

moved inside every human life and every citizen. Bare life is no longer confined to a particular place or a definite category. It now dwells in the biological body of every living being.

3.4. During the physicians' trial at Nuremberg, a witness, Dr. Fritz Mennecke, related that he had heard Drs. Hevelemann, Bahnen, and Brack communicate in a confidential meeting in Berlin in February 1940 that the Reich had just issued measures authorizing "the elimination of life unworthy of being lived" with special reference to the incurable mentally ill. The information was not quite exact, since for various reasons Hitler preferred not to give an explicit legal form to his euthanasia program. Yet it is certain that the reappearance of the formula coined by Binding to give juridical credence to the so-called "mercy killing" or "death by grace" (*Gnadentod*, according to a euphemism common among the regime's health officials) coincides with a decisive development in National Socialism's biopolitics.

There is no reason to doubt that the "humanitarian" considerations that led Hitler and Himmler to elaborate a euthanasia program immediately after their rise to power were in good faith, just as Binding and Hoche, from their own point of view, acted in good faith in proposing the concept of "life unworthy of being lived." For a variety of reasons, including foreseen opposition from Christian organizations, the program barely went into effect, and only at the start of 1940 did Hitler decide that it could no longer be delayed. The Euthanasia Program for the Incurably Ill (*Euthanasie-Programm für unheilbaren Kranke*) was therefore put into practice in conditions—including the war economy and the increasing growth of concentration camps for Jews and other undesirables—that favored misuse and mistakes. Nevertheless, the transformation of the program, over the course of the fifteen months it lasted (Hitler ended it in August 1941 because of growing protest on the part of bishops and relatives), from a theoretically humanitarian program into a work of mass extermination did not in any way depend simply on circumstance. The name of Grafeneck, the town in Württemberg that was the home of one of the main centers, has

remained sadly linked to this matter, but analogous institutions existed in Hadamer (Hesse), Hartheim (near Linz), and other towns in the Reich. Testimony given by defendants and witnesses at the Nuremberg trials give us sufficiently precise information concerning the organization of the Grafeneck program. Every day, the medical center received about 70 people (from the ages of 6 to 93 years old) who had been chosen from the incurably mentally ill throughout German mental hospitals. Drs. Schumann and Baumhardt, who were responsible for the Grafeneck center, gave the patients a summary examination and then decided if they met the requirements specified by the program. In most cases, the patients were killed within 24 hours of their arrival at Grafeneck. First they were given a 2-centimeter dose of Morphium-Scopolamine; then they were sent to a gas chamber. In other institutions (for example in Hadamer), the patients were killed with a strong dose of Luminal, Veronal, and Morphium. It is calculated that 60,000 people were killed this way.

3.5. Some have referred to the eugenic principles that guided National Socialist biopolitics to explain the tenacity with which Hitler promoted his euthanasia program in such unfavorable circumstances. From a strictly eugenic point of view, however, euthanasia was not all necessary; not only did the laws on the prevention of hereditary diseases and on the protection of the hereditary health of the German people already provide a sufficient defense against genetic mental illnesses, but the incurably ill subjected to the program—mainly children and the elderly—were, in any case, in no condition to reproduce themselves (from a eugenic point of view, what is important is obviously not the elimination of the phenotype but only the elimination of the genetic set). Moreover, there is absolutely no reason to think that the program was linked to economic considerations. On the contrary, the program constituted a significant organizational burden at a time when the state apparatus was completely occupied with the war effort. Why then did Hitler want the program to be put into effect at all costs, when he was fully conscious of its unpopularity?