

COMMENTARY

UNDERSTANDING NAZI ANIMAL PROTECTION AND THE HOLOCAUST

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Abstract. It is well known that the Nazis treated human beings with extreme cruelty but it is less widely recognized that the Nazis also took some pains to develop and pass extensive animal protection laws. How could the Nazis have professed such concern for animals while treating humans so badly? It would be easy to dismiss Nazi proclamations on animals as mere hypocrisy but there may be other explanations for the contradiction. For example, anecdotal reports and psychological evaluations of many prominent Nazis suggest they felt affection for animals but dislike of humans. Second, animal protection measures, whether sincere or not, may have been a legal veil to attack Jews and others considered undesirable. Third, the Nazis blurred moral distinctions between animals and people and tended to treat members of even the Master Race as animals at times. This article argues that at the core of the Nazi treatment of humans and animals was a reconstitution of society's boundaries and margins. All human cultures seek to protect what is perceived to be pure from that which is seen to be dangerous and polluting and most societies establish fairly clear boundaries between people and animals. In Nazi Germany, however, human identity was not contaminated by including certain animal traits but certain peoples were considered to be a very real danger to Aryan purity.

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INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the Nazis treated human beings with extreme cruelty. Grisly "medical" experiments on humans have been carefully documented and analyzed (e.g., Lifton 1986) as has the cold, calculated extermination of millions of people in the Holocaust (e.g., Hilberg 1961). Less well known are the extensive measures taken by Nazis to ensure the humane care and protection of animals. How could the Nazis have been so concerned about cruelty to animals while they treated people so inhumanely? It would be easy to dismiss the apparently benevolent Nazi attitude toward animals as "hypocrisy," but this would be a facile way of evading an examination of the psychological and social dynamics of Nazi thinking and behavior. Rather than questioning the authenticity of the motivations behind Nazi animal protection — a question that is unanswerable — it may be more useful to ask how such thinking was possible and what significance it had.

We offer three explanations for this contradiction. First, at a personal or psychological level, this behavior may not seem so contradictory because anecdotal reports and psychological assessments of many prominent Nazi political and military leaders suggest they felt affection and regard for animals but enmity and distance toward humans. While love of animals is itself considered an admirable quality, under the Nazis it may have obscured brutality toward human beings, both on the personal and the political level, whatever its roots were. Second, animal protection measures, whether sincere or not, may have been a legal veil to level an attack on the Jews. In making this attack,

since both were portrayed as victims of "oppressors" such as Jews. Third, the Nazis abolished moral distinctions between animals and people by viewing people as animals. The result was that animals could be considered "higher" than some people. All three of these explanations argue for a culture where it was possible to increase the moral status of animals and decrease the moral status of some humans by blurring the boundaries between humans and animals, making it possible for National Socialists to rationalize their behavior and to disenfranchise large groups of humans.

Although our analysis assumes a position of analytic detachment, this stance should not be read as an excusing of Nazi behavior. Our analysis of the Nazi movement has far-reaching ethical implications, but these are largely beyond the scope of this paper. We believe, in this instance, that moral concern is best channeled into understanding; indeed, a highly moralistic discussion might obscure the dynamics of the National Socialist movement.

Nazi Animal Protection

Around the end of the nineteenth century, kosher butchering and vivisection were the foremost concerns of the animal protection movement in Germany (Hoelscher 1949; Neff 1989; Trohler and Maehle 1987). These concerns continued during the Third Reich and became formalized as laws. On April 21, 1933, almost immediately after the Nazis came to power, they passed a set of laws regulating the slaughter of animals. At the start of 1933, the Nazi representatives to the Prussian parliament met in order to ban vivisection (Proctor 1988). In August, 1933, over German radio Hermann Göring announced an end to the "unbearable tor-

and threatened to "commit to concentration camps those who still think they can continue to treat animals as inanimate property" (Göring 1939, 70, 72). Göring decried the "cruel" experiments of unfeeling scientists whose animals were operated on, burned, or frozen without anesthetics. A ban on vivisection was enacted in Bavaria as well as Prussia (AMA 1933), although the Nazis then partially retreated from a full ban. The Nazi animal protection laws of November, 1933, permitted experiments on animals in some circumstances, but subject to a set of eight conditions and only with the explicit permission of the Minister of the Interior, supported by the recommendation of local authorities. The conditions were designed to eliminate pain and prevent unnecessary experiments. Horses, dogs, cats, and apes were singled out for special protection. Permission to experiment on animals was given not to individuals but only to institutions (Giese and Kahler 1944).

Inconspicuously buried in the animal protection laws of November, 1933 (point four, section two), was a provision for the "mercy killing" of animals. The law not only allowed but actually required that domesticated animals that were old, sick, and worn out, or for which "life has become a torment," be "painlessly" put to death. The wording of the provision was ambiguous; it was not entirely clear whether a family would be required to kill, say, an old dog that did nothing but sit by the fire. One binding commentary, passed immediately after the laws themselves, mandated that an expert should decide whether further life for an animal was a "torment" in unclear cases (Giese and Kahler 1944).

In addition to the laws against vivisection and kosher slaughter, scores of addi-

tional legal measures regulating the treatment of animals were enacted from 1933 through 1943, probably several times the number in the preceding half century (Giese and Kahler 1944). These covered in excruciating detail a vast array of concerns from the shoeing of horses to the use of anesthesia. One law passed in 1936 showed "particular solicitude" (Waite 1947, 41) about the suffering of lobsters and crabs, stipulating that restaurants were to kill crabs, lobsters, and other crustaceans by throwing them one at a time into rapidly boiling water (Giese and Kahler 1944). Several "high officials" had debated the question of the most humane death for lobsters before this regulation was passed, and two officials in the Interior Ministry had prepared a scholarly treatise on the subject (Waite 1977).

