

The Aryans

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Terminology

"Aryan" is a term meaning "noble".

In the 19th century that it was also a self-designation used by all Proto-Indo-Europeans.

The English word "Aryan" is borrowed from the Sanskrit word *ārya*, आर्य, meaning "noble" or "noble one", however, as a translation of Latin Arianus (derived from Old Persian *ariya*), Arian has long been in English language use.

It is translated into German as 'arisch'.

The Aryan Race

Arthur de Gobineau

Drawing on references in the Rig Veda, the term "Aryan" was seen as a racial category through the work of Arthur de Gobineau, whose ideology of race was based on an idea that blonde northern European "Aryans" had migrated across the world, and founded all major civilizations, before being degraded through racial mixture with local populations.

In the 1850s Arthur de Gobineau stated that "Aryan" corresponded to the suggested prehistoric Indo-European culture (1853–1855, *Essay on the 'Inequality of the Human Races'*).

Further, de Gobineau believed that there were three basic races – white, yellow and black – and that everything else was caused by race miscegenation, which de Gobineau argued was the cause of chaos.

The "master race", according to de Gobineau, were the Northern European "Aryans", who had remained relatively "racially pure".

Southern Europeans (to include Spaniards and Southern Frenchmen), Eastern Europeans, North Africans, Middle Easterners, Iranians, Central Asians, Indians, he all considered racially mixed, and degenerated through miscegenation, and thus less than ideal.

Houston Stewart Chamberlain

Through Houston Stewart Chamberlain, (the English/German author who married into the Wagner family) Gobineau's ideas later influenced the völkisch racial ideology, which also saw "Aryan peoples" as innately superior to other racial groups.

By the 1880s a number of linguists and anthropologists argued that the "Aryans" themselves had originated somewhere in northern Europe.

A specific region began to crystallize when the linguist Karl Penka, ('Die Herkunft der Arier - Neue Beiträge zur historischen Anthropologie der europäischen Völker', 1886), popularized the idea that the "Aryans" had emerged in Scandinavia, and could be identified by the distinctive Nordic characteristics of blond hair and blue eyes.

Thomas Henry Huxley

The distinguished biologist Thomas Henry Huxley agreed with him, coining the term "Xanthochroi" to refer to fair-skinned Europeans (as opposed to darker Mediterranean peoples, who Huxley called "Melanochroi").

This "Nordic race" theory gained traction following the publication of Charles Morris's 'The Aryan Race' (1888), which touches on racial ideology.

A similar rationale was followed by Georges Vacher de Lapouge in his book 'L'Aryen et son rôle social' (1899, "The Aryan and his Social Role").

To this idea of 'race', Vacher de Lapouge espoused what he termed 'selectionism', and which had two aims: first, achieving the annihilation of trade unionists, considered 'degenerate'; second, the prevention of labor dissatisfaction through the development of 'types' of man, each 'designed' for one specific task (see Aldous Huxley's novel 'Brave New World' for a fictional treatment of this idea).

Blavatsky

Petrovna Blavatsky

In 'Die Geheimlehre' - ('The Secret Doctrine') (1888), Helena Petrovna Blavatsky described the 'Aryan root race' as the fifth of seven 'Root Races', dating their souls as having begun to incarnate about a million years ago in Atlantis.

Blavatsky regularly contrasts "Aryan" with "Semitic" culture, to the detriment of the latter.

She also states that some peoples are "semi-animal creatures". These latter include "the Tasmanians, a portion of the Australians and a mountain tribe in China."

There are also "considerable numbers of the mixed Lemuro-Atlantean peoples produced by various crossings with such semi-human stocks - e.g., the inhabitants of Borneo, the Veddhas of Ceylon, most of the remaining Australians, Bushmen, Negritos, Andaman Islanders, etc."

The Semites were a subdivision of the Aryan root race.

"The occult doctrine admits of no such divisions as the Aryan and the Semite, ... The Semites, especially the Arabs, are later Aryans — degenerate in spirituality and in materiality. To these belong all the Jews and the Arabs."

The Jews, according to Blavatsky, were a "race descended from the 'Chandalas'".

The 'Chandalas' were the result of miscegenation between the Aryans and primates - (see Liebenfels).

Guido von List (and his associates, such as Lanz von Liebenfels) later took up some of Blavatsky's ideas, mixing her ideology with nationalistic and Völkisch theories; this system of thought became known as 'Ariosophy'. It was believed, in Ariosophy, that the Nordics were superior to all other peoples because according to Theosophy the Nordics were the most recent sub-race of the Aryan root race to have evolved. Such views also fed into the development of national Socialist ideology.

