Products or Bodies?  
Streamline Design and Eugenics as Applied Biology  
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In 1939, *Vogue* magazine invited nine well-known industrial designers—including Walter Dorwin Teague, Donald Deskey, Raymond Loewy, Henry Dreyfuss, Egmont Arens, and George Sakier, among others—to design a dress for the “Woman of the Future” as part of its special edition promoting the New York World’s Fair and its theme, “The World of Tomorrow.” While focusing primarily on her clothing and accessories, many commented as well on future woman’s physique, predicting that her body and mind would be perfected through the implementation of eugenics.

Figure 1
For example, Deskey proclaimed, “Medical Science will have made her body Perfect. She’ll never know obesity, emaciation, colds in the head, superfluous hair, or a bad complexion—thanks to a controlled diet, controlled basal metabolism. Her height will be increased, her eyelashes lengthened—with some X-hormone.” Because of her beautiful body, she would no longer need to wear underwear, he thought, and having passed through a stage of nudism, she would clothe herself in toga-like, semi-transparent draperies [figure 1]. 1 Teague’s design showed that he also believed that most women would have “beautiful bodies, and the present trend toward nudity [would] continue at an accelerated pace.” 2 Sakier stated that “[t]he woman of the future will be tall and slim and lovely; she will be bred to it—for the delectation of the community and her own happiness.... Her view-point will be clear and direct. She will be free from complexes and inhibitions.” 3 Balking the fashion trend, Loewy’s dress design focused less on transparency and more on efficiency. The lightweight wool suit had sleeves that zipped on and off for a quick transition between the office and the nightclub. However, this pragmatic costume also was due in part to Loewy’s vision of women’s bodies. Although films about the future succeeded in showing men and women in “various scanty and often attractive-looking attire” owing to the actors’ youth and good looks, Loewy felt that “this type of clothing doesn’t seem adapted to contemporary individuals.” However, he did not rule out the possibility that in the future, “eugenic selection may bring generations so aesthetically correct that such clothes will be in order.” 4

These predictions about the actualization of eugenics were reiterated throughout the entire issue of the magazine in the text of numerous articles. One piece was accompanied by an illustration [figure 2] depicting chemically-controlled reproduction of scientists and policemen (note the varied ratio of brain to body size), as if taken from the opening chapter of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) in which human embryos are transported on an assembly-line conveyor, receiving injections that determine their future occupations. The text of the *Vogue* article declared that, in the next century or so, reproduction would be “separated from marriage. Somewhere along about 2050 A.D. the first ectogenetic child, fertilized and grown in a glass tube in a laboratory, and then born outside the mother’s body, will be just entering school.” The author believed that “[g]enetics, by then, will be an old story. By the right combination, which almost anybody can reason out mathematically then, the world will have the kind of people the world wants. If someone wants them, it will not be difficult to produce some ‘fifty-thousand irresponsible, if gifted, mural painters.’” 5 Earlier in the issue, a description of “To-Morrow’s Daughter” proclaimed, “To-morrow’s American Woman may be the result of formulae—the tilt of her eyes, the curve of her chin, the shade of her hair ordered like

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crackers from the grocer. She may be gentle, sympathetic, understanding—because of a determinable combination of genes.” Furthermore, “her face will be beautiful, but that beauty will not be merely an ‘assembly-line’ product.... [H]er body will be a perfectly-working machine, unencumbered with pain.... [H]er mind will work clearly, unfogged; with cold logic and warm sympathy.... Tomorrow’s American Woman may, indeed, be close to perfection.”