The Nazis also sought to protect wildlife. In 1934 and 1935, the focus of Nazi legislation on animals shifted from farm animals and pets to creatures of the wild. The preface to the hunting laws of March 27, 1935, announced a eugenic purpose behind the legislation, stating, "The duty of a true hunter is not only to hunt but also to nurture and protect wild animals, in order that a more varied, stronger and healthier breed shall emerge and be preserved" (Giese and Kahler 1944). Nazi veterinary journals often featured reports on endangered species (Proctor 1988). Göring, in particular, was concerned about the near extinction in Germany of bear, bison, and wild horse, and sought to establish conservation and breeding programs for dwindling species and to pass new and more uniform hunting laws and taxes (Irving 1989, 181). Göring's Game Laws are still operative today.

A uniform national hunting association was created to regulate the sport, restock lakes, tend forests, and protect dying

species. Taxes levied on hunters would be used for the upkeep of forests and game parks. Göring also established three nature reserves, introduced elk, and began a bison sanctuary with two pure bulls and seven hybrid cows on one of the reserves (Irving 1989, 182). He eventually succeeded in rearing 47 local bison. He also created a Game Research Laboratory, where he reintroduced night owl, wood grouse, heathcock, gray goose, raven, beaver, and otter, which Albert Speer (1970, 555) referred to as "Göring's animal paradise." Göring viewed forests almost in religious terms, calling them "God's cathedrals," and culling of game populations to prevent starvation or epidemics was conducted as a "pseudo-religious duty" (Irving 1989, 182).

The Nazi animal protection laws, formulated with considerable medical and legal sophistication, were characterized by an almost compulsive attention to detail. While bureaucratic thoroughness may have been the major driving force behind these documents, they also extended the scope of legal control far beyond the boundaries of human society by attempting a centralized regulation of all relationships, not only among people but, throughout the natural world. The purpose of the Law for the Protection of Animals, as noted in its introduction, was "to awaken and strengthen compassion as one of the highest moral values of the German people" (Giese and Kahler 1944; Waite 1977, 41). The philosophical basis for the laws was the attempt to minimize pain, according to one doctoral dissertation written primarily during the Nazi period (Hoelscher 1949). The fact that animals were to be protected for their own sakes, rather than for their relationship to humanity, was described as a new legal concept (Giese and Kahler 1944; Hoelscher 1949; Meyer 1975).

Like virtually all legal documents, these laws contained ambiguities and possible loopholes. In many respects, the laws of November, 1933, did not go far beyond the laws protecting animals in Britain, then considered the most comprehensive in the world. The severity of the punishments mandated by the German laws was, however, virtually unprecedented in modern times. "Rough mistreatment" of an animal could result in a punishment of two years in prison plus a fine (Giese and Kahler 1944).

It is not clear, however, how vigorously or conscientiously the animal protection laws were enforced, particularly outside of Prussia. Barnard (1990) maintains that several experiments on animals were conducted secretly by Nazi doctors. Hilberg (1961, 600-604) also describes several Nazi medical experiments on animals that preceded those on human beings. At any rate, Nazi Germany gradually became a state where petty theft could result in death, while violent crimes might go unpunished. Punishment did not fit the crime in any traditional sense. The new government retained the entire legal apparatus of the Weimar Republic but used it in the service of a different concept. In accordance with declarations by Hitler, for example, the laws of July 2, 1934, on "Measures for Protection of the State" provided that punishment was to be determined not by the crime itself but by the "fundamental idea" behind the crime (Staff 1964). Mistreatment of animals, then, might be taken by courts as evidence of a fundamentally antisocial mentality or even of Jewish blood.

The preoccupation with animal protection in Nazi Germany was evident in other social institutions and continued almost until the end of World War II. In 1934, the new government hosted an international conference on animal protection in Berlin.

Over the speakers' podium, surrounded by enormous swastikas, were the words "Entire epochs of love will be needed to repay animals for their value and service" (Meyer 1975). In 1936, the German Society for Animal Psychology was founded, and in 1938 animal protection was accepted as a subject to be studied in German public schools and universities. In 1943 an academic program in animal psychology was inaugurated at the Hannover School of Veterinary Medicine (Giese and Kahler 1944).

The Ideological and Historical Context

Though it appeared politically monolithic, the Nazi movement contained a surprisingly wide range of intellectual opinions. The leaders, in general, showed little interest in abstract theory, and only Alfred Rosenberg even attempted to synthesize Nazism into a cohesive set of doctrines. One cannot, therefore, understand the movement as though it were centered around an abstract philosophy, searching for more formal kinds of logic and coherence. Nazism was far more a cluster of loosely associated concerns. Even leading National Socialists avoided committing themselves on the subject of ideology, emphasizing that in its totality, National Socialism was indefinable (Fest 1970).

Nevertheless, the National Socialists attempted to actualize a racial ideology and, in so doing, to create a new Germanic identity (Mosse 1966). The search for German national character certainly did not start during the Third Reich. The enormous anxiety and preoccupation of the Nazis over national identity and differentiation from other human groups was only a heightened version of Germany's long obsession with its identity and its boundaries from other human groups and its relation-

ship with animals. Essential to this construction of national identity were certain themes regarding man's connections to nature and animal life that were articulated in German romantic poetry, music, and social thought. These ideas shaped Nazi thinking and served as intellectual resources that were drawn upon and distorted as expedient.

Man as Beast. One influential theme, particularly evident in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, was the rejection of intellectual culture and reason and the praising of animal instinct in man. This view attached enormous importance to the animal origin and character of man. It sought to celebrate the earth and beasts in mythical ways and to glorify Nietzsche's "blond beast" or "raubtier,"¹ playing up the beast in man as a type of "secret idol," possessing qualities of vitality, unscrupulousness, and blind will and obedience (Glaser 1978, 138).