Blavatsky connects physical race with spiritual attributes constantly throughout her works.

"The intellectual difference between the Aryan and other races, such as savages is inexplicable on any other grounds. No amount of culture, nor generations of training amid civilization, could raise such human specimens to the same intellectual level as the Aryans. The 'sacred spark' is missing in them and it is they who are inferior races".

America

In the United States, the best-selling 1907 book 'Race Life of the Aryan Peoples' by Joseph Pomeroy Widney consolidated in the popular mind the idea that the word "Aryan" is the proper identification for "all Indo-Europeans", and that "Aryan Americans" of the "Aryan race" are destined to fulfill America's manifest destiny.

Germany

The depiction of Aryans as possessors of a "superior language" became a matter of national pride in learned circles of Germany (portrayed against the background that World War I was lost because Germany had been betrayed from within by miscegenation and the "corruption" of socialist trade unionists and other "degenerates").

Alfred Rosenberg

Alfred Rosenberg - one of the principal architects of Völkisch ideology and author of the influential 'Der Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts' - argued for a new "religion of the blood", based on the innate promptings of the Nordic soul to defend its "noble" character against racial and cultural degeneration.

The 'Der Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts' is a 1930 book by Alfred Rosenberg, one of the principal ideologues of the NSDAP, and editor of the party paper 'Völkischer Beobachter'. The titular "myth" is "the myth of blood, which under the sign of the swastika unchains the racial world-revolution. It is the awakening of the race soul, which after long sleep victoriously ends the race chaos." Adolf Hitler awarded the first 'State Prize for Art and Science' to the author of "The Myth of the Twentieth Century". The official document accompanying the prize "expressly praises Rosenberg as 'person who has, in a scientific and penetrating manner, laid the firm foundation for an understanding of the ideological bases of National Socialism.'"

Under influence of Rosenberg, the theories of Arthur de Gobineau, Georges Vacher de Lapouge, Blavatsky, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Madison Grant, and those of Adolf Hitler, all culminated in the racial policies of the Third Reich, and the "Aryanization" decrees of the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s.

In its eugenic medical model, the removal of the "racially inferior" Untermenschen was sanctified as the excision of a diseased organ in an otherwise healthy body.

Aryanism and National Socialism

The ideology of National Socialism was based upon the conception of the Aryan race or Germanic peoples being the 'Herren Volk' (master race).

The Völkisch conception of the Aryan race arose from earlier proponents of the supremacist conception of race as described by racial theorists such as Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain - (see above).

Hans F. K. Günther

The racial theorist Hans F. K. Günther identified the European race as having five sub-type races: Nordic, Mediterranean, Dinaric, Alpine, and East Baltic. Günther applied a Nordicist conception that Nordics were the highest in the racial hierarchy among these five European subtype races.

In his book 'Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes' (1922) ("Racial Science of the German People"), Günther recognized Germans as being composed of all five European sub-types, but emphasized the strong distinctly Aryan Nordic heritage among Germans.

He defined each racial sub-type according to general physical appearance, and their psychological qualities, including their "racial soul" - referring to their emotional traits and religious beliefs, and provided detailed information on their hair, eye, and skin colors, facial structure.

He provided photographs of Germans identified as Nordic in places like Baden, Stuttgart, Salzburg, and Schwaben; and provided photographs of Germans he identified as Alpine and Mediterranean types, especially in Vorarlberg, Bavaria, and the Black Forest region of Baden.

Adolf Hitler read 'Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes' and the book undoubtedly influenced his racial policy.

As a result, Günther attained a position in the anthropology department at the University of Jena in 1932, where Adolf Hitler attended Günther's inaugural lecture.

Günther distinguished Aryans from Jews, and identified Jews as descending from non-European races, particularly from what he classified as the Near Asian race (Vorderasiatische) more commonly known as the Armenoid race, and said that such origins rendered Jews fundamentally different from and incompatible with Germans, and most Europeans.

Günther stated that the Near Eastern race descended from the Caucasus in the fifth and fourth millennia BC, and that it had expanded into Asia Minor and Mesopotamia and eventually to the west coast of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

Aside from ascribing Armenians and Jews as having Near Eastern characteristics, he ascribed them to several other contemporary peoples, including: Greeks, Turks, Syrians, and Iranians.

