

Which One Is The Jew?

The Scientific Pursuit to Define Germany's Jews

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"National Socialism is nothing but applied biology." -Rudolf Hess¹

Alan E. Steinweis' *Studying the Jew* relates a satirical, yet nonetheless instructive, story from Jiri Weil's *Mendelssohn Is on the Roof* (1960). In this fictional account, Julius Schlesinger, a German SS officer in Nazi-occupied Prague, must complete a bizarre assignment. Reinhard Heydrich, the Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, has ordered that the statue of Felix Mendelssohn must be removed from the city's main concert hall. The problem is that Mendelssohn is one of many in a pantheon of statues of great composers at the concert hall. However, the bigger problem is none of the statues have any identifying marks or names to distinguish one from another. One of Schlesinger's assistants asks, "How are we supposed to tell which one is Mendelssohn?" To this, Schlesinger replies, "go around the statues again and look carefully at their noses. Whichever one has the biggest nose, that's the Jew." As the assistants carry out this order, it dawns on Schlesinger that they are not pulling down "the Jew", but rather Richard Wagner, the favorite composer of Adolf Hitler. In a panic, he stops his assistants from committing what would have been a grave insult to the Führer.²

This satire is instructive due to how it succinctly explains the understanding of Nazis on the topic of race and the supposed ability to be able to identify Jews by merely looking at them. While it is easy for us to laugh

¹ Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003), 270.

² Alan E. Steinweis, *Studying the Jew: Scholarly Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 23.

this story off as the backward views of a forgotten past, it is important to understand that at the root of the Nazi German state was a virulent antisemitism and racism that organized the world into a hierarchy of races with the Aryan racial ideal at the top. This hierarchy was not arrived at by accident. During the interwar period known as Weimar, German race scientists attempted to define the Jewish people as a race once and for all. By combining elements of anthropology, history, religion, art, philology, and Mendelian genetics, race scientists developed what they believed to be an accurate definition of what it meant to be a Jew.

I have chosen a number of prominent names in the formation of the Nazi's ideas about race and in particular the concept of the Jewish people as a race. We begin with a discussion of the foundational figures in the formation of race science in Germany. Men like Richard Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Hans F. K. Günther gave a foundational understanding of the Jewish people as a race from which men trained in the natural sciences of genetics and eugenics, like the well-known team of Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz, would base their hypotheses concerning the topic.

Regardless of whether the ideas of race science were based firmly in the natural sciences or from other less empirical narratives, the National Socialists used the findings of these men to construct legislation that segregated what they believed to be an alien, Jewish element from their idealized version of a German utopia. When this mere segregation was not enough, the Nazis moved onto more deadly methods of answering the *Judenfrage* (Jewish Question). However, the beginning of the "twisted road to Auschwitz" began with the frank discussion of the problem that some believed the Jews presented to the modern German. One can conceive of these race scholars and scientists as the mapmakers and road builders of the "twisted road". Their work figuratively and literally paved the way for one of history's most heinous periods of violence against the Jewish community.

The Foundations of Modern Race Science

Richard Wagner: Das Judentum in der Musik, 1850

While Richard Wagner did not boast any training specific to science, his polemical writings served as an inspirational starting point for many in the study of race science. Many admired not only Wagner's exceptional prowess as a composer of operas but also his antisemitic narratives. One of the first of many of these writings was his essay *Das Judentum in der Musik*.