Nietzsche was one of several heroes under Nazism whose work was distorted to become more brutal and aggressive, particularly his conception of the "blond beast." Glaser calls this element of National Socialism "man as predator." "The domestic animal who had been domesticated on the surface only was in the end superior to and more honest than man; in the predator one could 'rediscover his instincts and with that his honesty'" (Glaser 1978, 138). Animal instinct came to represent rebellion against culture and intellectualism. Returning to the animal nature within man, communing with nature, and elevating animal life to the level of cult worship were seen as alternatives to modernity, technology, and urbanization, according to Glaser. Acceptance of this view, it was thought, would lead to the spiritual and ideological changes necessary and desirable in German cultural life

for a new national self-identity to emerge (Gasman 1971).

As part of the rejection of culture, the new German, according to National Socialist ideology, was to disavow humanitarian behavior toward fellow humans as insincere. One element of this totalitarian system was the principle of contempt for certain human beings. Himmler, for example, called for renouncing "softness" (Fest 1970, 120). "False" comradeship and compassion were derogated. Instead of encouraging compassion, Hitler emphasized that the new German should emulate certain animal behaviors such as the obedience and faithfulness of pets and the strength, fearlessness, aggressiveness, and even cruelty found in beasts of prey, qualities that were among the movement's most stringent principles (Fest 1970, 120, 293).

The training of SS personnel illustrated the importance of these animal qualities, even if it ironically meant killing animals. It is alleged that after 12 weeks of working closely with a German shepherd, each SS soldier had to break his dog's neck in front of an officer in order to earn his stripes. Doing so, it was thought, would instill teamwork, discipline, and obedience to the Führer — qualities that were deemed more important than feelings for anything, including animals (Radde 1991).

Hitler himself pleaded for these qualities in German youth: "I want violent, imperious, fearless, cruel young people . . . The free, magnificent beast of prey must once again flash from their eyes . . . I want youth strong and beautiful . . . and athletic youth . . . In this way I shall blot out thousands of years of human domestication. I shall have the pure, noble stuff of nature" (Maltitz 1973, 62). In another instance, Hitler called for German youth to be as "swift as whippets" (Grunberger 1971, 136a). These new Germans were to

the decay of other civilizations; and vegetarianism became a symbol of the new, pure civilization that was to be Germany's future. Hunting was seen as appropriate to an earlier stage of man when killing animals involved some "risk" to the hunter. Now, only "sick" animals and those needed for food should be killed. When animals were to be killed for food, they were given a "sacred" status and their death was seen as a form of "sacrifice." This spiritual attitude toward animals, even those destined to be killed, could be seen in Nazi farm propaganda:

The Nordic peoples accord the pig the highest possible honor . . . in the cult of the Germans the pig occupies the first place and is the first among the domestic animals . . . The predominance of the pig, the sacred animal destined to sacrifices among the Nordic peoples, has drawn its originality from the great trees of the German forest. The Semites do not understand the pig, they do not accept the pig, they reject the pig, whereas this animal occupies the first place in the cult of the Nordic peoples (Brady 1969, 53).

Holistic Attitudes. A third theme, particularly expressed by philosophers such as Richard Wagner, exalted synthesis against analysis, unity and wholeness against disintegration and atomism, and Volk legend against scientific truth (Viereck 1965). Life, according to this view, had an organic unity and connectedness that should not be destroyed by mental analysis or physical dissection. "Mechanistic" science and the Jews perceived to be behind it were portrayed as part of a destructive analytic intellectualism that treated nature and animals mechanically by dissolving the whole into parts, thereby losing the invisible force that makes the whole more than the sum of its parts. It is important to understand that the

Nazis were not opposed to science per se but only to a particular approach. They wanted a science that was influenced more by Goethe than by Newton.

These attitudes helped to shape the Third Reich's criticisms of "mechanistic" scientific thinking and practices such as vivisection. The path of Western civilization had taken an incorrect turn, according to National Socialism. Mechanistic, exploitative technology, attributed to the Jews, was seen as cutting man off from his connections with nature and ultimately to his own spirit. Particularly influential was Wagner's thinking. Wagner had urged the smashing of laboratories and the removal of scientists and "vivisectionists." The vivisectionist, to Wagner, came to represent both the scientists' "torture" of animals as well as the capitalists' torture of the proletariat. Wagner also portrayed the vivisectionist as both evil and Jewish, but he was not alone in this. In *Gemma, oder Tugend und Laster* (Melena 1877), a sentimental novel of the 1870s that had done much to arouse public sentiment against animal experimentation, the author portrayed the vivisectionists as cultists who, under the pretense of practicing science, ritualistically cut up living animals in orgiastic rites. The author may not have intended to identify the vivisectionists in the novel with the Jews (it is very clear that membership in the cult of vivisectionists is a matter of volition rather than heredity) but the representation of vivisectionists in the book was so close to the popular stereotypes of Jews engaged in kosher butchering, it was inevitable that many people would make the connection.

Biological Purity. A fourth theme, also expressed by Wagner, involved Nordic racism and the biological purity of Aryans. The human race, it was argued, had become contaminated and impure through

be part animal, renouncing a certain side of their humanity. The compassion normally reserved for humans was to be redirected toward animals, and the cold aggressiveness of animal instinct became the model German. Animals were to be identified with and compassion toward animals rather than humans was to be encouraged, if not required. This was, in fact, part of the intent of the animal protection laws.

Reverence for Animals. A second theme was that animals were to be regarded as moral if not sacred beings. For example, the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel, writing at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, attacked religion, primarily Christianity, for putting man above animals and nature, and for isolating man from nature and creating contempt for animals. He believed that man and animals had the same natural as well as moral status and that much of human morality stemmed from animals, claiming that Christian moral principles such as "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" were "derived from our animal ancestors" (Bramwell 1989, 49). In Haeckel's view, animals were to be learned from, using the laws of nature as a way to reform human society. The function of human societies, like animal societies, was to survive, and biological fitness was essential to both. Not surprisingly, he supported "racial hygiene" through euthanasia (Bramwell 1989, 49). He deduced the ideal state from his observations of animals and nature, maintaining that the most efficient organization to ensure survival among animals (and therefore human society should adopt it too) was to be highly centralized and hierarchical, like the brain and nervous system (Bramwell 1989, 50). In his analyses, he stressed "duty" as essential to the success

of an ideal society; duty, he claimed, was a biological impulse shared with all animals in that they were bound to care for family and the larger collectivity, both necessary for survival.