As these descriptions clearly reveal, ideas promoted by the eugenics movement during the 1920s retained their appeal throughout the 1930s. Although anthropological publications such as Ruth Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture* (1934) were asserting that many human traits previously considered to be genetic were in fact cultural, such proclamations failed to reach readers of the 1939 issue of *Vogue*, who could ascertain from its contents that one’s occupation, intelligence, beauty, and personality stemmed from one’s genetic makeup. Based upon the assumption that the inheritance of such traits followed Mendel’s laws, eugenicists had been striving since the 1910s through their own research and through education of the public to produce the easily stated but ever-elusive “kind of people the world wants.” Because they believed that advances in medicine and sanitation were displacing the once-purifying role of natural
Eugenics’ notions of directing and accelerating human evolution in many ways metaphorically paralleled industrial processes of assembly-line manufacture. These parallels posed the basis for Huxley’s fictional eugenic scenario in a world that began during the year of “Our Ford,” the father of the assembly line. Industrial designer Norman Geddes perhaps furthered this parallel in his staging of Huxley’s opening scene through the format of the Futurama designer Normand Geddes’ parallel in his staging of Huxley’s opening scene through the format of the Futurama American Museum of Natural History in New York, characterized "defectives" as "drag nets on the ship of state" in an article in 1932. Historian Sheila Weiss points to this underlying "technocratic logic" of eugenics, rather than to its racism, as the most ethically perverse and damaging aspect of the movement. Once people of any sort were reduced to the status of less valuable products of a nation or considered as human "wreckage," their inutility logically demanded their disposal in the interest of efficiency, continued evolutionary progress, and enhanced national strength.
During the 1920s and 1930s, however, in pursuit of their goals, eugenicists implemented a two-pronged approach to maximize the efficiency of their programs for the genetic improvement of the race. “Positive eugenics” targeted the “fit” and worked to increase the quality and number of their offspring through propaganda offering simplistic explanations of Mendelian formulae [figure 3], and encouraging the production of large numbers of children from the well-endowed. Contrarily, “negative eugenics” worked to limit the reproductive capacities of the “unfit” and their supposedly deleterious influence on the national bloodstream. Such policies took form politically through legislation aimed at enforcing anti-immigration (the federal Immigration Restriction Act of 1924), the distribution of birth control to “less desirable” populations (the goal of Margaret Sanger’s American Birth Control League), and “voluntary” sterilization of criminals and the feebleminded (twenty-nine states had passed such statutes by 1938).14 Geddes likely referred to the latter in 1931 in the Ladies’ Home Journal, where he predicted in “Ten Years from Now,” that “[M]edical and surgical treatment will reduce crime to a fraction of its present-day proportion.”15 The implementation of “positive” and “negative” eugenics...
depended upon the participation of an enlightened public, both in their support for eugenic legislation and in their personal choices, the latter of which *Vogue* authors took for granted. In part, this support arose from public acceptance of the humanitarian goals promoted by eugenics enthusiasts; as Sakier phrased it, good breeding was intended “for the delectation of the community” and an individual’s “own happiness.” Despite the important role played by the public, however, the media often portrayed the eugenist himself, through his scientific research, as the mastermind producing the “Superman of Tomorrow” or, as compellingly, “various human types at will.” [figure 4]

Beyond the fact of the continued popularity of eugenics, its technocratic theoretical background conflating bodies with products, and designers’ references to its possibilities in *Vogue* and the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, what were the connections between eugenics and streamline design? Loewy’s “Evolution Chart of Female Dress” [figure 5] offers an appropriate place to begin examining this question, for it expresses the designer’s conception in the mid-1930s of the evolution of both the typical female costume and the female figure, from 1630 and 1890, respectively, into the indefinite future. In its inclusion of the female body, this chart differs dramatically from others by the designer such as the “Evolution Chart of the Desk Telephone” or those of any number of designed products such as automobiles, ships and houses. As was certainly intended by

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Figure 4

Loewy, who displayed one of these diagrams in his mock-up of an industrial designer’s office at the American Industrial Art exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1934, these charts strongly but silently pointed to the industrial designer himself as the chief agent of product evolution. In the case of the female figure, however, this agency (as well as the end product) was more ambiguous, perhaps owing more to the eugenicist than the industrial designer, given the concurrent publicity of the eugenicist’s powers.