The essay was originally published under the pseudonym, "K. Freigedank", in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1850. In the essay, Wagner attempted to define the Jew by way of examining the concept of "Jewish music". He began with the claim that his essay does not seek to make any political or religious statement, but rather focus on the state of "Jewishness" in the arts and music. One particularly revealing passage commented on the state of liberal revolutionaries who have sought emancipation for Jews as part of their overall program of reform.³ He stated,

"Our liberalism was not a very lucid mental sport... We went for the freedom of that nation [Volk] without knowledge of that Volk itself, nay, with a dislike of any real contact with it. So our eagerness to level up the rights of the Jews was rather much more stimulated by a general idea, rather than any real sympathy; for with all our speaking and writing in favour of the Jews'

³ Paul Lawrence Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1996), 78; It is important to note that, while Wagner's essay in 1850 was not intended to be overtly political, his later writings were rather scathing antisemitic works. There is debate whether or not this is directly related to his relationship with the "father of racial demography", Joseph Auguste Comte de Gobineau. De Gobineau was a prominent figure in the early discussion of race theories. Many racial scholars and scientists referenced his seminal work *The Inequality of the Human Races* in their own work. So, the racialization of Wagner in his later years may, indeed, be related to his introduction to de Gobineau's work later in life.

emancipation, we always felt instinctively repelled by any actual, operative contact with them.”⁴

This quotation began a passage where Wagner argued that the reasons why liberal attempts at Jewish emancipation were unsuccessful were due to the disconnection between the two peoples. Since German liberals did not have a personal understanding of the Jewish people, they could not effectively campaign for their emancipation and in reality did not really care that much whether or not they were successful. This was the crux of Wagner’s overall argument. The Jews were different from Germans and their emancipation or assimilation did not change this, according to Wagner. There was an “essential essence” that was apparent in all Jews and that was so “disagreeably foreign to whatever European nationality we belong”. He pointed to the “creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle” of the Jewish voice and speech patterns as an example of the objective differences that distinguished Jews and their art from that which is German. He went on for some length discussing the differences and the failure of Jewish musicians “to call forth in us that deep, that heart-searching effect which we await from Art.” He summed up his essay stating, “Judaism is the evil conscience of our modern civilization.”⁵

While Wagner’s essay does not particularly fall into the category of race science, it is informative to us for two reasons. First, it acquaints us with the lay of the land so to speak concerning how some Germans in prominent positions viewed Jews within their own professions. Secondly, it points out that there was already in 1850, and arguably for a great deal of time prior to this year, a very real sense among the politically and intellectually active that the Jewish *Volk* were a foreign body within the larger body of the German *Volk*. This was an idea that even existed among some Jews. Some seventy years later, Walther Rathenau, the German-Jewish industrialist and Foreign Minister of Germany during the Weimar Republic, stated in an essay entitled “Hear, O Israel!” that Jews were “an Asiatic horde on the sandy plains of Prussia... not a living limb of the people but an alien organism in its body.” Wagner’s writings served as inspiration to many in the *völkisch* movement, particularly to Wagner’s son-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain.⁶

Houston Stewart Chamberlain: Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, 1899

To say that Houston Stewart Chamberlain was an influential figure in the development of the Nazi’s ideas about race is a severe understatement. It can be safely asserted that without Chamberlain the racial state of Nazi Germany would have been a very different landscape. For many, Chamberlain was the prophet of the Thousand-Year Reich that Adolf Hitler and his followers worked hard to achieve. His *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (Foundations of the Nineteenth Century)* became the unofficial Bible of the *völkisch*, conservative movement.⁷

Chamberlain’s life began not in Germany, but in Great Britain, where he was born the son of a British admiral. However, Chamberlain spent most of his life on the European continent and even became a citizen of Germany later in life to show his love for the German people and civilization. He was trained as a botanist and probably would have had a successful career as a scientist had it not been for his poor health. Instead, he became a student of Richard Wagner’s ideas about race and joined the Bayreuth Circle, where Wagner’s racial ideas had gained a faithful audience. He dedicated himself to development and promulgation of racial ideas in

⁴ Wagner quoted in Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution*, 79.

⁵ Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution*, 81; Léon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism: From Voltaire to Wagner* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 437.

⁶ Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All: A History of Jews in Germany 1743-1933* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 233.

⁷ George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 97.