This preoccupation with animals as moral beings influenced Nazi thinking. The Nazis called for redressing early wrongs to animals; man was to have a regard for nature as a moral duty. Goebbels commented in his diaries:

Man should not feel so superior to animals. He has no reason to. Man believes that he alone has intelligence, a soul, and the power of speech. Has not the animal these things? Just because we, with our dull senses, cannot recognize them, it does not prove that they are not there (Taylor 1983, 77).

The moral status of animals was to be changed in the coming German empire; they were to be sentient objects accorded love and respect as a sacred and essential element in man's relationship with nature. For example, toward the end of the war, the editors of a book on legal protection of animals proclaimed, "Animals are not, as before [the Nazi period] objects of personal property or unprotected creatures, with which a man may do as he pleases, but pieces of living nature which demand respect and compassion." Looking to the future, they quoted the words of Göring that "For the protection of animals, the education of humanity is more important than laws" (Giese and Kahler 1944).

As sacred things, society was not to violate animals by killing them, either for sport or for food. Their vision of the future included a world where animals would not be unnecessarily harmed, holding out as role models various groups that were seen as respectful toward animal life. Hunting became a symbol of the civilization left behind; meat eating became a symbol of

a mixing of the races and the eating of animal flesh. "Regeneration of the human race" was linked to animal protection and vegetarianism (Viereck 1965, 119). Wagner's principal concern was with the notion of biological purification of Germany and its political future. He wrote that "present day socialism must combine in true and hearty fellowship with the vegetarians, the protectors of animals, and the friends of temperance" (Viereck 1965, 119) to save mankind from Jewish aggression. Viereck (1965, 119) refers to this "fellowship" as Wagner's "united front of purifiers" who could oppose the anti-vegetarian stance of Jews. According to Viereck, Wagner stated "the Jewish God found Abel's fatted lamb more savoury than Cain's offer" of a vegetable.

In an essay first published in 1881 entitled "Heldentum und Christenheit" (Heroism and Christianity), Wagner articulated an anti-Semitic theory of history that linked vegetarianism to Germany's future. This drew on the racial theories of Arthur Gobineau, the philosophy of Schopenhauer, and his own idiosyncratic brand of Catholicism. In abandoning their original vegetarian diet, Wagner believed, people had become corrupted by the blood of slaughtered animals. This degeneration was then spread through the mixing of races. Interbreeding eventually spread through the entire Roman Empire, until only the "noble" Germanic race remained pure. After their conquest of Rome, the Germans, however, finally succumbed by mating with the subject peoples. "Regeneration" could be achieved, even by highly corrupted races such as the Jews, through a return to natural foods, provided this was accompanied by partaking of the Eucharist (Wagner 1888a). Wagner also believed that one could not live without "animal food" in the northern climates, so he suggested that in the future there would

be a German migration to northern climates where it would not be necessary to eat animals, thereby permitting Europe to return to pristine jungle and wild beasts (Viereck 1965, 119).

Racial contamination, it was argued, had mixed biologically inferior human stock with Aryan blood, thereby threatening the purity of the highest species. The physician Ludwig Woltmann (1936), for example, described the Germans as the highest species because of their perfect physical proportions and their heightened spirituality. He argued that life was a constant struggle against the biological decay of this highest species. This biological struggle was waged against the sub-human, a notion that can be linked to an intellectual undercurrent in the German movement known as the neo-Manichaeism, a third-century cosmology given a secular form by a Viennese monk at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The monk, Adolf Lanz, published a book called *Theozoology* that claimed that in the beginning there were two races, the Aryans and the Apes, that Lanz called the "animal people." The Aryans were pure and good whereas the animal people represented darkness and sought to sexually defile Aryans. Because of such interbreeding, the original Aryans and animal people no longer existed, but Lanz claimed that one could still distinguish and rank races according to the proportion of Aryan or ape blood they possessed. Thus Nordic people were close to pure Aryan and were ranked the highest race and Jews were ranked the lowest because they were close to pure ape (Rhodes 1980, 107). There are echoes of this idea in the writings of Wagner, who maintained in "Heldentum" that the Semitic races had always viewed themselves as descended from the apes, while the Aryan races traced their descent "from the Gods"

(Wagner 1888a). According to Rhodes (1980, 108), there is some evidence that Hitler read the work of Lanz and accepted his view.

The Nazis, in many ways, departed from the anthropocentric understanding of the cosmos that has dominated Occidental civilization since at least the late Middle Ages. Their world was not so much centered around man, at least as presently constituted, as about the process of evolution, conceived as a process of perpetual improvement through "survival of the fittest." This process, however, was not viewed so much as a spontaneous process but as something that, in the contemporary world, sometimes required assistance (Proctor 1988). In other words, it became a project to biologically perfect what it meant to be German.— a task not unlike that taken with German shepherd dogs who were deliberately bred to represent and embody the spirit of National Socialism. Van Stephanitz, the creator of this breed, sought national status for a local population of coyote-like dogs in the 1920s that were to be regarded as racially better dogs, analogous to better-bred humans, and whose only reason for existence was to go to war on the day hostilities began (Radde 1991).

Central to National Socialist ideology was the quest for racial purity by creating a "superrace" and eliminating "inferior races." Indeed, laws passed under the Third Reich to improve the eugenic stock of animals anticipated the way in which Germans and non-Aryans were treated eugenically. Germans were to be treated as farm animals, bred for the most desirable Aryan traits while ridding themselves of weaker and less desirable animal specimens. Such remodeling of civilization was not to flout the "natural order," meaning that distinctions between humans, animals, and the larger "natural" world

were not to make up the basic structure of life. Rather, the fundamental distinction made during the Third Reich was between that which was regarded as "racially" pure and that which was polluting and dangerous. The former was embodied in the Aryan people and nature, the latter in other humans who were synonymous with "lower" animals.