In many ways, this ambiguity was appropriate to the roles of both professions, for both industrial designers and eugenicists (aspiring designers, as well, of humans and society) considered themselves to be primary agents of evolutionary progress. Enacting a role shared only by plant and animal breeders, both types of designers rationally selected between desirable and undesirable traits to reform “primitive,” “criminal,” and “degenerate” products and bodies from the inside out into functional, “fit” forms suitable...
for mass (re)production. In both the arenas of eugenics and early industrial manufacture, designers bemoaned the all-too-rapid rates of reproduction of undesirable, unhygienic products and human "types" (for supposedly the "unfit" were more fertile and productive than the "fit" owing to their lesser intelligence and restraint, and heightened sexuality). That industrial designers and modern architects such as Adolf Loos (in his seminal essay "Ornament and Crime"), however, applied the terminology used by eugenicists for human evolution ("primitive," "criminal," and "degenerate," among others) to manufactured products deserves notice, for it points out the reciprocal conceptual force which each powerful modern realm—industrial manufacturing and evolutionary thought—endowed the other.

These evolutionary characterizations of products derived from a common art historical presumption that stylistic evolution paralleled human evolution, owing to the conception of style as a mental expression given physical form. Historian Carlo Ginzburg has beautifully elaborated this concept for art history generally; its prevalence as well in the field of architecture and design is clearly manifest in the writings of modern practitioners. To return to Loos's essay, his thesis that "modern" design cannot contain ornamentation and still be considered "modern" derives from his understanding of Ernst Haeckel's theory of evolutionary recapitulation, in combination with the above understanding of style. Loos opens his essay by explaining recapitulation: "In the womb the human [i.e., white male] embryo goes through all phases of development the animal kingdom has passed through. And when a human being is born, his sense impressions are like a new-born dog's. In childhood he goes through all changes corresponding to the stages in the development of humanity," passing through the stages of a "Papuan.... a Germanic tribesman...Socrates... Voltaire" to then become a "modern adult." Loos, therefore, reasons that "[w]hat is natural in the Papuan or the child, such as delight in ornamentation and tattooing as shown through the style of their art, "is a sign of degeneracy in a modern adult... The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday use." 19

Loos's deduction was given graphic form by Loewy in his evolutionary charts which, as a whole, depict the evolution of design moving from the intricate, gaudy, and ornamental to sleek, simplified forms. The indexicality of an object's style to the racial essence of its creator perhaps was most pointedly stated by Louis Sullivan, however. "The Parthenon was, in fact, the Greek nature, mind, heart, soul, beliefs, hopes, aspirations, known, felt, and interpreted by a great Greek artist," he wrote. "[I]t was a direct product sign and image of Greek civilization.... Ask yourself the question: not in what style, but in what civilization is this building." 20 Geddes, from his own extensive knowledge of late-nineteenth-century

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evolutionary thought, or from reading Sullivan or Claude Bragdon’s descriptions of Sullivan, took these ideas one step further by asserting that the process of evolution was a direct force shaping style itself. “There is said to be a law of nature that higher forms must, before maturity, pass through all stages of evolution of their predecessors. This seems to hold true for the modern art of building.” In a reference perhaps to the stylistic cacophony of nineteenth-century American architecture, he continued: “Mankind has had to re-experience the architectural development of the Egyptians, the Greeks, through the Gothic, the Renaissance and the Baroque, before it could express its own time in its own terms.” 21 For Geddes, then, functionalist design as embodied in streamlined forms resulted from this process, which reaffirmed its preeminent position (and their own as well) as a “higher” evolutionary form.

Although Donald Bush and other historians of design refer to the influence of evolutionary ideas upon the style’s development, they have done so largely to point out that organic forms such as birds and dolphins modeled the adaptations selected by nature in conformance with the principles of air and fluid dynamics, with the emphasis on the latter.22 These principles, derived from physics, determined that for vehicles to travel through air or water efficiently with the least amount of resistance and energy expenditure, they required a minimum of protuberances, smooth external shells, rounded fronts, and tapered backs such as those exhibited by numerous organic forms. Hence, the style’s sleek shape and its attendant qualities of maximized efficiency and hygiene. Historians also have agreed that, in addition to these qualities, streamline designers embraced the goal of producing “ideal” product types (despite their practice of planned obsolescence in product design) that would, at least in rhetoric, contribute substantially towards the realization of an imminent utopia. Jeffrey Meikle, in particular, has elucidated the important role that new materials and production processes played in the development of the style, in addition to establishing the most widely accepted ideological interpretation of the style as an appropriate response to the varied economic and psychological effects of the Great Depression.23