In his work 'Rasseigenschaften des jüdischen Volkes' - ('Racial Characteristics of the Jewish People'), he defined the racial soul of the Near Eastern race as emphasizing a 'Handelgeist' ("commercial spirit"), and described them as 'Kunstvolle Händler' ("artful traders") - a term that Günther ascribed as being used by Jewish racial theorist Samuel Weissenberg to describe contemporary Armenians, Greeks, and Jews.

Günther added to that description of the Near Eastern type as being composed primarily of commercially spirited and artful traders, by claiming that the type held strong psychological manipulation skills that aided them in trade.

He claimed that the Near Eastern race had been "bred not so much for the conquest and exploitation of nature as it was for the conquest and exploitation of people".

Hitler and the Aryans

Hitler's conception of the Aryan Herrenvolk ("Aryan master race") explicitly excluded the vast majority of Slavs, regarding the Slavs as having dangerous Jewish and Asiatic influences.

The Third Reich, because of this, declared Slavs to be 'untermenschen'.

Exceptions were made for a small percentage of Slavs who were seen to be descended from German settlers, and therefore fit to be Germanized, and to be considered part of the Aryan master race.

Hitler described Slavs as "a mass of born slaves who feel the need of a master".

Hitler believed Slavs to be intrinsically idle and disorganized.

Dr Paul Joseph Goebbels, propaganda minister of the Third Reich, had media portray Slavs as primitive 'untermenschen' from the Siberian tundra.

The German notion of Slavs being inferior was seen as part of the agenda for creating Lebensraum ("living space") for Germans, and other Germanic people, in eastern Europe that was initiated during World War II under Generalplan Ost.

As part of this plan, millions of Germans and other Germanic settlers would be moved into conquered territories of Eastern Europe, while the original Slavic inhabitants were to be removed.

Hitler often doubted whether Czechs were Aryan or not.

He said in his table talk "It is enough for a Czech to grow a moustache for anyone to see, from the way the thing droops, that his origin is Mongoloian."

The question of whether Italians were Aryan enough was questioned by the German racial theorists.

Hitler viewed northern Italians as strongly Aryan, but not southern Italians.

Völkisch theorists viewed the downfall of the Roman Empire as being the result of the pollution of blood from racial intermixing, claiming that many Italians were a hybrid of races, including black African races.

Hitler even mentioned his view of the presence of Negroid blood in the Mediterranean peoples during his first meeting with Mussolini in 1934.

Aryan Nordicism

'Nordicism' was a historical movement which, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, advocated the existence of a 'Nordic race', and the promotion of its interests.

Only in the 1920s did a strong partiality for "Nordic" begin to reveal itself, and the term was used almost interchangeably with 'Aryan'.

Nordicists stated that Nordics had formed upper tiers of ancient civilizations, even in the Mediterranean civilizations of antiquity (in particular ancient Greece and Rome), which had declined once this dominant race had been assimilated.

Thus they argued that ancient evidence suggested that leading Romans were blond or red-haired.

Nordicism in Germany was known under the term "Nordischer Gedanke" (Nordic thought).

This phrase was coined by the German eugenicists Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer and Fritz Lenz.

It appeared in their 1921 work 'Menschliche Vererbung' - (Human Heredity), which insisted on the innate superiority of the Nordic race.

Adapting the arguments of Arthur Schopenhauer, and others, to Darwinian theory, they argued that the qualities of initiative and will-power, identified by earlier writers, had arisen from natural selection, because of the tough landscape in which Nordic peoples evolved.

This had ensured that weaker individuals had not survived.

This argument was derived from earlier eugenicist and Social Darwinist ideas.

According to the authors, the Nordic race arose in the ice age, from:

'quite a small group which, under stress of rapidly changing conditions (climate, beasts of the chase) was exposed to exceptionally rigorous selection and was persistently inbred, thus acquiring the peculiar characteristics which persist today as the exclusive heritage of the Nordic race ... Philological, archaeological and anthropological researches combine to indicate that the primal home of the Aryans must have been in Northern Europe.'

At the time of publication, Germany was well-accustomed to theories of race and racial superiority, due to the long presence of the Völkish movement, the philosophy that Germans constituted a unique people, or 'volk', linked by common blood.

While Volkism was popular mainly among Germany's lower classes and was more a romanticized version of ethnic nationalism, Nordicism attracted the middle and upper classes, including prominent German anthropologists and eugenicists.

