

# The central role of Darwinism in the Holocaust

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This paper challenges the common assumption that Hitler was the main driving force behind the Holocaust due to his anti-Semitic beliefs. It is well-documented that a major driving force was social Darwinism and the belief that the Aryan race was superior and had the right and obligation to prevent deterioration of the superior race by mixing with inferior races, such as Slavic peoples, Jews, Negroes and gypsies. This race view was widely supported by both the academic and medical establishments, the main groups that designed, implemented, and carried out the Holocaust.

A common assumption is that the Holocaust both originated and was carried out by Adolf Hitler (figure 1). In fact, although Hitler played a central role in orchestrating the Holocaust, both the leadership and those who directed and carried out the Holocaust were primarily doctors and academics, including especially anthropologists.<sup>1</sup> One reason for placing the central blame on Hitler is an attempt by those in the professions that produced the nefarious fruits of eugenics to deny the well-documented record of the past. Placing the blame on Hitler also hides, or denies, the results of eugenics by those who practised these professions.

As Shields and Dunn wrote, the political controversy over eugenics, even in America, is “a topic long neglected by historians even though our [American] eugenics program was quite advanced leading to the sterilization of some 65,000 citizens”.<sup>2</sup> They added, quoting Bruinius, that the true “history of American eugenics has been in many ways forgotten”.<sup>3</sup> The reasons include the fact that “many progressive heroes lined up in favour of eugenics in the name of scientific progress, while Catholics opposed it because of the Church’s doctrines on the sacredness of human life”.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was not until 2013 that:

“... the full story of the Church’s often successful opposition was told by the Catholic historian Sharon Leon. In his blurb, the conservative political theorist Robert Gorge noted with exasperation, ‘If there is a story long overdue for telling, surely it is the story of how and why the Catholic Church and its faithful stood against the eugenics movement at a time when just about everyone else had gotten on the pro-eugenics bandwagon.’”<sup>5</sup>

Opposition also came from certain other Christian groups, mostly the conservative churches, including Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, and Missouri Synod Lutherans.

## Eugenic ‘science’ influenced Hitler

Adolf Hitler was a voracious reader and owned a large library. At least 19 of his books are known to be on the subject of Darwinism and eugenics.<sup>6</sup> His Press Chief, who worked

closely with Hitler, wrote Hitler “had an amazing amount of information at his fingertips, and ... [was] enormously well-read ... he would sit up late carefully reading all new publications”.<sup>7</sup> Hans Frick, Hitler’s personal lawyer, stated before his (Frick’s) 1946 execution at Nuremberg that Hitler carried a copy of Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* with him throughout World War I. Schopenhauer developed some evolutionary ideas even before Darwin (figure 2) published his survival-of-the-fittest theory. An example is the concept that all life strives to preserve itself, and those forms that succeed better in doing so will be more likely to thrive. Our mental and other faculties are merely tools to achieving that end. Furthermore, “Along with the scientific and technological burgeoning, German philosophers ... were overturning long-held ideas about the nature of man and his society. With Charles Darwin ... and Sigmund Freud ... they would reshape the contemporary Weltanschauung so it would never be put together in the same way.”<sup>8</sup> This Weltanschauung influenced Hitler greatly.

When sent to Landsberg Prison (figure 3) as a result of the 1924 failed Nazi Beer Hall Putsch in Munich, Hitler was regularly supplied with reading materials by his friends and associates. He even once described his prison stay as a university education paid for by the state.<sup>9</sup> While incarcerated, Hitler read, among other books, the two-volume work, *Principles of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene*, first published in 1921. This book, which almost perfectly spells out the groundwork or fundamentals of the Holocaust, was co-written by three leading eugenicist professors: Eugen Fischer, Erwin Baur, and Fritz Lenz.<sup>10</sup> Baur died in 1933, but the other two co-authors were active members of the Nazi party for decades.

This book was so popular in Germany that it went through five editions from 1921 to 1940, and almost all the reviews were positive. Hitler used the eugenics notions developed by Germany’s leading scientists to support the ideal of a pure Aryan society in his manifesto, *Mein Kampf* (1928)<sup>11</sup> Several of Hitler’s statements in *Mein Kampf* document his reliance on Darwinism to justify his support of various eugenics and infanticide programs, e.g.:

