But this essential difference between the two approaches is certainly not a value difference as Mr. Stark seems to conclude—though in the contrary sense—when he writes: “If physics had been conducted exclusively as a ‘pure’ science, ignoring any application whatsoever ..., then it would have shriveled up as a ridiculous intellectual game.”

Mr. Stark left a teaching and research position in order to devote himself to technology. That is his due right; since an individual, notably an important one, is free to seek his occupation at any time and in any field he pleases. This severance surely did not take place without some conflict.\(^5\) But Mr. Stark should really have preserved enough respect for his own former activity to not debase it publicly.

Otherwise, even the title of the work is an unfortunate choice. The crisis, which undoubtedly exists in physics and which is equally undoubtedly attributable above all to German science. It manifests itself in the same way in all countries where physical research is being conducted; and it can only be overcome when science has found the answer to the quantum puzzle. There is no other remedy. We would like to agree with the author, however, that Germany should try to increase the amount of experimental research at the expense of theoretical work. But surely we all know that the current disproportion is mainly due to the predicament which our entire nation is in and that physicists are unfortunately not in the position to change it much.

All in all, we would have wished that this book had remained unwritten, that is, in the interest of science in general, of German science in particular, and not least of all in the interest of the author himself.\(^6\)

3 Philipp Lenard & Johannes Stark: The Hitler Spirit and Science [May 8, 1924]

Source: Philipp Lenard and Johannes Stark, \(^1\) ‘Hitlergeist und Wissenschaft’, Großdeutsche Zeitung. Tageszeitung für nationale und soziale Politik und Wirtschaft, Vol. 1, Issue No. 81, Thurs-

\(^5\)Annoyed by the faculty’s objections to the form of his expert opinion on Glaser’s habilitation and incensed by the faculty’s lack of trust, Stark resigned his professorship, left the university, and took up research in a private laboratory in 1922; cf. Stark [1987], pp. 64ff. He had other motives for this career change as well, however. See footnotes 8ff. of doc. 18.

\(^6\)The reviewer proved to be right. After his porcelain factory failed, Stark was unable to obtain another university position during the Weimar period. It was only after A. → Hitler’s seizure of power that Stark was again able to acquire important positions by virtue of his early loyalty to the → NSDAP. Cf. doc. 3 for P. → Lenard’s and Stark’s declaration of solidarity with Hitler in 1924. He obtained the presidency of the PTR in 1933 (cf. doc. 18) and also of the Deutsche Forschungs-Gemeinschaft (→ DFG) in 1934 (cf. docs. 33f.).

\(^1\)In Stark [1934]d and in the second to last paragraph of doc. 40, J. → Stark claims that P. → Lenard (of Heidelberg) had written this proclamation on his own and that Stark himself (then in Ullersricht) had only provided his signature. It was in any case unusual for German physicists to publish declarations of this type in newspapers; it was not without effect: Cf., e.g., Beyerchen [1977], sec. 5, pp. 95ff.
We have had the pleasure of receiving general recognition as scientists and would like to speak here in this capacity. Following our innermost feelings we would like to make known herewith our recognition as scientists of Hitler and his comrades. We recognize—in the way they expressed themselves before and during the recently concluded legal proceedings[3] and in their whole thinking and sentiment—the very same spirit [Geist] that we ourselves have constantly looked for, striven toward, and expressed in our own work to make it profound and successful: That spirit of total clarity, of honesty towards the outer world, and at the same time of inner uniformity; that spirit which hates any compromising activity because it is insincere. But we have already recognized early on and revered this—to us exemplary—spirit in the great scientists of the past as well: in Galileo, Kepler, Newton, and Faraday.[4] We admire and revere it in the same way also in Hitler, Ludendorff, Pöhner, and their comrades.[5] We recognize in them the closest affinity of ideas with our own.

Consider what it means to be privileged to have this kind of genius living among us in the flesh. They were rare at all times, these culture-bearing intellects. But all the inner aspirations of humanity and all the resulting achievements making our life on earth worthwhile and beautiful are based on their efforts. Experience reveals that the incarnations of this spirit are only of Aryan-Germanic blood, just as the great men of science named above were also of this blood. But blood also can die out; Romans and Greeks died out along with their culture. Do not be deceived, the Aryan-Germanic blood, the carrier of its unique spirit,

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2The newspaper editors inserted the following introductory comment under the authors’ names: ‘We are exceptionally pleased to be able to offer to two noteworthy representatives of German science the chance to present their views in the following article. Both are recipients of the Nobel Prize who, as they have informed us, wish to strengthen the national movement with their joint declaration and to support the efforts to restore the lives and occupations of our freedom fighters.’

3After the failure of Adolf → Hitler’s attempted putsch in Munich on Nov. 8–9, 1923, Hitler, the ex-general Erich von Ludendorff, and the leaders of the Kampfbund, who had coordinated the activities of the National Socialist Party and other paramilitary groups in Bavaria were put on trial for high treason in Munich. The trial opened on Feb. 26, 1924, received enormous publicity, and ended on April 1 with the minimum sentence of five years imprisonment for Hitler and three other defendants; von Ludendorff was acquitted. For contemporary documents about the putsch attempt and the succeeding trial see, e.g., Noakes & Pridham (Eds.) [1990b], Vol. 1, pp. 26–35.


5General Erich Friedrich Wilhelm von Ludendorff (1865–1937) had served in World War I and supported Hitler’s plans for a ‘national revolution’. He was to become head of the national army. Ernst Pöhner (1870–1925), Munich’s police chief, sympathized with the Nazis and was appointed by Hitler as the new ‘Prime Minister’ with dictatorial powers during the putsch.