According to Hitler's own fanciful anthropology, non-Aryans were sub-human and should be considered lower than domestic animals. He stated in *Mein Kampf* that slavery came before the domestication of animals. The Aryans supposedly subjugated the "lower races": "First the vanquished drew the plough, only later the horse" (Hitler 1938). This, in Hitler's imagination, was the "paradise" that the Aryans eventually lost through the "original sin" of mating with the conquered people. Such a view clearly placed certain people below animals. The Nazi notion of race in many ways assumed the symbolic significance usually associated with species; the new phylogenetic hierarchy could locate certain "races" below animals. The danger and pollution normally thought to be posed by animals to humans was replaced with other "races." The Germans were the highest "species," above all other life; some "higher" animals, however, could be placed above other "races" or "subhumans" in the "natural" hierarchy.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTRADICTION

Concern for Animals/Antipathy for Humans

In trying to understand Nazi animal protection, we would be remiss to ignore the possibility that such measures stemmed

from personal interest in or affection for animals by key Nazi figures. Several members of the German general staff, for example, were reported to laud various qualities in their own pets, to support animal rights, and to oppose hunting and meat eating.

On the one hand, this explanation should be questioned because reports of Nazi compassion for animals are based, in part, on personal diaries or notes that may have been circulated or written to create a sympathetic image of Nazi leaders as warm and human people or as having values consistent with the National Socialist movement such as rural glorification.² On the other hand, there are lines of evidence that support such an explanation. First, there is widespread consistency in reports of Nazi compassion for animals, some of which date to long before the 1930s and 1940s. Second, there are some data supporting this explanation that are not autobiographical or biographical but are based on direct personality assessments of Nazis. Third, the sympathetic attitudes toward animals are consistent with the prior cultural trends in German thinking discussed earlier. And last, these reports are often coupled with contemptuous attitudes toward humans that fit, in two respects, psychiatric profiles of Nazi leaders. The most common profile argues that intimate human relationships were more difficult for these individuals to sustain than were relationships with animals. A more recent profile (Lifton 1986) suggests that caring for animals may have been a coping device that allowed Nazis to "double" or maintain a sense of self as humane while behaving insensitively or cruelly toward humans. Thus, key members of the German general staff may have, for whatever motivation, personally identified with animals while having contempt for humanity. At this psychological

level, animal protection measures and the Holocaust seem more compatible than contradictory.

Not surprisingly, Adolf Hitler has received the most biographical study. The analyses describe his interest in animals and pets, as well as his vegetarianism and opposition to hunting, although his motivations for these behaviors are less clear. Bromberg and Small (1983), for instance, contend that Hitler's compassion for animals was no more sincere than his interest in children; both were mere propaganda ploys, and he supposedly once shot and killed a dog without reason. The vast majority of anecdotal reports suggest a very different picture, however.

Dogs, as companion animals, appeared to be an integral part of Hitler's entire life. His fondness and bonding with dogs was noted long before his rise to power. During the early 1920s, Hitler's landlady, Frau Riechert, observed that a large dog named "Wolf" was his constant companion. Dogs, throughout much of his life, were Hitler's closest attachments (Padfield 1984, 475). Toland (1976, 133) claims that Hitler "had a need for the faithfulness he found in dogs, and had a unique understanding of them," commenting once that some dogs "are so intelligent that it's agonizing." According to Padfield (1984), Hitler frequently remarked on his wolfhound Blondi's wholehearted devotion to him while expressing doubts about the complete loyalty of his staff.

According to Stone (1980, 62), in his last days, Hitler came to depend on the companionship of Eva Braun and his dogs, having his favorite dog and its pups with him in the bomb shelter. During these final days, Hitler permitted no one but himself to touch or feed Blondi's pup, Wolf (Waite 1977, 425), and he risked his life every day by taking Blondi for a walk outside his bunker (Serpell 1986). When it came time

for Hitler and others to commit suicide, he could not bring himself to give Blondi the poison or watch her die (Payne 1960).

Besides dogs, Hitler apparently felt some bond with other animals. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler (1938) explained that deprivation had taught him to empathize with mice, so he shared his food with them. When living in Vienna, it was known that he would save bits of dried bread to feed the birds and squirrels when he read outside. He was particularly fond of birds, being drawn to ravens. He later gave special orders that ravens were never to be molested (Waite 1977, 41). Hitler, however, was most obsessed with wolves. According to Langer (1972), Hitler was "intrigued" by wolves and because Hitler loomed so large in German society, his interest was widely known.

In his earlier years, he used the nickname "Wolf."³ (Langer 1972, 93). In the 1920s Hitler became friends with Frau Helena Bechstein, the wife of a famous Berlin piano manufacturer, who played the role of foster mother to Hitler. Hitler would often sit at her feet and lay his head against her bosom while she stroked his hair tenderly and murmured, "Mein Woelfchen" (Strasser 1943, 301). Hitler chose "Herr Wolf" as his cover name. His favorite dogs were Alsations, that is, "Wolfhunde" in German, and these were the only ones he allowed himself to be photographed with. In France he called his headquarters "Wolfschlucht" (Wolf's Gulch), in the Ukraine "Werewolf," in Belgium "Wolfsschlucht" (Wolf's Gorge), and in East Prussia "Wolfschanze" (Wolf's Lair)—saying to a servant there "I am the wolf and this is my den."⁴ After the Anschluss with Austria in 1938, he asked his sister Paula to change her name to Frau Wolf. The name of the secretary he kept for 20 years was Johanna Wolf. One of the tunes from a favorite Walt Disney movie

that he whistled often and absentmindedly was "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" (Langer 1972, 246). German guerrilla fighters who would provide resistance to allied forces were called the "werewolves" (Speer 1970, 555).