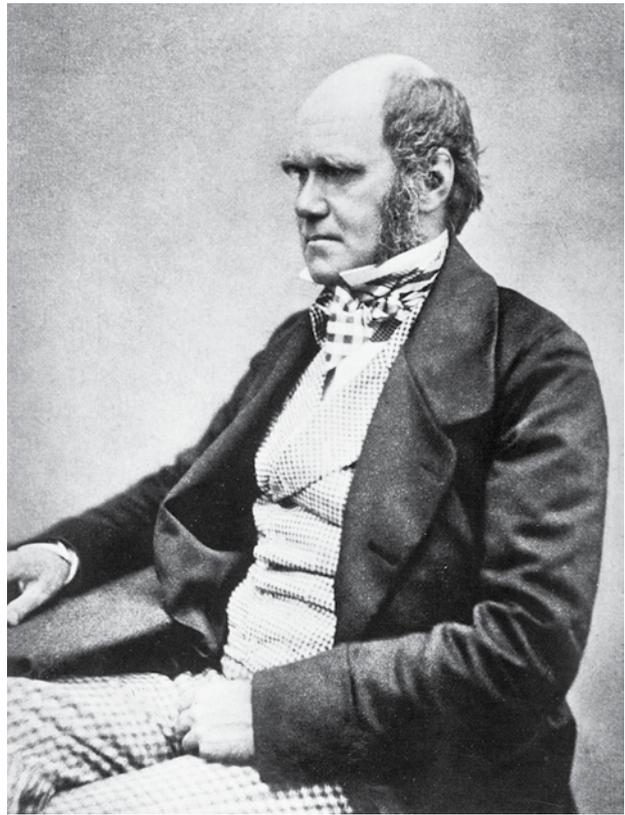


**Figure 1.** Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany. He was greatly influenced by social Darwinism and eugenics, both worldviews widely held by academia, especially by professors of medicine, anthropology, and genetics.

“While nature only allows the few most healthy and resistant out of a large number of living organisms to survive in the struggle for life, people restrict the number of births and then try to keep alive what has been born, without consideration of its real value and its inner merit. Humaneness is therefore only the slave of weakness and thereby in truth the most cruel destroyer of human existence.”<sup>12</sup>

The book *Principles of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene* soon became the scientific basis for Nazi Germany’s eugenic sterilization programs and the central importance of isolating, and eventually killing, inferior races to ensure the purity of the German race. Its first author, Fischer, was Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics, and Rector of the Frederick William University of Berlin.

Fischer’s ideas were central in the anti-Jewish Nuremberg Law of 1935 that was the first formal step that led to the Holocaust and served to justify the Nazi Party’s racial superiority programs. Decades before then, Germany had already run concentration camps in the German-ruled colony of South-West Africa. These pre-World War I camps, a



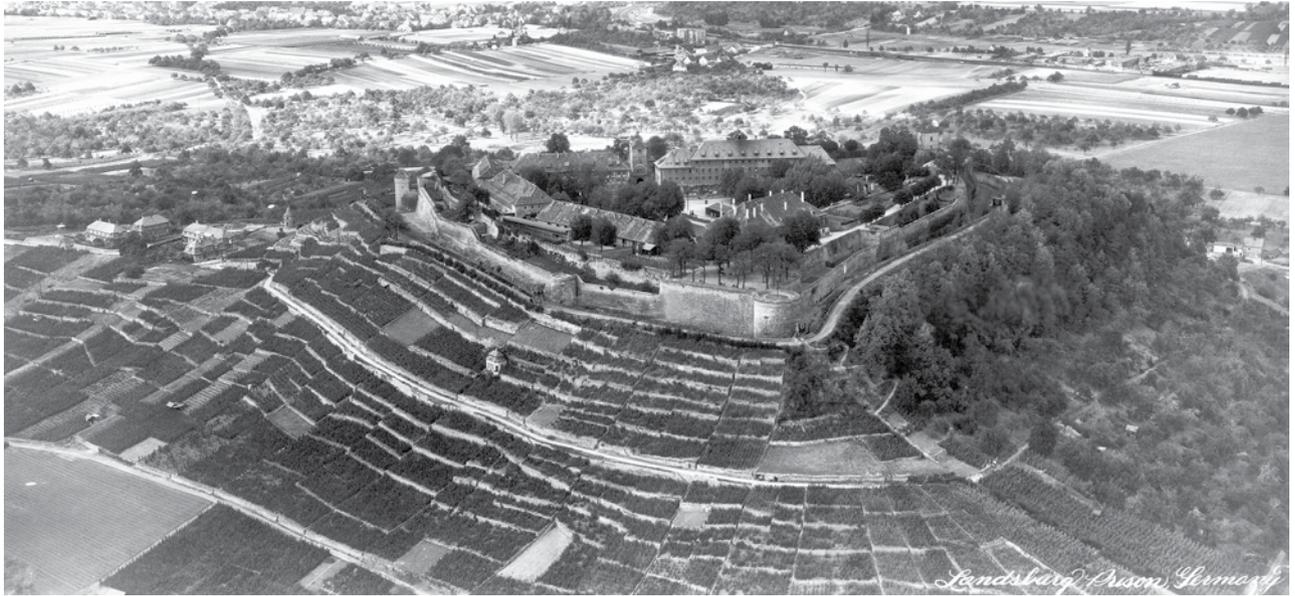
**Figure 2.** Charles Darwin, who did not originate the theory of evolution by natural selection, but did more than any other man to popularize it, first in England, next in Germany and then throughout the world.