As shown above, however, the influence of evolution on modern architects and designers occurred at much deeper theoretical level than simply offering models of aerodynamically streamlined forms. If the biological evolutionary basis of the style is examined more closely, especially in consideration of the close relationship between evolutionary thought and eugenics at that time, new questions are raised about the message and meaning of the style as the first major expression of industrial design in the U.S. This article contents, therefore, that biological theories of evolution served as a primary ideological and historical context for designers’ development of theories of streamlining; it does not consider evolution, as other historians and the designers themselves have, as a
progressive force actually at work in the dual arenas of human and product development. When viewed in this context, the style’s close theoretical correlations to eugenics becomes clear. Just as deep concern over controlling the progress of evolution compelled many people to accept eugenics, so in many instances designers’ applications of evolutionary principles to the realm of product design crossed the line between evolution and eugenics.

On one side of this line, according to evolutionary thought, natural selection and independent modification directed evolutionary progress; on the other side, according to eugenic thought, rational selection and controlled modification determined the paths of the future. Just as eugenicists tried to apply biological laws, as they understood them, to control the outcome of evolution by paring away the “parasite drag” caused by the “unfit,” so too did streamline industrial designers apply biological principles when theorizing how to stylistically shape products into a modern aesthetic suitable for a “civilized” nation. In their equation of products with bodies, in their choice to focus on the elimination of “parasite drag” (as Geddes biologically termed the physically turbulent eddies that slowed a vehicle’s forward progress), in their choice to foreground efficiency, hygiene, and the pursuit of the utopian “ideal type” as the preeminent goals for product design, and simply in their role as evolutionary agents reforming products for mass production, streamline designers exactly mirrored the theoretical doctrines, rhetoric, and role espoused by contemporary eugenicists.

Countless examples could be given of evolution as the primary conceptual model informing theories of streamline design, down to such remarkable intricacies as Egmont Arens’s assertion of the role of “natural selection” in weeding out too-slow typographic fonts, or various designers’ ruminations whether “bastard offspring” and “mongrelism” in product design restored “vitality” to modern design through “hybrid vigor” or desecrated its principles of “purity.” Instead, I will offer three particularly good examples (in addition to those already mentioned) in which designers’ applications of evolutionary thought crossed over the line from evolution proper into the more historically improper realm of eugenics.

The first comes from a comparison of a German rail poster from 1935 with two remarkably similar images published in the U.S.: an advertisement for Collier’s magazine that same year, and a brochure distributed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture during the previous decade. During the 1930s, numerous brochures and exhibits promoting “ultra-modern” streamlined trains lined up past and present locomotives in a row, facing the same direction, symbolically depicting the forward linear thrust of their evolutionary development [figure 6]. At times, the force and appeal of this forward progressive direction was heightened through comparison to a counter-directional motion. Although he does not explain the counter-directional imagery, Meikle discusses this trope of

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“progress,” connecting past, present, and future, in a German poster bearing this type of imagery [figure 7]. The poster for the “100 Jahre Deutsche Eisenbahnen Ausstellung, Nürnberg” contrasts a fiery, elevated streamliner speeding towards the right with an earth-hugging, coal-powered, horse-and-buggyish train heading towards the left. Despite the blue smoke belching from the stack of this locomotive from the 1830s, this highly inefficient nineteenth-century train appears immobile, as stationary as the onlookers conversing with its passengers. Meikle astutely interprets the inclusion of this train as a transitional device that, through its allusions to the past, tempered the radicality of the streamliner of the future, making both more palatable to a culturally and socially conservative public. The streamliner thus became a “better version of [an] experience similar to those of the past.”

Comparison with two other images from the U.S., however, suggests an additional meaning for this counter-directional imagery. An advertisement soliciting advertisers’ business for Collier’s magazine replicated almost exactly the image in the contemporaneous German poster [figure 8]. Across the top half of the two-page ad, a streamliner speeds to the right, its shining headlight illuminating the darkness. The train is followed by a swoosh of forward-slanted text that proclaims, “Stream-Lined Editing Long Before Stream-Lined Trains Set New Standards.” In the bottom left quarter of the pages, moving towards the left, are a mid- to late-nineteenth-century, coal-burning locomotive and railcar. But they seem to be moving so slowly that they do not even threaten to displace the blocky print stationed in front of them, which reads, “A Slow Ride for Your Money.”