Certainly, Hitler was not alone in his interest in animals and his keeping of pets. Göring had several pet lions; Goebbels, Hess, Höss, and several other elite Nazis had pet dogs. A typical example of such affection was Klaus Donitz, admiral of the German Navy, who was known to have a deep love for dogs. When he would return home his first greeting was always for the family dog, a little Spitz named Purzel (Padfield 1984, 115). Later, he had another pet dog named Wolf whom "he loved dearly." He remarked once "there is nothing in the world more faithful than a dog. He believes his master unconditionally. What he does is right" (Padfield 1984, 331). Donitz also expressed concern for the protection of stray dogs: "I think I shall start a kindergarten when I get out, a mixed one for puppies as well as children," (Padfield 1984, 475). He did not, however, ever create such an orphanage. Padfield suggests that Donitz may have simply fallen under the influence of Hitler, who emphasized the virtues of obedience in animals, or conversely that he had doubts about the correctness of the path he was following or that he, like Hitler, had doubts about the complete loyalty of his staff.

As mentioned earlier, when it came to hunting, the only sportsman was Göring.⁵ Other leading Nazis appeared to show little interest in it or staunchly opposed it, including Hitler, who was known to have a strong distaste for hunting. Toland (1976, 424–25), for example, recounts that once, when dinner conversation turned to hunting, Hitler commented: "I can't see what there is in shooting, you go out armed with a highly perfected modern weapon and

without risk to yourself kill a defenseless animal" (Toland 1976, 424-25). Hitler frequently criticized hunting:

How can a person be excited about such a thing. Killing animals, if it must be done, is the butcher's business. But to spend a great deal of money on it in addition . . . I understand, of course, that there must be professional hunters to shoot sick animals. If only there were still some danger connected with hunting, as in the days when men used spears for killing game. But today, when anybody with a fat belly can safely shoot the animal down from a distance . . . Hunting and horse racing are the last remnants of a dead feudal world (Speer 1970, 115-16).

Nor was Hitler alone in his opposition to hunting. Himmler, for instance, had a "positively hysterical opposition to hunting," according to Fest (1975, 121). Indeed, Himmler's "lunch was ruined if he was reminded that animals had been slaughtered." He once protested to his doctor and future therapist:

How can you find pleasure, Herr Kerstein, in shooting from behind cover at poor creatures browsing on the edge of a wood—innocent, defenceless, unsuspecting? It is really pure murder. Nature is so marvellously beautiful and every animal has a right to live. It is this point of view that I admire so much in our forefathers. They, for instance, formally declared war on rats and mice, which were required to stop their depredations and leave a fixed area within a definite time limit, before a war on annihilation was begun against them. You will find this respect for animals in all Indo-Germanic peoples. It was of extraordinary interest to me to hear recently that even today Buddhist monks, when they pass through a wood in the evening, carry a bell with them, to make any woodland animals they might meet keep away, so that no harm will come to them. But with us every slug is trampled

on, every worm destroyed (Wykes 1972, 89-90).

Emulating Wagner,⁶ Hitler and other elite Nazis became vegetarians (Waite 1977, 26). This practice incorporated Wagner's "blood" imagery by viewing meat eating as contaminating because animal blood was mixed with Aryan racial blood (Waite 1977, 26). Hitler hired a vegetarian cook (Payne 1960, 566) and became very critical of others who were not vegetarian, sometimes referring to meat broth eaten by others as "corpse tea" (Waite 1977, 19). On one romantic date, his female companion ordered sausage, at which Hitler looked disgusted and said: "Go ahead and have it, but I don't understand why you want it. I didn't think you wanted to devour a corpse . . . the flesh of dead animals. Cadavers!" (Waite 1977, 19). The vegetarianism of other Germans was a fad spawned by Hitler's preferences (Stone 1980, 62). Rudolf Hess, for instance, was not only a vegetarian, but a nonsmoker and non-drinker. Reportedly, he was so worried about the food he ate with Hitler in the Chancellery that he would bring his own vegetarian food in containers, defending his practice by saying that his food had to contain "biologically dynamic ingredients" (Manvell and Fraenkel 1971, 64).

Hitler, following Wagner, attributed much of the decay of civilization to meat eating. Among the many ideas that the dictator adopted from the composer was a belief that civilization could be regenerated through vegetarianism. Hitler would not touch meat, not out of considerations of health but of "absolute conviction" that decadence "had its origin in the abdomen—chronic constipation, poisoning of the juices, and the results of drinking to excess" (Rauschnig 1940).

Decay resulting from constipation was something that in his mind could be avoided by not eating anything resembling feces and by purging often.

Several entries in Goebbels' diaries underscore the notion that vegetarianism symbolized a higher state of humanity to which Nazis aspired. In one entry, Goebbels observed that "He [Hitler] believes that meat-eating is harmful to humanity . . . It is actually true that the great majority of humanity is living a vegetarian life and that the animals that live on plants have much greater powers of resistance than those that feed on meat" (Lochner 1948, 188). In another entry, Goebbels noted: "At table the Fuhrer makes another strong plea for vegetarianism. I consider his views correct. Meat-eating is a perversion in our human nature. When we reach a higher level of civilisation, we shall doubtless overcome it" (Taylor 1983, 6). In another entry, Goebbels observed that Christianity was a "symptom of decay" because it did not advocate vegetarianism:

The Fuhrer is deeply religious, though completely anti-Christian. He views Christianity as a symptom of decay. Rightly so. It is a branch of the Jewish race. This can be seen in the similarity of religious rites. Both [Judaism and Christianity] have no point of contact to the animal element, and thus, in the end, they will be destroyed. The Fuhrer is a convinced vegetarian, on principle. His arguments cannot be refuted on any serious basis. They are totally unanswerable (Taylor 1983, 77).