forerunner of the Nazi death camps, murdered, starved, and experimented on hundreds of native Africans.<sup>13</sup> Fischer was also featured as a speaker at a population conference organized by the American birth control founder Margaret Sanger.

As Professor Sacks concluded, the concern was not only that Hitler imbibed these “ideas, whether through Nietzsche, Spencer, Haeckel or other writers”, but that these eugenic ideas

“... were widely shared among intellectuals of the time. The movement for eugenics, the selective breeding of humans and the sterilization of the mentally handicapped and those otherwise declared unfit, was pioneered by Darwin’s half-cousin Sir Francis Galton and supported among others by H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, John Maynard Keynes, Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt.”<sup>14</sup>

It was only after the full realization of the horror and scale of the Nazi genocide programs was revealed that these programs were finally rendered morally unacceptable. The steps to the Holocaust began with the case of Gerhard Kretschmar, an 11-month-old blind child with deformed limbs.<sup>15</sup> Richard and Lina Kretschmar, both ardent Nazis, petitioned Hitler



**Figure 3.** Aerial view of Landsberg Prison where Hitler was incarcerated after the Nazi party's failed coup in 1924. It was here where Hitler dictated *Mein Kampf* to Rudolf Hess and also read several books advocating superior race theories.

to euthanize the child to open the door wide to euthanize deformed children. In the United States, the US Supreme Court case titled *Buck vs Bell*<sup>16</sup> opened the door wide to sterilize mentally deficient persons. In the US, the result was to sterilize over 60,000 people judged mentally or physically deficient<sup>17</sup> and in Germany about 200,000 people were euthanized, plus an additional many thousands in German-occupied countries.

The next step in Germany was to ramp-up “gene-cleansing efforts from sterilization to euthanasia—what quicker way to purify the gene pool than to exterminate” the defective races and peoples.<sup>18</sup> In the process, the “aura of science and medical research was meticulously maintained” to justify the Nazis’ deeds in the name of ‘science’.<sup>19</sup> Along this line, German historian Wendy Lower wrote that the

“... first Nazi mass murderess was not the concentration camp guard but the nurse. Of all the female professionals, she was the deadliest. Centrally planned mass killing operations began neither in the gas chambers at Auschwitz–Birkenau nor in the mass shooting sites of Ukraine; they began instead in the hospitals of the Reich. The first methods were the sleeping pill, the hypodermic needle, and starvation. The first victims were children. During the war, nurses gave thousands of deformed babies and disabled adolescents overdoses of barbiturates, lethal injections of morphine, and denied them food and water.”<sup>20</sup>

She added that these programs were all carried out “... in the name of progress and the health of the nation. In the late nineteenth century, the modern science of genetics spawned the international field of eugenics, a term defined in the sub-title of a 1910 book

by an American leader in the field, Harvard-educated Charles Davenport—*Eugenics: The Science of Human Improvement by Better Breeding*.”<sup>21</sup>

In Germany, eugenics was called ‘racial hygiene’, and was specifically aimed at increasing

“... the Aryan population. Inherited ‘genetic’ defects and traits were understood as racial or group manifestations that defined humanity’s different civilizations, some deemed more advanced than others, all of them competing for survival. Racism, like nationalism, was viewed positively. Progress, imagined in German ideals of beauty and conduct, could be achieved only by removing humanity’s blights. In the hands of revolutionary zealots, Nazi men and women of action, this science of human inequality had to be taken as far as it could go.”<sup>22</sup>

The scientists soon found that even biological “... sterilizations were insufficient to achieve the goal of Aryan perfection through social engineering, and segregation was not enough either. The only total, ‘final’ solution to the problem of racial degeneration was to destroy the contaminant, starting with ‘defective’ Germans. Misleadingly termed ‘euthanasia’ or ‘mercy killing’, the top-secret program was personally authorized by Adolf Hitler and carried out under the cover of war.”<sup>21</sup>