As the copy makes clear, the streamliner represented both the quick sales of Collier’s magazine and the fast-moving merchandise of manufacturers who advertised in its pages. Its swooping progressive curve foretold “an immediate upward response in your sales curve!” in addition to symbolizing through its forward-looking direction “the alert and progressive” purchasers who read the magazine. Collier’s promised that its readers and advertisers would be enthralled by “[t]imely, incisive articles—never dragged out in length,” for as both eugenicists and designers had publicized throughout the previous decade, “drag” posed a primary hindrance to progress. The slow train, on the other hand, signified a slower-moving medium, one unlike Collier’s burdened by extraneous articles that targeted the “slow-minded, self-satisfied type of reader who buys, if at all, when he gets around to it.” By targeting the “active,” wealthy, mentally superior individuals, and “side-tracking” the “slow-minded” ones, Collier’s claimed that it had “segregated the very heart of the most responsive market in the United States.”

Through its terminology, this advertisement evoked various evolutionary and eugenic images: the side-tracked train, derailed from the line of progress, following an evolutionary dead-end; the

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26 Ibid., 148.
Figure 7

Figure 8
institutional segregation of the poor, unproductive, developmentally-arrested people who were a “drag” on national efficiency; the association of progress and streamlining with the physically, fiscally, and mentally active. The dual-directional flow thus broadly symbolized evolutionary progress in opposition to evolutionary degeneracy. When viewed from this perspective, the German poster for the Nürnberg exhibition elicited a warning similar to, but more subtle than, that emphasized by Loos in “Ornament and Crime” (which he revised in 1929). “The speed of cultural development is hampered by the stragglers,” Loos warned. “It is a misfortune for a state if the culture of its inhabitants stretches over too great a time span.”

Streamlining, of both man and machine, promised to pare away all protuberances that hindered cultural and evolutionary progress by bringing both into line.

This interpretation is strengthened through additional comparison with a promotional pamphlet published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that was widely distributed through county agents and agricultural colleges [figure 9]. As a push to “Join
Sometimes the word was written "streamline," sometimes "stream-line," which created confusion among those who were engaged in the design and engineering of streamlined objects. The term "streamline" was used in various contexts, including in the design of vehicles, buildings, and even in nature. The word was often used in an abstract sense to describe the ideal form that would minimize drag and maximize efficiency.

Egmont Arens gave versions of his streamlining lectures at: General Electric in Schenectady, NY; in late 1936; the Lions Club in Bridgeport, CT; in late 1935; the Auditorium High School Building in Owatonna, MN; the Rhode Island School of Design; a public school in Providence, RI; the Design Laboratory, part of the Works Progress Administration in New York City; the Advertising Club of Wilmington, DE with Du Pont advertisers in attendance; the Dayton Art Institute in late 1936; and the Youngstown, OH, Junior League. See various folders, including "See America Streamlined, 1935–36," Box 51 "Writings," and folders "Streamlining Out of Depression," "Publicity," and "Clippings about Egmont Arens," Box 46, all in the Egmont Arens Papers.

Harry Laughlin, director of the Eugenics Research Office at Cold Spring Harbor, New York, made this clear through his exhibit of "the elimination of mongrel chromosomes by the pure sire method" at the Third International Congress of Eugenics, held at the American Museum of Natural History in 1932. Although the text of the Collier's advertisement implied as much, in comparison with the message of this agricultural brochure, the streamliner thus symbolized the quick intelligence, good form, and high productivity that resulted from a solid genetic foundation.