Germany. His work was the first to officially marry the concepts of mysticism alive in German Romantic ideas about race and the scientific evidence of anthropology that was emerging at the end of the nineteenth century.⁸

His most famous work, *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, was published in 1899 and had been through twenty-eight editions by 1942. In *Die Grundlagen*, Chamberlain celebrated the epic history of the German Volk through a detailed look at their place in human civilization. He set up a grand narrative that pitted the Aryan race (also referred to as Indo-European) against the growing influence of the evils of the “Jewish spirit” of selfishness and materialism. He stated,

“The Indo-European, moved by ideal motives, opened the gates in friendship: The Jew rushed in like an enemy, stormed all positions and planted the flag of his, to us, alien nature – I will not say on the ruins, but on the breaches of our genuine individuality.”⁹

In this narrative, the German took on the archetypal role of God and the Jew took the role of the Devil tempting and dragging the “Pure Germans” down into a selfish materialism that departs from the metaphysical values that had kept the German race pure and superior. The German race, according to Chamberlain, inherited and improved civilization from the Romans and Greeks. It was the Nordic Man who was the protector of Civilization. The only mistake, according to Chamberlain, was the Nordic Man’s reluctance to destroy all degeneracy that surrounded him and establish his superior, cultural dominance in Europe. As a result, the Asiatic horde of the Jews had invaded and infected European society with materialism and inferior blood. The only solution for Chamberlain was a racial regeneration and a religious revival in the Protestant Church. He even went to great length to prove empirically that Jesus Christ was not Jewish, but an Aryan Messenger from God Himself.¹⁰

Despite the use of these narrative structures, Chamberlain provided a sophisticated reasoning for his argument couched in the language of anthropological science. He agreed with the idea that the outward appearance of a person determined the inner essence of that person’s character. He pointed to the anthropological evidence of craniometry and physiognomy to buttress his claims of German superiority and Jewish inferiority. This was a departure from the *völkisch* movement of the period, which distrusted science as being too modern and Jewish to be trusted. Chamberlain disagreed with this and asserted that modern progress was a good thing as long as it was harnessed and used under the direction of the German *Volk* according to its racial needs.¹¹

What made Chamberlain’s ideas so intriguing was how he framed the battle between the German and the Jew. It was no longer just a matter of simply converting them to Christianity. While Chamberlain believed that every measure available to German life and society, including the Church, should be used to rid the world of the scurrilous Jew, his rhetoric upped the ante of the antisemitic threat. Chamberlain’s narrative pitted the German against the Jew in a battle to the death. Whoever won this battle ruled the world forever. This fatalism played well to readers, *völkisch* or not, who believed in the mystical epic of the German people. Kaiser Wilhelm II tried to get Chamberlain’s books added as required reading in the schools and read Chamberlain to his family frequently. His popularity among those on the political right elevated him to the level of a type of Racial Moses leading the German *Volk* out of their bondage and into the Promised Land of the Nazi Racial State. However,

⁸ In Wagner’s later years, his antisemitic, racist ideas became more and more prominent in his polemical writings far beyond what was said in *Das Judentum in der Musik*; Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 93-94.

⁹ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Howard Fertig, 2006), 330-331.

¹⁰ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 68-9, 93-97; Stackelberg and Winkle, *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook*, 11.

¹¹ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 95-97.

like Moses, Chamberlain would not be allowed to enter this Promised Land. He died in 1927, six years before Nazis came to power. Yet his memory and ideas informed those who followed in his footsteps.¹²

Hans F. K. Günther: Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes, 1921

If there was one man in the history of race science who can be credited for the bridge between the old antisemitic traditions and the new scientific racism, that man was Hans F. K. Günther. In Günther, the old world of Wagner and Chamberlain met the new scientific ideas of racial anthropology. Günther's work was important to the history of race science not because of any original ideas or research, but rather due to the way in which Günther synthesized the works of others for a larger audience in Germany.