As Sacks remarked, the “Holocaust did not take place long ago and far away”. Rather, it occurred “in the heart of rationalist, post-Enlightenment, liberal Europe” and, in other words,

“... the epicenters of antisemitism were places of

cosmopolitan, avant-garde culture like Berlin and Vienna. The Nazis were aided by doctors, lawyers, scientists, judges, and academics. More than half of the participants at the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, who planned the ‘final solution to the Jewish question’, the murder of all Europe’s Jews, carried the title ‘doctor’.<sup>23</sup>

Holocaust survivor and Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry at the University of Vienna Medical School, Viktor E. Frankl, astutely evaluated the influence of modern anthropologists and other academics in helping to prepare the road to Nazi atrocities. He concluded:

“The gas chambers of Auschwitz were the ultimate consequence of the theory that man is nothing but the product of heredity and environment—or, as the Nazis liked to say, of ‘Blood and Soil’. I am absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Maidanek were ultimately prepared not in some Ministry or other in Berlin, but rather at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers.”<sup>24</sup>

The fact is, eugenics

“... was allowed to flourish in Nazi Germany. The scientists involved ‘were not bizarre and perverse psychopaths ... . In the postwar period, they were very well integrated in German society. They were very good researchers of international standing ... [under] which these kinds of biomedical scientists are prepared to initiate or commit atrocities to further their research interests.”<sup>25</sup>

Svante Pääbo, pioneer of ancient DNA research, wrote that many of the Nazi eugenic programs supported by the Eugenic Kaiser Wilhelm Society produced world-class research. This past haunts Germany today. One guiding principle of the modern Max Planck Society was to establish research institutes

“... on topics in which Germany was scientifically weak. An area of particular weakness was anthropology, and for a very good reason ... the MPS [Max Planck Society] had a predecessor before the war. Its name was the Kaiser Wilhelm Society ... had built up and supported institutes around eminent scientists such as Otto Hahn, Albert Einstein, Max Planck, and Werner Heisenberg, scientific giants active at a time when Germany was a scientifically dominant nation.”<sup>26</sup>

He added that this “era came to an abrupt end when Hitler rose to power and the Nazis ousted many of the best scientists because they were Jewish ... the Kaiser Wilhelm Society became part of the German war machine”.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, it was “through its Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics that the Kaiser Wilhelm Society was actively involved in racial science and the crimes that grew out of that”.<sup>28</sup> It was this institute where

“... people like Josef Mengele were scientific assistants while performing experiments on inmates at Auschwitz death camp, many of them children. Whereas Mengele was sentenced for his crimes after the war (although he had escaped to South America), his superiors at the Institute for Anthropology were never charged. On the contrary, some of them became professors at universities.”<sup>29</sup>

### Racism and leading scientists

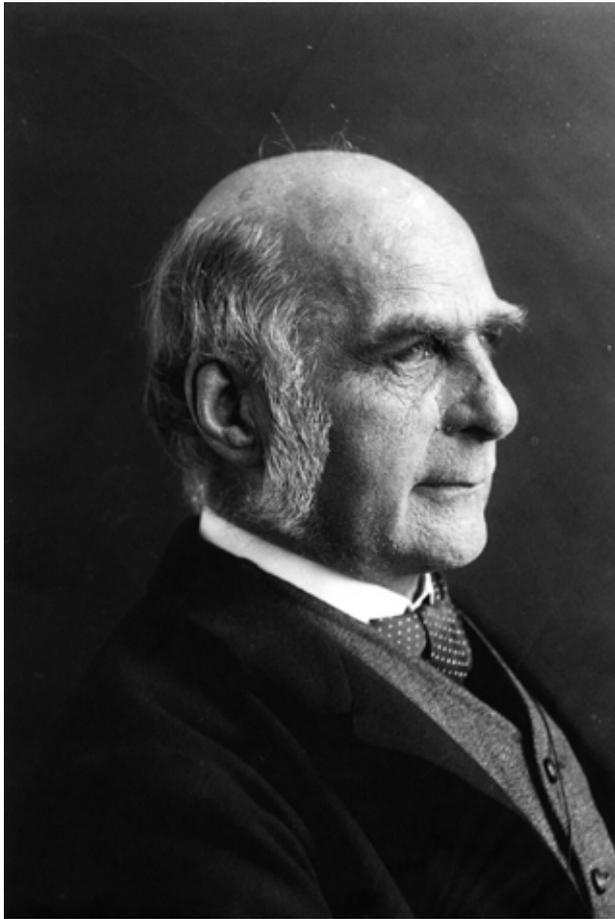
In addition, one of the earliest promoters of social Darwinism in Germany was University of Jena zoology Professor Ernst Haeckel.<sup>30</sup> This pioneering German evolutionist also “followed a Darwinian trope in arranging human ‘species’—12 of them, comprising 36 ‘races’ in all, in his scheme—in phylogenetic trees” which were rated from inferior to superior.<sup>31</sup> In the 1860s he used Darwin’s theory for developing a philosophy that applied not only to biology, but also to psychological and social phenomena.<sup>32</sup>

