

NAZI IDEOLOGY AND THE HOLOCAUST



The Holocaust refers to the murder of 6 million Jews, and 6 million other “enemies of the state” by the Nazi regime controlling Germany, from 1938 to 1945. The Holocaust is a dramatic and shocking example of **genocide**. It stands alone in its level of organization and efficiency, and has become the ultimate case study in the history of genocide.

Nazism and the Holocaust Notes by A. Pennino

Walt Whitman High School elective: *Genocide: The Holocaust and Beyond* Spring 2020 edition

The most important source materials for these notes include: Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center; the US Holocaust Memorial Museum; Peikoff, *The Ominous Parallels* 1982

Germany

"The Land of Poets and Philosophers"



How could nazism and the Holocaust happen in “civilized” Germany?

In this notes packet, we will examine how ideas led to the Holocaust.

In the next notes packet, we will study the Holocaust.

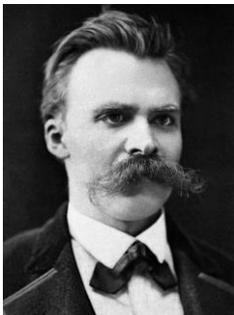
IT WAS THE PHILOSOPHERS.

IDEAS MATTER.

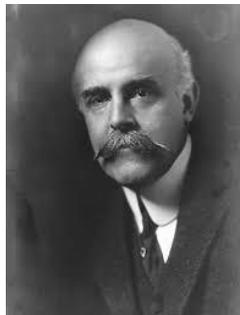
At the end of the 19th century and into the early 20th, many intellectuals turned away from liberalism. This was a global trend, not unique to Germany, but certain German philosophers were especially influential. Elites worldwide became more likely to believe ideas that would support the trend towards totalitarianism after World War I.

WHAT WAS POPULAR IN PHILOSOPHY CLASSES IN THE ERA BEFORE THE NAZIS?

1. **TRUTH** is relative or unknowable. "Everyone [every People] has their own truth"
2. **COLLECTIVISM**: the modern world demands that every individual submit to the "greater good."
3. **All people are NOT equal**. Theories of **racial determinism** and the pseudo-science of **racial biology** were more common than ever. Among most Europeans, racism fueled the **imperialism** of the age, and the idea that it was the "**white man's burden**" to dominate and "civilize" the "inferior races." In the U.S., white supremacist racism supported **segregation** and various forms of discrimination. **Anti-Semitism**, basically defined as bigotry and hostility against Jews, was common globally. Jews suffered discrimination, scapegoating and various forms of oppression in many parts of the world, especially in Russia and parts of Europe and the Middle East. **Social Darwinism**, the idea that the "fit" succeed and the "unfit" will always remain poor, was embraced by many elites. It was a new twist on old attitudes that bloodlines should determine societal hierarchies. **Eugenics**, the idea that human societies could be improved through better breeding, led to laws and policies that foreshadowed the NAZI program. The idea was to encourage the "fit" or "high grade" to marry and have more children, while discouraging the same for the "unfit, low grade, or defective." There was often a racist element to this thinking as well. In many countries (including the United States!) laws were passed regulating marriages, and even providing for the **forced sterilization** of so-called "defectives"! In short, the concepts of human **classification** and **collective identity** were dominant.



Frederick Nietzsche



Madison Grant, American eugenicist



Martin Heidegger, philosopher
who joined the NAZIS

PHILOSOPHY

IN THE PRE NAZI ERA:	NAZIS:
<p>“There are no facts, only interpretations. ...All things are subject to interpretation; whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of Power and not truth. –Nietzsche</p> <p>“The ‘true’, to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as ‘the right’ is only the expedient in the way of our behaving” –William James</p> <p>“Instinct and feeling, illumination and intuitive vision- these are the things that lead us into the realm of forces that determine the meaning of our existence [not scientific knowledge]” -Walther Rathenau, leading intellectual during Weimar Republic</p>	<p>“There is no such thing as truth, either in the moral or scientific sense.” –Hitler</p> <p>“Important is not what is right but what wins.” –Goebbels</p> <p>“I tell you, if the Fuhrer wishes it then two times two are five.” -Goering</p> <p>“Do not seek Adolf Hitler with your mind. You will find him through the strength of your hearts!” -Hess</p> <p>“[Hitler’s authority comes from] something mystical, inexpressible, almost incomprehensible which this unique man possesses, and he who cannot feel it instinctively will not be able to grasp it at all.” -Goering</p>

NAZISM IS A FORM OF FASCISM

FASCISM is a social, political, and economic system based on **ultra-nationalism** and **collectivism**.

ACCORDING TO FASCISM,

1. YOU EXIST TO SERVE THE NATION.

All aspects of life must serve the greater good of one's nation. This idea is how fascists define "correct" **socialism**: putting society first. This might mean government should control part of the economy, or private enterprise should be *permitted for the good of society*.

