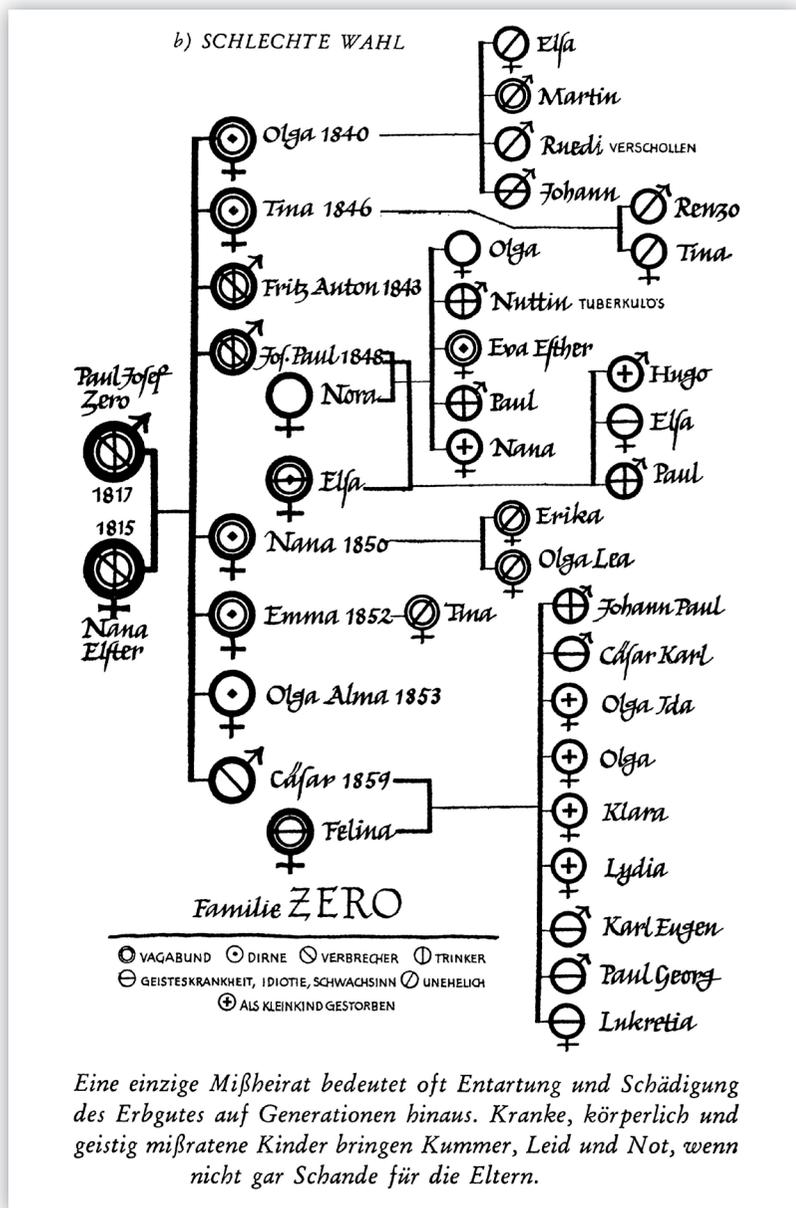


EUGENICS

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The racist theory that the Roma and Sinti were “contaminating” the “gene pool” of the European population was first proposed by Swiss psychiatrists and later adopted by the National Socialists. In 1905 Josef Jörger, a Swiss psychiatrist and supporter of eugenics, used this genealogical tree to show how the Zero family had allegedly been “polluted” by marriage with a woman from a traveller family. In the study, the various members of the family were defamed by the use of vague, subjective and moralising labels such as “prostitute”, “criminal”, “feeble-minded” and “illegitimate”. According to the theory of eugenics, social behaviour is largely inherited. So the eugenics movement recommended improving the genetic make-up of the population with the help of “racial hygiene”, including forced sterilisation, experiments on humans, and the segregation of “undesirable” groups.

Did you know

... that Adolf Hitler was not the only supporter of eugenic theory? Famous scholars and politicians such as Winston Churchill, H. G. Wells, Theodore Roosevelt, George Bernard Shaw, John Maynard Keynes and Linus Pauling were too.

... that the eugenics movement originated in the USA during the 1920s and 1930s, but programmes were also implemented in Switzerland, Brazil, Sweden and many other countries?

For you to do

How is the question of “desirable” and “undesirable” members of society discussed today?

The photo

Genealogical tree of the Zero family (a deliberately negative pseudonym) designed to illustrate Josef Jörger’s theories on the negative effects of a mixed marriage with a traveller. Thomas Huonker Collection, Zurich, Switzerland.