Günther was trained as a linguist and philologist and received his doctorate in 1920. He also fancied himself an amateur anthropologist and based a considerable amount of his works on anthropological evidence and theories about the races. He brought together various disciplines to service his theories and give credibility to his ideas.¹³

Written in 1921, Günther's first book *Ritter, Tod, und Teufel: Der heldische Gedanke* (The Knight, Death, and the Devil: A heroic Thought) drew from the philosophical ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche. Günther condensed the ideas of Nietzsche down to concepts of the powers of will and the germination of a superman through an inherent consciousness of election. His heroic character of the Knight represented the protagonist of the *Volk*, who reclaimed the ideal qualities of the ancient German (heroism, loyalty, honesty, and racial purity). These ideas caught the eye of Walther Darré and gained him access to the social and intellectual circles of the National Socialist movement.¹⁴

In 1922, Günther wrote and published the work that would launch him into superstar status among Nazi scientists. His *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (Racial Study of the German People) gained such popularity that it was reprinted fifteen times before 1933, the year that the Nazis took official power in Germany. This was followed in 1930 by his *Rassenkunde des jüdischen Volkes* (Racial Study of the Jewish People), which was an expansion of an appendix appearing in *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* concerning the Jews.¹⁵

Günther defined race in a strictly zoological sense, as a "group of human beings, which distinguishes itself through a specific combination of physical and mental traits from every other group of human beings." From this definition, he identified three races: the black race (Negroids), the yellow race (Mongoloids), and the white race (Europoids). Within the white race, Günther argued that the Nordic group was the most superior. He went further to argue that leading nations in the world were those nations that had the strongest hint of Nordic blood.¹⁶

It was Günther's glorification of the Nordic race in his writings that made him so popular in Weimar Germany. His description of the Nordic race as being at the top of a racial hierarchy due to its purity, beauty, and creativity struck a chord with German readers. For this reason, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* sold 124,000 copies by 1942 and his abridged version of the same book sold 300,000 copies.¹⁷

He made an important distinction between the German words *Rasse* and *Volk*. He defined *Rasse* as the pure forms of the races, though he acknowledged that there were few if any examples of pure races at the time

¹² Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 93-96; Elon, *The Pity of It All*, 267.

¹³ Steinweis, *Studying the Jew*, 25.

¹⁴ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 208, 303.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 303; Steinweis, *Studying the Jew*, 25-26.

¹⁶ Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 70.

¹⁷ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 303; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 104.

of his writing. He defined *Volk* as a mixture of pure races that had distinguished themselves through physical attributes, culture, and gestures. He believed that the German *Volk* was a mixture of Nordic, Western European, Eastern European, and Dinaric races with Nordic being the dominant racial strain. He contrasted this with the Jewish *Volk* that was a combination of Near-Eastern and Oriental racial strains. This alone made the Jews incompatible with all European races, but specifically to the German race.¹⁸

He argued that racial types objectified the physical representation of man's inner drives and nature. Not surprisingly, he grouped together the so-called physical characteristics of the Jews (slouched bodies, bent shoulders, obese forms, thick, sensual lips) and contended that these physical characteristics, along with "Jewish gestures and traits", were indicative of the stereotypical Jewish preoccupations with materialism, power, and monetary gain. He backed up these claims with photographic evidence of the "typical Jewish posture".¹⁹

Despite his reliance on seemingly objective sources of anthropology, it is clear, however, that Günther was repeating the same stereotypes that were already prevalent in German ideologies about the Jews. His description of the physical characteristics was reminiscent of Wagner's writing about the Jewish voice in *Das Judentum in der Musik*. His racial history of the Jews drew from similar ideas as Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. In spite of this, Günther was beloved among the Nazis. In 1930, the Nazi government in Thuringia forced the University of Jena to accept him as a professor of anthropology. This gave Günther even more credibility among the German public, making him the leading proponent of the doctrine of race.²⁰