This relevance of genetics to streamline design is furthered through the last two examples, alternately from Arens and Teague. Between 1934 and 1936, Arens toured the country lecturing on "Streamlining in Nature" at high schools, colleges, junior leagues, and executive meetings of industrialists. He accompanied his talks with numerous lantern slides that gorgeously displayed streamlined adaptations in natural forms including trees, flowers, fish, birds, horse and dogs. For the latter two, he used thoroughbred forms ("Purebred Arabian Horses" and greyhounds), noting as eugenists that trainers and breeders could select and shape animals to produce beautiful, functional forms. In his talk, he contrasted a white greyhound [figure 10] with an Irish setter. "Champion greyhound. Here is the same thing without the benefit of the trainer. It comes almost naturally to a greyhound. It is in his blood. Men have selected for breeding dogs who showed good form.... Greyhounds were being bred for lines like these long before the engineers discovered the slipstream." Arens emphasized the primacy of purebred genes as a basis for the streamline form over the physical requirements of fluid dynamics, a primacy that reiterated the visual message of the opening slide of his lecture [Figure 11]. For this slide, Arens created an abstraction of two curves to represent "Stream Lines" that more closely resembled the torso of the greyhound than they did the typical representation of a vehicle in the "slipstream." Given the visual similarities with the greyhound and his comments about breeding, his textual separation of the words "Stream" and "Lines" even left room for an association of streamlining as being connected to bloodstream lineage.

Teague, too, compared industrial designers with breeders, for in creating perfect designs they were metaphorically functioning
in much the same way as breeders and eugenicists who strove to ever improve the “purity” of selected biological strains. Teague believed that the “aim of design [was] a perfectly functioning organism” and that “certain universal principles” (elsewhere he referred to them as “the basic, unchanging laws of design”) were “exemplified in all good design.” Teague felt that these principles held true regardless of whether the “organism” were a racehorse, panther, oak tree, sword, ox cart, airplane, or motor car.34 If, for a certain problem, a designer asked himself, “What is this thing for? What is it made of? How is it made?” Teague thought that the composite answer to these questions would gradually reveal “the ultimate form which that thing ought to assume,” an ultimate form that was, in essence, genetic, as his subsequent explanation made clear. “This ultimate form is latent in the thing itself, as the color of our eyes and the shape of our fingers are latent in the uniting cells with which our lives begin.”35 He compared the industrial designer with “some divine designer” (or the accomplished breeder) who could transform a “clumsy, barrel-shaped draft animal” into an efficient, graceful racehorse with “fire and courage in its heart and health in its


35 Walter Dorwin Teague, “Art of the Machine Age” (an address given at the Art Week Luncheon in Boston, 10 Apr. 1934), folder “Writings—Articles,” Box 79, Walter Dorwin Teague Papers and here “stream line.”
Germany's eugenic social policies. 41

In giving material form to eugenic ideology, streamline designers were not automatically aligning themselves with extremist political positions. Eugenacists, after all, came from a wide array of ethnic backgrounds and expressed highly varied political preferences. Although Anglo-Americans and Nordic Europeans formed the largest contingent of eugenics supporters, many Jews both in the U.S. and in Europe, African-Americans, and Asians also participated in the movement. 39 Of these groups, supporters adhered to a variety of social and political philosophies from the far right to the far left, including “democratic” capitalism, socialism, anarchism, fascism, and feminism. 40 Given that eugenics enthusiasts espoused a wide spectrum of political philosophies, the comparison of streamline designers with eugenicists does not imply that designers supported fascism and totalitarian politics. In no cases do the archival records of the designers in this article suggest that any of them supported Hitler’s political totalitarianism or racial policies. Dreyfuss was Jewish, Geddes had many Jewish friends, and Teague possessed such a strict definition of and dislike for totalitarianism that he even criticized Roosevelt’s New Deal as too heavy-handed.

However, to be opposed to political totalitarianism did not necessarily require one to also be opposed to eugenic ideals and policies which, in hindsight, seem to us today to tend strongly in that direction. Historian Stefan Kuhl states that the shift away from support of the Nazis by members of the American Eugenics Society in the 1930s was due not to disapproval of the German eugenics program, but rather to Hitler’s political totalitarianism, and in many cases where international criticism did target Nazi ethnic racism, in fact most of these critics did not question the fundamental principle of race betterment. 41 The English newspaper clippings about European political developments saved by Herbert Spencer Jennings between 1935 and 1936 support Kuhl’s conclusions. Many of the articles criticized German totalitarianism in contemporary international conflicts, while making almost no mention at all of Germany’s eugenic social policies. 41