Identification with animals by elite Nazi figures was often paired with their contempt for humanity, perhaps suggesting a psychological explanation for the coexistence of animal protection with human cruelty. Characterizations of Hitler's personality portray him as having contempt and fear of humans but compassion and

warmth for animals. Toland (1976, 425) notes that it became known in the Third Reich that Hitler had a deep affection "for all dumb creatures," but very little for men and women. "It was as though since the Viennese days he had turned away from the human race, which had failed to live up to his expectations and was therefore damned. At the heart of the mystery of Hitler was his fear and contempt of people." Similarly, Payne (1960, 461) observes that Hitler felt closer to and more compassion for certain animals than people, when it came to their suffering. Payne (1960, 461) reports that a German pilot recalled that "Hitler saw films given to him by a friendly maharaja. During the scenes showing men savagely torn to pieces by animals, he remained calm and alert. When the films showed animals being hunted, he would cover his eyes with his hands and asked to be told when it was all over. Whenever he saw a wounded animal, he wept." He hated people who engaged in blood sports, and several times he said it would give him the greatest pleasure to murder anyone who killed an animal.

Similarly, while Goebbels' attitude toward humans was contemptuous, his expressed attitude toward his pet dog was loving. Goebbels' diary entries, especially those written in the mid-1920s, were explicit about this split in feelings. Goebbels revealed:

As soon as I am with a person for three days, I don't like him any longer; and if I am with him for a whole week, I hate him like the plague . . . I have learned to despise the human being from the bottom of my soul. He makes me sick in my stomach, Phoeey! . . . Much dirt [gossip] and many intrigues. The human being is a canaille [riff raff but also pack of dogs] . . . The only real friend one has in the end is the dog . . . The more I get to know the human species, the more

I care for my Benno [his pet dog] (Lochner 1948, 8).

Certainly, Hitler and Goebbels were not the only members of the German Nazi elite to identify with animals, express compassion for them, and praise traits in them such as obedience and aggressiveness while simultaneously showing contempt for humanity. Rudolf Hess, for instance, had a pet wolfhound named Hasso (Leasor 1962, 86). Höss, the commander of Auschwitz, was a "great lover" of animals, particularly horses. After a hard day of work at the camp, he "found relief walking through the stables at night" (Glaser 1978, 240). Eduard Wirth, a prominent physician at Auschwitz, had three pet dogs at one point. When two became ill, he referred to one of his rooms as their "sick ward." When his favorite dog died, he wrote sadly to his wife of its death, noting that the dog "suffered a lot so I gave him morphine . . . It is good that he dies; he was in the end blind in both eyes" (Lifton 1986, 397, 399).

Psychological assessments of the personalities of a number of leading Nazi political figures also show evidence of distancing from humans and interest in animals. In one study (Miale and Selzer 1975), Rorschach tests were administered to Nazi prisoners of war. Results indicated several departures from "normal" test findings, with subjects seeing themselves as animals or subhuman in the Rorschach more often than controls. Half the subjects depicted themselves, or aspects of themselves, as animals (typically unevolved, low-level bugs, beetles, or insects); six of the subjects also offered self-portraits of themselves as subhuman or inhuman figures such as gremlins. Miale and Selzer (1975, 276) contend that the respondents' animal responses had a "lack of vitality" indicating that this group was "cut off from

their vital impulses and were unable to be free and spontaneous. Their antisocial attitudes were not expressions of normal impulses, but rather of the repression and distortion of these impulses." In short, the findings suggested that, on the whole, these men had an "incapacity to feel human feelings" (Miale and Selzer 1975, 282). Dicks' (1972) research also found those Nazis studied to be "affectionless and lacking deep positive relations to human figures."

The German-Animal Alliance Against Jews and Others

National Socialist propaganda often portrayed Germany as a woman figure at one with nature but exploited and oppressed by demonic Bolsheviks, capitalists, and Jews (Fest 1970; Lane and Rupp 1978). These victimizers were seen as endangering the purity of the German "blood" and "spirit." Animals, too, were being victimized by these oppressors, whether by slaughtering them according to kosher law or by using them as subjects in scientific experiments. Metaphorically, only a subtle difference separated the animal from the German victim in this struggle. By allying themselves closely to animals in their pursuit of animal protection, the hated "vivisector" became synonymous with the Jew, enemy of both animals and of Germans. Animal protection measures, then, may have served as a legal vehicle to express these anti-Semitic feelings.

Laws passed by the Nazis on April 21, 1933, to regulate butchering were not only a measure for the protection of animals. They also constituted a barely concealed attack on the Jews, whose "ritualistic slaughter" was characterized as "torment of animals." The preamble to the laws stated:

The animals protection movement, strongly promoted by the National Socialist government, has long demanded that animals be given anesthesia before being killed. The overwhelming majority of the German people have long condemned killing without anesthesia, a practice universal among Jews though not confined to them, ... as against the cultivated sensitivities of our society (Giese and Kahler 1944).

The discussion that followed contained many further references to the horrors allegedly found in kosher butcher shops.⁷

The German movement against animal experimentation was also, from its inception, strongly associated with anti-Semitism.⁸ In a decree issued on August 17, 1933, Hermann Göring, then chairman of the Prussian ministry, proclaimed that people "foreign" or "alien" to Germany viewed the animal as "a dead thing under the law ...". He declared:

I ... will commit to concentration camps those who still think they can continue to treat animals as inanimate property ... The fairy tales and sagas of the Nordic people, especially the German people, show the spirit of close contact, which all Aryan people possess, with the animals. It is the more incomprehensible, therefore, that justice, up to now, did not agree with the spirit of the people on this point as it did on many others. Under the influence of foreign [i.e., Jewish] conceptions of justice and a strange comprehension of law, through the unhappy fact that the exercise of justice was in the hands of people alien to the nation ... the animal was considered a dead thing under the law ... This does not correspond to the German spirit and most decidedly it does not conform to the ideas of national socialism (Göring 1939).

The statement is particularly noteworthy, since the very existence of concentration camps was generally not acknowledged at the time.