2. TOTALITARIAN DICTATORSHIP IS THE ONLY LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT. The nation is best served by one fascist party, led by one all-powerful leader. They are The State: those who govern.

3. EQUALITY IS REJECTED.

The interests of your People take priority over all other peoples. The Strongest and most able of your people should rule, and the rest should follow and OBEY.

4. MILITARISM IS GOOD.

Your nation must always be in a state of war, or planning a war, to dominate other nations. Victorious war is an end in itself, not merely a means to an end. All war is glory for one's nation.

DICTATORSHIPS OF RIGHT AND LEFT

FAR LEFT: COMMUNISM

FAR RIGHT: FASCISM

Nazism and fascism are considered right-wing forms of dictatorship; communist governments are left wing dictatorships. Both are collectivist. Differences:

Communist dictatorships claim to be working towards total equality and abolishing countries. All economic sectors are government owned.

Fascist dictatorships do not try to equalize wealth. Socialism and capitalism are both used as tools for *the good of the Nation: the true goal*.

In practice, both Nazis and Communists set up one-party totalitarian dictatorships. Both are rooted in the idea of group struggle against enemies. In both systems, you have no free speech, no free elections, no freedom of opinion, no freedoms period. Secret police and political prisons, censorship and propaganda, leader worship, and mass murder are characteristics of both types of dictatorship.

WHAT EXACTLY IS NAZISM?

NAZISM- a form of **fascism** in which all members of the “Aryan Race” serve the collective Aryan good under a totalitarian, one party dictatorship. The ultimate goal of nazism is the supreme domination of the “Aryan Race” over all other peoples of the earth, who are seen as inherently inferior and must be subjugated or eliminated. **Anti-Semitism was central to nazism:** nazis deemed Jews to be “sub human” and the greatest threat to the “Aryan Race.” **Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)** explained NAZI ideology and goals in his 1925 book *Mien Kampf* (“My Struggle”).



FASCISM: Ultra-nationalist, militarist, collectivist dictatorship in which one party has unlimited power to rule in the name of The People (The Nation).

Nazism (and potentially fascism in general) is inherently genocidal. The People, as defined by national identity, are understood to be in a constant struggle for survival against other enemy peoples.

NAZI IDEOLOGY (BELIEFS SYSTEM) OUTLINE

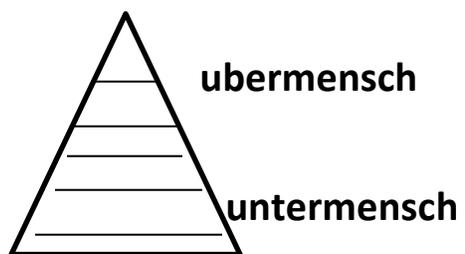
NAZI [National Socialist German Workers] Party

1. SOCIAL:

Racism is the defining element of Nazism.

The Race—The Blood—The Nation—The Fatherland—The Reich—The People—Aryans—Germans—*US V THEM...*

RACIAL STRATIFICATION- higher and lower races



**According to Nazism:
Aryans are the “MASTER RACE,”
Jews are the lowest of “sub-humans”**

RACIAL COLLECTIVISM- Each individual must act in the interest of his race. All people are defined by their race.

RACE STRUGGLE- Adapted from Marx’s “class struggle.” Different races pitted against each other through history. The Jews were seen as always behind Aryans’ problems. *#scapegoat...*

RACIAL DARWINISM- the strongest races dominate and / or replace the weaker ones

2. POLITICAL:

totalitarian dictatorship by the party. Complete submission of citizen to state.

POLICE STATE: Constant war against internal enemies. **Gestapo:** secret police. **The SS:** “[Race] Protection Squads”

MILITARISM, ENDLESS WAR: race struggle and idea of **Lebensraum** (“living space”) are the basis of foreign policy.

Immediate goals: reclaim lands lost in WW1, unite all German peoples, expand east.

Medium term goals: Conquer Eurasia.

Long term goal: global domination and conquest for the Aryan race.

3. ECONOMIC:

“pragmatism” -use any economic approach that strengthens the Nation.

SOCIALIST: the collective good is always the goal. Guarantee economic security for all.

CORPORATIST: Use expertise of Big Business.

CAPITALISTIC ELEMENTS: allow profit motive to boost productivity.

"Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer!"
“One People, One Nation, One Leader”



THE NAZI RISE TO POWER

- 1920 formation of NSDAP
- 1922 failed *putsch* (coup de tat) in German state of Bavaria
- 1920s electoral wins: increased presence in Reichstag.
- 1929 global economic crisis.
- 1932 Hitler receives 1/3 of votes for president.
- 1933 Hitler appointed Chancellor by President Hindenburg.
- 1933 Reichstag fire, blamed on German Communist Party.

All other parties eventually banned / absorbed by Nazi Party.

- 1934 President Hindenburg dies. Chancellor Hitler granted temporary "emergency powers" ...
- 1935 ONE PARTY DICTATORSHIP:

THE THIRD REICH