Political philosophy and socio-scientific beliefs apparently fell into different ideological domains, as shown in part by the wide range of political groups who espoused eugenic principles but used these principles to argue, in many cases, opposing viewpoints. The facility with which this was accomplished owed in part to the malleability of eugenic ideas—to the imprecise and relative definitions of widely used terms such as “fit” and “unfit,” the lack of clear understanding about the roles of “nature” and “culture”—and to the overall appeal of human betterment. Together, these aspects

36 Walter Dorwin Teague, “Rightness Sells,” repr. from Advertising Arts, no citation, in Box 79 “Writings,” Walter Dorwin Teague Papers, Henry Dreyfuss characterized the relationship between engineers and industrial designers as a marriage that was producing “highly satisfactory offspring”; see Dreyfuss, “The Industrial Designer’s Best Friend and Severeest Critic” (an address given to the American Society of Engineering Educators at Stanford University, 18 Feb. 1950), in M (Lcroc) 
41 Population of the Empire; Falling Birthrate,” the Times (London), 10 Aug. 1935, and other clippings in folder “Newspaper Clippings - England, 1935-36,” Herbert Spencer Jennings Papers. Although two of the articles in this collection documented the plan of the Nazis to exterminate the j евish people and the current deprivations of j еws in Germany, the majority of the articles focused on other developments in German political policy. A few of the articles even applauded German eugenic policies for increasing the German birthrate.
allowed eugenics to appeal to an array of different groups who used a diverse set of rationalizations based upon their personal political beliefs to defend their particular take on eugenic social policies.

Clearly, some prominent advertisers and designers during the streamline era promoted strongly hierarchical, even racist and classist, viewpoints in their speeches, advertising copy, and urban planning visions. Both Meikle and William Pretzer have asserted the totalitarian tendencies of the style. Meikle notes that the key metaphor of streamlining—eliminating resistance and friction—implied “smoothing away, through social engineering, all potential disturbances, whether of action or expression.” He posits that the decline in streamlining resulted from a general recognition of the similarity of its ideals to the “destructive concept of a thousand-year Reich in Germany.” 42 In his Marxist analysis, Pretzer describes the style as an anti-democratic, corporate “fiat” that “did not allow for regional, ethnic, popular, or class variations,” one that “emanated from a panic that sought refuge in the planned, orderly and, ultimately, the authoritarian.” 43 The top-down approach of its designers and advertisers, by which they considered the upper classes to be more “civilized” and “modern” and their goal to be the elevation of national taste up to an upper-class ideal, in addition to the eugenic implications of the style’s features, confirm Meikle’s and Pretzer’s interpretations.

Yet, in some instances, designers and eugenicists expressed humanitarian concerns for the less privileged and included the latter group in their visions of the “world of tomorrow.” For example, in his Democracy exhibit for the New York World’s Fair, Dreyfuss envisioned a clean and orderly garden city adjacent to factory towns, mining towns, and agricultural towns, all of which he saw as being as interdependent as the various types of workers they housed. “Even Wall Street and Nebraska wheat growers can’t get along, each without all the others.” During the Living Mural part of the exhibit, film, music, and lighting were combined to produce a utopian, multimedia spectacle parading images of the workers of the world—including farmers, miners, religious and educational leaders, and “men and women representing all the occupations”—across the domed sky of the “Perisphere” in a flash reminiscent of the Aurora Borealis. 44 In Arens’s exhibit at the fair, Three-Thirds of a Nation, he argued that in order to preserve democracy, the lowest portion of American society in terms of income, health benefits, nutrition, and sanitation needed to be improved, for otherwise the symbols of technological progress would only serve as a “mockery to the dispossessed.” 45 In Land of Plenty (1947), Teague also expressed his concern that “the elevation of the lower levels” was “our Number One national imperative,” for “deficiencies in living conditions produce deficiencies in health, mentality, and morals, and these in turn reduce ability to contribute to the national welfare.” Although his ultimate intentions resembled those of eugenicists

trying to increase national efficiency, the population he proposed to target reveals his humanitarian intentions. 46

By aligning themselves with eugenicists in their shared role as the chief agents of evolutionary progress, and by approaching products as bodies in need of the same types of reforms as those promoted by eugenic ideology, streamline designers exhibited their faith in contemporary science, technology, and their own newfound profession to serve as the true progenitors of an orderly future world.