Even before this appointment, Günther's ideas were becoming accepted as truth by academics. In 1927, the 7th edition of *Meyers Lexikon*, a standard German reference work, used his *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* as a source for its anthropological description of the Jews. It stated, nearly identical to Günther's work, that the Jews were a "predominately Near Eastern- Oriental racial mix" that exhibited racially based characteristics such as "business sense, cleverness, aversion to physical work" and an "exceptional ambivalence of their essence."²¹

Yet his popularity did not last forever. In the years following the Second World War, Günther was unable to secure an academic position due to his abstruse thinking and discredited ideas. He continued to publish works under the pseudonyms of Ludwig Winter and Heinrich Ackermann. In 1959, he wrote a book entitled *Begabungschwund in Europa* (Fading Talent in Europe) that lamented the host of "counter-selective forces" that were eroding the health of the white races of Europe. However, he did not die in abject obscurity. In the late 1950s, he joined the newly formed *Northern League* where his Nordic racist ideas still held sway. In his postwar autobiography, Günther wrote that he never mixed science and politics. This statement seems contrary to his widely recognized status as father of German *Rassenkunde* and the *Rassenpapst* (Racial Pope) of the doctrine of race.²²

Eugenics Based on Old Prejudices

Alfred Ploetz, the Father of German Rassenhygiene

¹⁸ Steinweis, *Studying the Jew*, 27-28.

¹⁹ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 303; Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 111, 150.

²⁰ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 202, 302-3.

²¹ Eric Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof: Genealogy, Racial Science, and the Final Solution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 57.

²² Kühn, *The Nazi Connection*, 103; Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 293, 301.

At the turn of the century, the science of eugenics was growing in popularity in Europe and America as a possible solution to the problems of rapid urbanization and industrialization. Eugenics, in both positive and negative forms, advocated the selective breeding of humans in order to strengthen those deemed biologically and reproductively fit and to diminish the numbers deemed unfit to reproduce. The science was begun in Great Britain by Francis Galton and perfected in the United States of America under the auspices of Charles Davenport and Harry Laughlin in New York. In Germany, Dr. Alfred Ploetz would become the leading voice in the eugenics movement. In 1895, he coined the term *Rassenhygiene* (racial hygiene) in his book, *Die Tüchtigkeit unserer Rasse und der Schutz der Schwachen* (The Fitness of Our Race and the Protection of the Weak). This term would become the name given to the German pursuit equivalent to the American and British eugenics program.²³

Ploetz agreed with Cesare Lombroso, the father of modern criminology, that criminality was inbred along with other social and mental defects. Ploetz believed that eugenics was the only practical answer to the problem of degeneracy and that the United States, which had already implemented a wide-reaching program of forced sterilization by the 1920s, was a bold leader in the movement to secure the rights of the fit against the unfit. Yet Ploetz's beliefs about eugenics were somewhat extreme even compared to the Americans. Ploetz wrote that physicians should examine newborns at birth for their fitness to live or die. He believed that the survival of the strongest and fittest trumped any claims of ruthlessness. Mankind could not afford to allow the weak to flourish under any circumstances, according to Ploetz. He stressed in his writings the need for the state to intervene in the struggle for racial existence. Liberal democracies, bloody war, revolutions, and welfare for the sick or inferior all led to the eventual degeneration of the racial stock, according to Ploetz. He believed war and revolution should be avoided at all costs and that welfare should only be given to those past childbearing age to discourage large families living on the government dole. People, according to him, should be protected by the state from the evils of alcohol, venereal disease, or any other threat to the "human germ plasm". He even went so far as to warn against the medical intervention of patients who would normally die out without reproducing.²⁴

It is these ideas about the racial hygiene of the superior against the inferior that informed the scientific and social attitudes of the next generation of scientists whose work would be directly influential in the crafting of Nazi racial policy. In Europe and America, the preservation of the race, whether it was American, British, or Aryan, was of the highest importance.

