'mythology of the autonomy of science' through an exploration of modernism and eugenics that stresses the interconnectedness of science, politics, and social practices (p. 119).

Modernism and Eugenics is comprised of four thematically organised chapters that chart the convergence of eugenics and programmatic modernism, from the development of the scientific ethos of eugenics, to the establishment of the biopolitical state. Eugenics emerged in the late nineteenth century as both a critique of, and solution to, the 'anomie of modernity' by refiguring the individual and national body within a biological discourse (p. 7). Turda emphasises that although eugenics was taken up by European countries in various ways (in France through puericulture, in Germany as racial hygiene), all eugenic programmes were based on the 'politicisation of science', a belief in the importance of heredity to one's physical state, and the overlapping of medicine, biology and national health (p. 7). Turda chronicles how eugenics became increasingly integral to modernist re-imaginings of the nation, particularly after WWI through what he calls 'the biologisation of national belonging' whereby the individual and the nation were conceptualised as biological entities whose regulation would create social cohesion and bring about national palingenesis (pp. 6–7). He sees eugenics and modernist visions culminating in the biopolitical states that emerged in the 1930s and 40s in fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, but also in Romania, Hungary and many other European countries.

Turda's comparative analysis, which is based on such sources as national and international conference proceedings and specialised journals, is quite impressive as he illuminates points of convergence and divergence in the eugenics movements of countries as diverse as France, Romania, Britain, Hungary, Germany, Czechoslovakia

and Greece. However, since Turda touches briefly on eugenics in many different national contexts without sketching a rich outline of the movement in any one country, some prior knowledge of the history of eugenics is advised in order to fully appreciate the intricacy and sophistication of his arguments. As Turda notes in his introduction, this study is a contribution to a eugenics historiography that is mature enough to embrace a trans-disciplinary, comparative approach that engages with the topic of modernism. *Modernism and Eugenics* would therefore be best appreciated by historians of eugenics, science and medicine, with a working historical knowledge of European eugenics.

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Alison Bashford and Phillipa Levine (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. xx + 586, hardback, £85.00/\$150.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-537314-1.

Many people today think of eugenics as some abomination invented by the Nazis. Sadly, that is not so. Like anti-Semitism, it was once rampant across the political spectrum. Indeed, as this splendidly comprehensive history makes clear, it was a dominant discourse for most of the first half of the twentieth century. In their introduction, the editors say it was, at the time, regarded as the height of modernism. While it was tarnished, in particular, by the post-war Nuremberg trials, it lingered on, and has a heritage that persists today.

Eugenics sought to be the science of humanity in the machine age. It combined the discoveries of Charles Darwin with Victorian notions of rationalising and industrialising every aspect of society, including humans themselves. Darwin's half-cousin, the scientific polymath Francis Galton, articulated its basic nostrums best. Natural selection