Haeckel actively promoted Darwinism, especially the idea that “the central European races were the most highly developed” and that by “virtue of their abilities, they would triumph over all other races and dominate the entire world”.<sup>33</sup> Haeckel in his best-selling book *Die Welträtsel (The Riddle of the Universe)*,<sup>34</sup> also advocated the killing of those persons with hereditary defects, including cripples, the deaf, cretins, and the retarded, to name a few examples.<sup>35</sup> The escalation of racism by academics and social Darwinism in Germany that led to the Holocaust

“... was almost seamless, beginning with the compulsory sterilization of unwanted types, then the killing of ‘impaired children’ in hospitals, then the killing of ‘impaired’ adults (the mentally and physically handicapped) in special centers by carbon monoxide gas, then the extension of this to the concentration and extermination camps. The programme was carried out, throughout, by doctors and psychiatrists, only a handful of whom objected.”<sup>36</sup>

The program was halted in August 1941 due to the large number of protests, largely from the churches. In a review of the many rationalizations that the Nazis gave for their Darwinian eugenic programs, “what is striking is not only the specific ideas of social Darwinism—the strong eliminate the weak, the Aryan race must be protected against pollution—but the overwhelming sense of the *authority of science*, whatever the science”.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, the United States contributed both professionally and financially to the racial research that formed the intellectual foundation of the Holocaust.<sup>38</sup> The field of anthropology’s focus on “the physical differences among people went hand-in-hand with” the academic emphasis on the hierarchical placement of human groups.



**Figure 4.** Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin, who coined the word eugenics. His book *Hereditary Genius* (1869) was the first attempt to study what he saw as superior individuals, and formed the basis of his eugenic theory. Galton was very influential in convincing Darwin and many others to accept eugenics partly because he appeared to put the field on a scientific basis.

The case for the 'northern races' superiority was effectively "presented by Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882); a cultural historian ... [who] published his theories in the late 1800s and warned of the dangers of race mixing".<sup>39</sup> Gobineau was not the first to argue for European racial superiority, although he was one of the more influential racial theorists. Specifically, Gobineau concluded that the German races, including the Indo-Germanic and the Aryan races, were those persons from the people groups that were more culturally and otherwise more evolved, and

"... only members of these races could rule others. To this end, he urged that these racial groups must remain pure. Gobineau's theories found great acceptance in Germany, and copies of his books sold well. ... His ideas were planted in German society and resonated among anthropologists such as Alfred Ploetz, the founder of the [German] eugenics movement."<sup>40</sup>

Gobineau's anthropologically based racial ideas were "... fused with another distinct trend of racial

thinking, which had its roots in Charles Darwin's theory of the process of evolution through natural selection ... Gobineau's contribution to science, were it not for his lethal influence on the development of racial doctrine, would hardly have merited even a footnote in intellectual history."<sup>41</sup>

### The lead role of eugenics in the Holocaust

Another central factor causing the Holocaust was not only Darwinism but also socialism, both of which influenced the so-called race hygiene movement. Ploetz (1860–1940) enthusiastically read the works of not only Charles Darwin, but also those of Ernst Haeckel and Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>42</sup> Ploetz was the author of *The Fitness of our Race*, a book that heavily influenced many Nazi leaders and intellectuals.<sup>43</sup> He also founded *The Journal of Social and Racial Biology* in 1904, which was very influential in both the Nazi movement ideology and in the development of racial anthropological theory, as well as in German academia as a whole. One of his pupils was the aforementioned Fritz Lenz (1887–1976).