Fritz Lenz: Grundriss der menschliche Erblchkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene, 1921

The trusted textbook of German genetics for nearly 20 years, *Grundriss der menschliche Erblchkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene* (Foundations of Human Heredity and Racial Hygiene), strongly influenced biomedical thinking in Germany and gave National Socialists the scientific legitimacy for their campaign to create a racial state in the *Vaterland*. By 1936, the two-volume work had gone through four editions and in 1931 had been published in English to the rave reviews of American eugenicists. It had a rather wide readership in Germany. It was even one of the books that Adolf Hitler read during his imprisonment after the failed Beer Hall Putsch in 1923.²⁵

²³ Kühl, *The Nazi Connection*, 4; Black, *War Against the Weak*, 32, 51.

²⁴ Lombroso also gave rise to the scientific evidence of craniometry that measured the skulls of criminals and the insane against those of the relatively normal; USHMM, *Deadly Medicine*, 3-4; Kühl, *The Nazi Connection*, 13; Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 99; Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 14-15.

²⁵ Black, *War Against the Weak*, 270.

The work was the joint efforts of Erwin Baur, professor of genetics in Berlin, Ernst Fischer, professor of anthropology at the University of Freiburg, and Fritz Lenz, a highly regarded scholar and eugenicist who had contributed extensively to Alfred Ploetz's *Archiv für Rassen-und Gesellschaftsbiologie*. It is the work of Fritz Lenz that was most intriguing of the three.

Fritz Lenz's contribution to the study of race science was significant primarily because of what he deemphasized in comparison to his colleagues. For Lenz, the answer to the Jewish Question or even the bigger racial questions of eugenics was not about measuring foreheads and comparing shades of blond hair and blue eyes. The answer according to Lenz was the preservation of Nordic blood and spirit. In the second edition of *Foundations of Human Heredity*, he stated,

One must warn against exaggerating [the importance] of external racial traits as hair and eye color, body length, and head shape. The genes that determine these traits make up a rather small portion of the entire hereditary endowment of a race. A dark-haired German can just as easily have Nordic mental traits as a blond-haired one. The mental characteristics are far more important than the external traits, and the former are in greater danger than the latter. There will be blond hair and blue eyes in Europe for thousands of years, but the Nordic soul is dying out.²⁶

This quotation gets at the problem that Lenz saw in the discussion of race. For Lenz, there was an intrinsic value in his concept of race. There was nothing else more important to Lenz. In his *On the Renewal of Ethics*, he asserts that “[w]e believe in one thing: in blood—in the race. The race is that which carries everything, the personality, the state, and the people. Everything that is essential comes from it. [Race] is the essence itself.” Once again, we have a leading figure in the racial discussion talking about the essential “essence” of race. Wagner mentioned it in his writings just as did Chamberlain and Günther. However, Lenz took this discussion to another level entirely. For Lenz was not a mere musical genius, wannabe botanist, or amateur anthropologist. Lenz was a eugenicist who believed in the active implementation of eugenic theory in the legal and social systems. He stated in *Foundations of Human Heredity* “[o]ur ethnological studies must lead us, not to arrogance, but to action—to eugenics.”²⁷

While a great deal of the definition of who was of pure racial character came from the former theories of Chamberlain and Günther concerning head shape, eye color, and the anthropological origins of the competing races, the eugenic solution came directly from the eugenicists like Ploetz and Lenz. According to eugenic theory, if Germany wanted to protect itself from an untimely demise, it had to protect its race and blood by directing the growth of superior breeding stock and the decline (and eventual extinction) of inferior breeding stock.

