

a "morphine addict" and "the dupe of astrologers"; but the flight of the *Stellvertreter des Führers* also opened up an opportunity to attack medical quackery—and quackery more generally.⁷⁶ On June 12, 1941, the propaganda minister announced the arrest of "all astrologers, magnetopaths, anthroposophists, and so forth"; he also wryly noted that none of these purported "seers" (*Hellseher*) had managed to foresee their own arrest.⁷⁷ I do not want to leave the impression that alternative traditions disappeared from Germany or even went underground. Himmler continued to be a fan of organic medicine, sponsoring concentration camp experiments to test various folk and native remedies. (The Dachau concentration camp had several greenhouses in which various herbs and medicinal plants were grown both for experiments and for large-scale production.) Himmler remained enthusiastic about homeopathy, mesmerism, and the holistic traditions that went under the name of *Biochemie*. His belief that the "vital heat" of the human body was fundamentally different from ordinary mechanical heat led him to support the notorious experiments to determine whether pilots downed in the icy waters of the North Sea might be more rapidly warmed by human flesh than by conventional methods. At Dachau, naked women were forced to embrace the frozen, near-dead victims of hypothermia experiments, the theory being that their "organic" heat would prove more effective than, say, submersion in a bath of warm water.

After the war, a number of orthodox physicians accused of crimes against humanity cited Himmler's organic affinities in an effort to distance themselves from the Reichsführer's policies. SS Gruppenführer Karl Gebhardt, for example, who participated in several of the most notorious camp experiments, used Himmler's fondness for alternative medicine to argue that his own work bore no resemblance to that of the SS Reichsführer.⁷⁸ The ploy did not work, and Gebhardt—the last president of the German Red Cross in the Third Reich and a well-published medical professor—was executed by Allied authorities at Landsberg on June 2, 1948.

Ever since this time, the Nazi romance with nature has been used—especially in medical literature—to tar the regime as a kind of irrationalist backwater. Historians have shown the complexity

of the ideological struggles of the time, but the myth-making apparatus of the medical profession seems to prefer a more cardboard image of the era: Nazis as fanatics, as antiscience. This serves, of course, to distance the self-righteous "we" from the tainted "they"; perhaps it is comforting to believe that "Nazi doctors" were quacks—and that since orthodox physicians were not quacks, they could never have become implicated in such crimes as were common in the era.

What is important to recognize, however, is that naturopathic medicine was only one of several ways stalwart Nazi doctors dealt with illness. Nazism pervaded orthodox medicine as deeply as alternative traditions; academics were as eager as "quacks" to vilify their Jewish colleagues, for example. The challenge of understanding Nazi medicine is to comprehend how terror crossed new boundaries; how crime, callousness, and common sense came to coexist in the country once hailed as "the land of thinkers and poets." We shall return to the question of quackery in chapters 5 and 7—for there was no shortage of charlatans—but first some words on the more familiar racial reductionism of the era, and one of the lesser-known fertile facets of fascism: the push to explore genotoxic hazards.