Other leading figures in the eugenics movement included Ernest Rüdin, Karl Pearson, Charles Davenport, August Forel, Psychiatrist Wilhelm Schallmayer, and even Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton (figure 4). The inspiration for all of these eugenic leaders was

"Darwin's publication *On the Origin of Species* [that] brought about a great tidal wave of interest in speciation. If animals of other species had varieties within them, why not look for such variation in humans as well? Perhaps all humankind had not evolved from the same sources ... polygeneticists believed they evolved through various prehuman species, resulting in different 'kinds' of people. The debate was a precursor to the discussion of race, and interest in this controversy ran high within the burgeoning field of anthropology. Darwin had created a new vocabulary and a new way of looking at existing anthropological questions about human remains and about living human groups."<sup>44</sup>

These eugenic leaders all consistently maintained that Darwinism was central to their eugenics ideas. Professor Ploetz opened his influential book with the following quote from Nietzsche: "upward leads our way from the species to the superspecies",<sup>45</sup> concluding that the "Aryan race alone stood at the peak of racial development".<sup>46</sup> The fact is, the

"... scientific and political movement of 'racial hygiene' is on many levels linked to the development of Nazism and Fascism with their racist medical philosophies, the segregation and sterilization laws, as well as, later, the murderous Nazi euthanasia program. Largely conceived and popularized through ... Ploetz ... the term 'racial hygiene' (*Rassenhygiene*)

... specifically sought to attribute eugenics assumptions about the inheritability of human social and biological traits to a background understanding of ‘race’ and ‘racial degeneration’, this particular form of eugenics was influential ... throughout much of northern Europe.”<sup>47</sup>

Ploetz, a socialist, also worked tirelessly to “reconcile Socialism with Darwinism”.<sup>48</sup> Ploetz and his wife Pauline (née Rüdin) lived in the United States for four years, and while living there were influenced by several leading American Darwinian eugenicists.<sup>49</sup> They had originally wanted to move to South Africa to study “the lowest human races”,<sup>50</sup> a goal that did not work out. Of note is, when living in the USA, the couple “felt frustrated because they could not openly proclaim their hostility to Christianity ... and their sympathy for socialism” in America.<sup>51</sup>

### Physicians and race degeneration

The Nazis “had no difficulty finding physicians willing and enthusiastic to participate in killing the disabled ... quite a few leading physicians already had jettisoned the idea that the disabled had a right to live”.<sup>52</sup> Another leading scientist who supported this view was prominent eugenics advocate Max von Gruber (1853–1927), a Munich Professor of Hygiene. Hitler’s conclusions about the putative loss of

“... biological vitality and evolutionary progress of the German people was a common theme in eugenics literature in the early twentieth century. In a book written shortly before World War I, the famous professor of hygiene and avid eugenics advocate, Max von Gruber, warned about biological degeneration that would occur if German [Aryan] birthrates continued to decline.”<sup>53</sup>

He also discussed “the same concern in a 1918 article in the book *Germany’s Awakening Renewal* that Hitler may well have read. Many other eugenicists, including Ploetz, agreed with Gruber” about his biological degeneration concern.<sup>53</sup> One of the most detailed studies of Nazi scientists by the lead investigator, Dr Leo Alexander, of the crimes that were committed in the name of neuropsychiatry and neuropathology concluded that the odious “core Nazi belief that had informed the practice of medicine under Hitler’s rule”<sup>54</sup> was that not

“... only were all people not created equal in the eyes of the Third Reich, but some people were actually not human at all. According to Nazi ideology, *Untermenschen*—subhumans, as they were called, a designation that included Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, Poles, Slavs, Russian prisoners of war, the handicapped, the mentally ill, and others—were no different from white mice or lab rats whose bodies could thereby be experimented on for the advance of the Reich’s medical goals.”<sup>54</sup>

According to Heinrich Himmler, “The sub-human is a biological creature, crafted by nature which has hands, legs, eyes, and a mouth, even a resemblance of a brain. Nevertheless, this terrible creature is only a partial human being ... . Not all of those who appear human are in fact so.”<sup>54</sup> Jacobsen commented that, although

“... German citizens were asked to believe this pseudoscience [of eugenics]; millions did not protest. German scientists and physicians used this racial policy to justify torturous medical experiments resulting in maiming and death. In the case of the handicapped and the mentally ill, the *Untermenschen* theory was used by German doctors and technicians to justify genocide.”<sup>55</sup>

### Ernst Rüdin

Ernst Rüdin (1874–1952) was a Swiss-born geneticist, eugenicist and Nazi who rose to prominence around 1907. When at the University of Munich, he was an assistant to psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926). Rüdin later assumed the directorship of what is now the Max Planck Institute in Munich. Professor Rüdin’s avid support for eugenic racism was so great that his colleagues nicknamed him the “Reichsführer for Sterilization”.

Both Professors Rüdin and Kraepelin were ardent advocates of the theory that the German race was degenerating. Rüdin has long been internationally regarded as the pioneer of mental inferiority genetic inheritance studies. He also argued for, designed, justified, and even helped to finance the mass sterilization and clinical killing of putatively inferior German children and adults.