The Nazi Application of Race Science

In the 1920 party platform of the National Socialists German Worker's Party, the following lines appear:

None but members of the nation may be citizens of the state. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. No Jew therefore may be a member of the

²⁶ Sheila Faith Weiss, “Race and Class in Fritz Lenz's Eugenics.” *Medzinhistorisches Journal* 27 (1992): 14

²⁷ Weiss, “Race and Class...” in *Medzinhistorisches Journal* 27, 9; Stackelberg and Winkle, *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook*, 75.

nation. Anyone who is not a citizen of the state may live in Germany only as a guest and must be regarded as being subject to legislation governing aliens.²⁸

From these lines, we can see that the National Socialists political agenda was already a decidedly antisemitic one. Antisemitism was not just one of many issues on the minds of the early Nazis. It was the major issue second only to restoring the Reich to its former glory. One could even argue that their focus on the Jews in Germany was their primary solution to the problem of restoring the Reich. As previously mentioned, the development of race science had already been well underway in Germany for some time before the above words were penned and adopted. It is my contention that the lines of science and politics were greatly blurred during this development. This blurring facilitated the Nazis in their creation of the racial state that would dominate the German controlled parts of Europe before and during the Second World War.

This is apparent not only in the party platform of 1920, but also in the writings of the leader of the party, Adolf Hitler. In *Mein Kampf*, he stated,

The *völkisch* State has to make up for what is today neglected in this field in all directions. It has to put the race into the center of life in general. It has to care for its preservation in purity. It has to make the child the most precious possession of a people. It has to take care that only the healthy beget children; that there is only one disgrace: to be sick and to bring children into the world despite one's own deficiencies; but one highest honor: to renounce this. Further, on the other hand this has to be looked upon as objectionable: to keep healthy children from the nation. Thereby the State has to appear as the guardian of a thousand years' future, in the face of which the wish and the egoism of the individual appears as nothing and has to submit. It has to put the most modern medical means at the service of this knowledge. It has to declare unfit for propagation everybody who is visibly ill and has inherited a disease and it has to carry this out in practice. [...] He who is not physically and mentally healthy and worthy must not perpetuate his misery in the body of his child.²⁹

Hitler expressed agreement with Fritz Lenz in his assertion that “it is a hardly conceivable mistake in thinking to believe that, let us say, a negro or a Chinese would become a German because he learns German and is prepared to speak the German language in the future and perhaps to give his vote to a German political party.” He continued in a separate passage by expressing a popularly held eugenic belief about hybridization of races:

Any crossing between two beings of not quite the same high standard produces a medium between the standards of the parents. That means: the young one will probably be on a higher level than the racially lower parent, but not as high as the higher one. Consequently, it will succumb later on in the fight against the higher level. But such a mating contradicts Nature's will to breed life as a whole towards a higher level.³⁰

²⁸ US Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Vol. IV. (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 209.

²⁹ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939), 608.

³⁰ Lenz has said in *Foundations of Human Heredity* “Jews do not transform themselves into Germans by writing book on Goethe.” Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 55; Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 390, 588.

In yet another passage, he explained the *völkisch* worldview in opposition to his understanding of Karl Marx's ideology. He stated,

In opposition to this [Marxism], the *völkisch* view recognizes the importance of mankind in its racially innate elements. In principle, it sees in the State only a means to an end, and as its end it considers the preservation of the racial existence of men. Thus it by no means believes in an equality of the races, but with their differences it also recognizes their superior and inferior values, and by this recognition it feels the obligation in accordance with the Eternal Will that dominates this universe to promote the victory of the better and stronger, and to demand the submission of the worse and the weaker.³¹

The obvious eugenic thinking that is evident in Hitler's emphasis on promoting "the victory of the better and stronger" and "submission of the worse and the weaker" is rather indicative of the kind of thinking that permeates the intentions of the Nazis in regards to race and establishes their link with the racial theorists of the previous discussion. Hitler made no secret his love for Wagner and went so far as to kiss the hands of the dying Chamberlain. These men were major prophets in the doctrine of race. Guenther, Ploetz, Baur, Fischer, and Lenz were the studious disciples in this twisted theology of German *Volksgeist* and scientific methods. It is really no major surprise that when the Nazis went to write the definition of the Jews into the German legal code that they would rely heavily on both the major prophets' warnings and the disciples "rigorous research".³²