Hans F. K. Günther (see above), one of Fischer's students, first defined "Nordic thought" in his programmatic book 'Der Nordische Gedanke unter den Deutschen' - (Nordic Thought among the Germans').

He became the most influential German in this field.

His 'Kurze Ethnologie des deutschen Volkes' - ('Short Ethnology of the German People')(1929) was very widely circulated.

Morphologically, the Nordic race was argued to be associated with characteristics such as blue eyes, blonde hair, and tallness, however, more important than these was a high cephalic index - a head that was considerably longer, front to back, than it was wide.

The psychological traits of Nordics were described as truthful, equitable, competitive, reserved, and individualistic

Nordicism is an ideology of racial separatism which views Nordics as an endangered racial group.

The Nordic race was seen as distinct from the Alpine race and the Mediterranean race.

These groups (and possibly others) were seen as subdivisions of the 'Caucasian' race.

The idea of the Northern origins of the 'Aryans' was particularly influential in Germany.

It was widely believed that the "Aryans" were ethnically identical to the Goths, Vandals and other ancient Germanic peoples of the Völkerwanderung.

This idea was often intertwined with antisemitic ideas.

The distinctions between the "Aryan" and "Semitic" peoples were based on the aforementioned linguistic and ethnic history.

A complete theory of Aryan and anti-Semitic history can be found in Alfred Rosenberg's major work, 'Der Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts' - ('The Myth of the Twentieth Century' - see above).

Rosenberg's account of ancient history, melded with his racial speculations, proved to be very effective in spreading racial theories among German intellectuals in the early twentieth century, especially after the First World War.

Nordicism and Atlantis

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Atlantis

Völkisch racial theories held the Atlanteans to be a race of Nordic supermen, and Alfred Rosenberg (see above) wrote of a "Nordic-Atlantean" master race whose civilization was lost through inward corruption and betrayal.

According to Rosenberg, the Nordic race had evolved in a now-lost landmass off the coast of Europe, perhaps the mythical Atlantis, migrated through northern Europe and expanded further south to Iran and India where it founded the Aryan cultures.

Like Grant and others, he argued that the entrepreneurial energy of the Nordics had "degenerated" when they mixed with "inferior" peoples.

Related to Atlantis is the concept of Thule.

In Greek mythology Thule was known as Hyperborea - an unspecified region in the northern lands that lay beyond the north wind.

Hyperborea or Hyperboria – "beyond the Boreas" – was perfect, with the sun shining twenty-four hours a day, which to modern ears suggests a possible location within the Arctic Circle.

John G. Bennett wrote a research paper entitled "The Hyperborean Origin of the Indo-European Culture" (Journal Systematics, Vol. 1, No. 3, December 1963) in which he claimed the Indo-European homeland was in the far north, which he considered the Hyperborea of classical antiquity.

This idea was earlier proposed by the Austro-Hungarian ethnologist Karl Penka ('Origins of the Aryans', 1883).

H.P. Blavatsky, Rene Guenon and Julius Evola all shared the belief in the Hyperborean, polar origins of Mankind and a subsequent solidification and devolution.

According to these esoterists, Hyperborea was the Golden Age polar center of civilization and spirituality; mankind does not rise from the ape, but progressively devolves into the apelike condition as it strays physically and spiritually from its mystical otherworldly homeland in the Far North, succumbing to the demonic energies of the South Pole, the greatest point of materialization (see Joscelyn Godwin, Arktos: The Polar Myth).

for more information about the Aryans and Atlantis see:

'Atlantis und das Dritte Reich'

Later Developments

With the rise of Hitler, Nordic theory became the norm within German culture.

In some cases the "Nordic" concept became an almost 'abstract ideal' rather than a mere racial category.

Mainstream Nordic theory was subsequently institutionalized.

Hans F. K. Günther, who joined the NSDAP in 1932, was praised as a pioneer in racial thinking, and a shining light of Nordic theory.

Most official German comments on the Nordic Race during the Third Reich were based on Günther's works.

Eugen Fischer and Fritz Lenz were also appointed to senior positions overseeing the policy of 'Rassenhygiene' - (Racial Hygiene).

In 1942 Hitler stated in private,

'I shall have no peace of mind until I have planted a seed of Nordic blood wherever the population stands in need of regeneration. If at the time of the migrations, while the great racial currents were exercising their influence, our people received so varied a share of attributes, these latter blossomed to their full value only because of the presence of the Nordic racial nucleus.