### The steps in place for the Holocaust before Hitler

Ernst Rüdin, Alfred Ploetz, and several other racial hygiene ‘experts’ under Reich Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick formed the “Committee on Questions of Population and Racial Policy”. Frick was convicted in the first Nuremberg trial for crimes against peace and humanity, and war crimes, and hanged in 1946. The committee’s ideas were the scientific basis used to justify Nazi Germany’s racial policy that ended in the Holocaust. As a result of the strong support of these and other professionals, the “Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring” was promulgated in July 1933 and put into effect by the German government on 1 January 1934.

The next step was to extend the program to those persons that the anthropologists claimed were members of inferior races, including all non-Aryans, such as Jews and Slavs. The work of Ernst Haeckel was another important cornerstone of the Holocaust and, partly due to his frequent attacks on the churches and Christianity, undermined Judeo-Christian

ethics and morality which resisted the Holocaust.<sup>52</sup> Haeckel also supported the form of social Darwinism which taught

“... that human society was itself like a biological organism and that therefore the principles of selection, ‘Culling Out’ and the ‘Right of the Stronger’ which occur in nature, should also govern relations between human individuals and groups. While Social Darwinism was by no means an exclusively German phenomenon, nowhere else was it raised, even before Hitler came on the scene, to the status of a world religion.”<sup>56</sup>

Most of these racist ideas existed even before Hitler became Germany’s leader.<sup>57</sup> For example, Darwinism’s spread in Germany was facilitated by an essay competition that was

“... sponsored in 1900 by the head of the powerful Krupp Corporation on the topic: ‘What can we learn from the principles of Darwinism for application to inner political development and the laws of the state?’ The winner of the first prize, Wilhelm Schallmayer, looked at all human institutions in terms of the struggle for survival.”<sup>58</sup>

Schallmayer’s close associate and supporter was none other than Alfred Ploetz. Social Darwinists taught that Germany’s humanitarian social programs favoured the weak and interfered with

“... the process of natural selection as a healthy regulator of human affairs. Social Darwinists saw it as their task to reverse this ‘unhealthy’ interference with the natural process. They demanded that the modern State stop supporting the ‘incapable elements’ and favor instead the biologically valuable elements on whom the survival of the race depends.”<sup>59</sup>

In the name of the “principle of self-preservation of the species”, social Darwinists such as Alexander Tille demanded the “right of the stronger races to destroy the weaker. Once the Nazis seized power in Germany,” this social Darwinian foundation became the Nazi Party foundation.<sup>60</sup>

### Why Hitler hated the Jews

Why Hitler hated the Jews is a complex subject, but it is known that when Germany “annexed Austria, Hitler had both the area of his father’s birthplace, Dollersheim, and the grave of his grandmother designated as a tank-training ground”, thus forever destroying all evidence of his paternity that was located there.<sup>61</sup> Some speculate that the reason was due to a self-hate, based on the theory that Hitler was part Jewish. Complicating the issue further is that, in his early life, Hitler had many Jewish acquaintances and friends. One example included his mother’s physician, Eduard Bloch, who treated her (sometimes *pro bono*) until she died of breast cancer on 21 December 1907, aged only 47. Hitler allowed Bloch to sell his house at market value and emigrate with his wife from Austria to the USA. Other examples include:

“Hitler received his First-Class Iron Cross in World War I from a Jew, First Lieutenant Hugo Gutmann. He borrowed his psychology of the masses from Sigmund Freud, a Jew. Eva Braun, his mistress, was saved after her second suicide attempt by a Jewish doctor, Martin Marx; his vegetarian cook, Marlene von Exner, was part Jewish. And finally, one of Hitler’s allies in the war, Francisco Franco, was half-Jewish.”<sup>62</sup>

Hitler was also indebted to several Jewish art dealers, including Samuel Morgenstern, Jakob Altenberg, and Samuel Landsberger, who marketed his artwork.<sup>63</sup> The music of Jewish musician Anton Bruckner was ‘beloved’ by Hitler for its ‘Germanic grandeur’.<sup>64</sup>

Conversely, Hitler was very influenced to hate Jews and other ‘inferior races’ by the German educational system. For example, the education of SS members taught them to distinguish