The Nuremberg Laws, 1935

In September 1935, the first in a series of laws collectively known as the Nuremberg Laws were passed. The first two of these laws (Reich Citizenship Law and the Law to Protect German Blood and Honor) established a fixed hierarchy of racial categories for the first time in German legal code. These laws were enacted in order to streamline the plethora of decrees and laws passed since 1933 concerning the legal definition of Jews and their place in the Reich.³³

All Germans were required to produce family ancestries to prove their racial stock. Racial stock was determined by the religious affiliations of the individual's grandparents in 1871, the year of the declaration of the Second German Reich. The racial categories established ranged from "full blooded Jew" to "full blooded German". Those with no Jewish grandparents were classified as "full blooded Germans" and were given the citizenship status of *Reichsangehöriger* (citizen of the Reich). Those with three or four Jewish grandparents were classified as "full blooded Jews". In the middle, were two classifications of *Mischlinge*.³⁴

Those Germans who had only one Jewish grandparent were classified as *Mischlinge* of the Second Degree. These individuals were generally treated as Germans, but were still restricted in who they could marry or have sex with. Individuals with two Jewish grandparents were classified as *Mischlinge* of the First Degree. They existed under a separate classification of *Geltungsjuden* (Jews under the law) if they were married to a full-blooded Jew or belonged to a Jewish community.³⁵

The Nuremberg Laws represented a synthesis of earlier ideas about race and the newer concepts of eugenics. The civil servants who drafted the laws quoted the research of Guenther, Fischer, and Lenz. Their

³¹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 579-80.

³² Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 93.

³³ Steinweis, *Studying the Jew*, 41-42.

³⁴ Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Towards German Jews 1933-1939* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1970.), 124.

³⁵ Steinweis, *Studying the Jew*, 42.

focus on the regulation of marriage and reproductive rights worked on the assumptions of Mendelian genetics and positive eugenics. The National Socialists believed that the problem of German-Jewish miscegenation and race suicide was at the root of the Jewish Question. According to the Nazis, Germany's future prosperity depended upon the regulation of marriage and reproduction.³⁶

However, the definition of Jewish blood based on religious faith relied on absurd assumptions of earlier racial theorists that were based on the Lamarckian hypothesis of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. The Lamarckian hypothesis argued that the learned behaviors of an individual or group would influence that individual or group's blood and genetic heredity. This hypothesis was counter to the Mendelian model that focused on the static physical characteristics that did not change by some magical process due to the beliefs or learned behaviors of an individual within a species at any given time. While the National Socialists used Mendelian ideas to create their legal hierarchy, their choice to define Jews and Germans based on religious affiliation undermined their use of August Mendel's genetic theories. As Karl A. Schleunes stated in his *Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, "the absurdity of these assumptions [related to religious preference of grandparents] bothered neither the doctor nor the legislator." Even though the National Socialists attempted to codify the work of race scientists in the Nuremberg Laws, the ultimate basis of the Laws was a flawed understanding of science. Yet, it is clear that the goal of these laws was not to promote science, as much as remove what the Nazis believed was an alien, Jewish element from the Reich.³⁷

The National Socialists misuse and abuse of scientific reasoning in drafting legislation is important due to the centrality of scientists and doctors of the Nazis' creation of a racially pure Thousand-Year Reich. Without a firm definition of race, the National Socialist racial state would have been even more ad-hoc than it appeared in the Nuremberg Laws. The work of essayists, like Wagner and Chamberlain, and scientists, like Günther, Ploetz, and Lenz, gave the National Socialists a foundation to make their arguments to the general public and pursue their goals of a racially pure bio-utopia.

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³⁶ USHMM, *Deadly Medicine*, 160; Steinweis, *Studying the Jew*, 42.

³⁷ Schleunes, *Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, 129.

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