“... between inferior and ‘high-value races’ which were defined as ‘the culminating entities of the biological process’. The primary representatives of the ‘high-value races’ were the people of Nordic stock. They had survived in the struggle for existence ... because of an inborn creative ability that brought them forward in the process of natural selection. They thus provided ‘the most striking evidence of the basic law of the eternal struggle, in which all the weak and the less valuable must succumb’.”<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, the German education system and academia taught the main populations that those that were supposedly of “inferior racial stock, the Jews, did well living in cities, which ... were harmful to the majority of people and especially to the high-value races”.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the German university professors were called the midwives who helped give birth to Nazism.<sup>65</sup> The Nazi State, which adopted these ‘biological facts’ into their worldview on the authority of the scientific establishment, then turned its attention to developing programs for “promoting greater discrimination” in the reproduction of humans.<sup>59</sup>

In the next step, the “German anthropologists ... collected body parts, bones, and measurements of a people they were helping to eliminate, believing that such memorabilia would have ‘a rare value’ when the [eugenic] work was done, [and] the annihilation complete”.<sup>66</sup>

So many professors, scientists, and doctors were guilty of war crimes involving the application of social Darwinism that a second Nuremberg trial was held in December 1946 specifically for this group. Of the 23 Nazi doctors and scientists, only one woman was tried, Dr Herta Oberheuser, who had performed gruesome medical experiments on death camp inmates, some of whom she murdered.<sup>67</sup> She received a light sentence, only 20 years in prison—which was later reduced to five years. Of the various Nuremberg trials, over 30 prisoners received death sentences.

### This history ignored

A problem that Shields and Dunn note is this history of the influence of academia on Nazism is often ignored, trivialized or, worse, denied by academia and Western society in general. To remedy this problem requires

“... an outcry against any attempt to trivialize, relativize, or hide the history of the Third Reich. Anthropology is a profession that has had every opportunity to know, understand, and value diversity in human life and its cultures, peoples, and habits; yet, in the case of the Nazi anthropologists, it turned against that opportunity. Instead, it measured the value of human beings by fictitious standards of *pseudonatural* science and *pseudosocial* science, causing the obliteration of rich cultural traditions as well as death, and destruction to unfathomable numbers of human beings [emphasis in original].”<sup>68</sup>

This effort not only was designed to legitimize social Darwinism, but also to “draw attention away from the annihilation of Jews” to the group of prolific and tireless writers

“... who have worked over the last twenty years to expose the Nazi past ... as they, in the process, expose the continuing careers of many perpetrators. There is a suspicion that the attempts to tie the Nazi period to activities of former Nazis in the post-war period could be used to promote a left-leaning agenda by implying that nothing has changed in Germany from the Nazi era.”<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, because many of the Nazi scientists retained their positions after the war, probing their role during the Nazi era was difficult and “the reluctance persisted long after the first investigations”.<sup>70</sup> One research professor, Dr Roelcke, “encountered resistance several years ago when he attempted to document that Ernst Rüdin, the Nazi-era Director of the Institute for Psychiatry in Munich, and the University of Heidelberg in Germany were involved in research on child euthanasia victims.”<sup>71</sup>

### Conclusions

The fact is, the many “scientists associated with the Kaiser-Wilhelm Society enhanced the credibility of the Nazi state’s program of scientific terror and murder”.<sup>72</sup> If it were not for Darwinism, and the application of his theory called social Darwinism, the Holocaust would likely never have occurred in Germany. Darwinism is the idea that all living species, including humans, are “subject to, and are a result of, natural selection, that is the survival of the fittest and the strongest”.<sup>73</sup>

In short, Darwin’s influence on anthropology, and academia as a whole, was summarized by one historian

by noting that “Anthropologists began to link pre-hominid remains with evidence of current human variation, trying to establish lines of heredity ... . In looking at human heredity and culture in an evolutionary framework, anthropology became a strong force in secularizing society against the power of the church.”<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the anthropologists

“... had collected remains of human varieties throughout the world, and ... such artifacts became a central measure of a museum’s or a university’s prestige, and efforts to systematize racial history ... [that] became a dominant theme in the anthropological literature. Ethnographic museums sprang up throughout Germany and were the envy of museum people throughout the world.”<sup>75</sup>

In addition, the

“German university was the intellectual fatherland of eugenics and racial science. The universities of Germany and Austria and their constituent faculty played critical roles in the development and advancement of eugenics and racial selection: they enforced sterilization, euthanasia and inhuman experimentation on the living, as well as on the exploitation of the bodies of victims of state terror for the teaching of human anatomy and pathology.”<sup>76</sup>

This event is also one of the worst world horror events ever in terms of number, extent and the level of suffering, an evil close to unparalleled in the entirety of human history.<sup>77</sup>

### Acknowledgments

I thank Richard Weikart, Bryce Gaudian, and MaryAnn Stuart for their help with this article.

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