Nazi ideologues sought to link the history of Judaism to vivisection. The revelation of Abraham and Moses was understood as the dominant tradition of the Occident, which culminated in the industrial revolution and the human domination of nature.⁹ The word "vivisection" (the same in German as in English) was often used broadly to refer to dispassionate dissection and analysis. For example, Wilhelm Stapel, a conservative writer of the Weimar Republic, noted that "more important than all the vivisection of intellectualism is the growth of a national myth ... that blossoms forth from the blood" (Craig 1982). Judaism, in both actual and symbolic ways, was understood as the tradition of "vivisection."¹⁰ Nazi racial theorists regularly contrasted the supposedly cold, analytic mentality of the Jew, with that of "Nordic man," who, they claimed, understood things organically as part of the natural world (Giesler 1938; Proctor 1988).

The anti-Semitism of the Nazis was a very radical form of an idea that is still familiar: that Jews and, by association, Christians had scorned the natural world. Some of the Nazis such as chief ideologist Alfred Rosenberg rejected Christianity as a sect of Judaism, and others tried to purify Christianity of its Jewish heritage (Mosse 1966). As a result, the distinction between Christianity and paganism in Nazi Germany grew increasingly unclear (Glaser 1978).

The link between animal protection and anti-Semitism is paradoxical, since the Old Testament celebrates animals with great passion and eloquence. Nevertheless, such an association may go back very far. In the fourteenth century, Geoffrey Chaucer satirized it in his *Canterbury Tales*. When the prioress is introduced, we are told how well she fed her hounds and how she would weep at the sight of a mouse

caught in a trap. But this same prioress uses her tale for a furious attack on Jews, accusing them of ritual murder of children (Chaucer 1969). More recently, in the mid-nineteenth century, philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1903) held that Jewish traditions were responsible for a view of animals as things.

The key figure in promoting this association in Germany was the composer Richard Wagner. Long after he died, his writing continued to have considerable impact on German thought. He dramatized his ideas respecting race and animal protection in the opera *Parsifal* and his prose would sometimes contain imagery featuring "blood," of a sort that was constantly used in the rhetoric of Hitler and his followers (Craig 1982). In a letter of August, 1879, to Ernst von Weber, the founder of the Dresden Animal Protection Society and author of the influential *Die Folterkammern der Wissenschaft* (The Torture Chambers of Science), Wagner stated:

Until now I have respected the activities of such societies, but always regretted that their educational contact with the general public has rested chiefly upon a demonstration of the usefulness of animals, and the uselessness of persecuting them. Although it may be useful to speak to the unfeeling populace in this way, I none the less thought it opportune to go a stage further here and appeal to their fellow feeling as a basis for ultimately ennobling Christianity. One must begin by drawing people's attention to animals and reminding them of the Brahman's great saying "Tat twam asi" ["That art thou"]—even though it will be difficult to make acceptable to the modern world of Old Testament Judaization [the spread of Jewish blood and influence]. However, a start must be made here—since the commandment to love thy neighbor is becoming more and more questionable and difficult to observe—particularly in the

face of our vivisectionist friends (Wagner 1987).

Like Göring (1939) and others who would come later, Wagner identified vivisectionists with Jews.

A much expanded version of this letter was published under the title "Offenes Schreiben an Ernst von Weber" (Open Letter to Ernst von Weber) and dated October, 1879. The revision was even more emotional in tone. Wagner supported breaking into laboratories where experiments on animals were conducted, as well as physical attacks on vivisectionists. He closed with the melodramatic declaration that, should the campaign against vivisection prove unsuccessful, he would gladly depart from a world in which "no dog would any longer wish to live," "even if no 'Requiem for Germany' is played after us" (Wagner 1888b). With Wagner's public and financial support and von Weber's skillful leadership, the Dresden Animal Protection Society soon became the center of the German antivivisection movement (Trohler and Maehle 1987).

As illustrated by the quotation from Wagner's original letter, anti-Semitic rhetoric in German suggested that persecution of Jews was sometimes perceived as revenge on behalf of aggrieved animals. Jews were identified as enemies of animals and implicitly Germans. In Wagner's outrage against the use of frogs in experiments, he explicitly identified "vivisectionists" as "enemies." Vivisection of frogs was "the curse of our civilization," according to Wagner. He urged the Volk to rid itself of scientists and rescue the frog martyrs. Viereck (1965, 108) maintains that Wagner created "a sort of moral Armageddon" between those "who free trussed animals" and those "who truss them to torture them." Those who fail to untruss frogs were "enemies of the state."

After the death of Wagner in 1883, his followers, such as the brothers Bernard and Paul Förstner, continued the anti-Semitic campaign against vivisection. The latter became editor of *Thier-und Menschenfreund* (Friend to Animals and Man), the journal of the Dresden Animal Protection Society. Wagner's admirers in the twentieth century included such spokesmen for anti-Semitism as Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Alfred Rosenberg, and, most significantly, Adolf Hitler (Katz 1986).

Another close associate of von Weber who added prestige to the movement against vivisection was Friedrich Zöllner, a famous though controversial professor of astrophysics (Bretschneider 1962). In a popular book entitled *Über den wissenschaftlichen Missbrauch der Vivisection* (On the Scientific Misuse of Vivisection), first published in 1880, Zöllner launched a counterattack against the physiologists. In its inaugural issue the British magazine *Animal's Defender and Zoophilist* (published by an antivivisection society) ran a highly favorable critique of Zöllner's book, offering the following summary:

Zöllner who is a patriotic admirer of Bismark . . . agrees with the men of Bayreuth [followers of Wagner] in demanding an intellectual, moral and aesthetic regeneration of the German people. The press being in the hands of clever and ambitious Jews, and the teachings at universities being, explicitly or implicitly, atheistic, Professor Zöllner has no difficulty in tracing many of evils just mentioned [suicide, crime, usury, swindling and just about everything else] to the uncongenial influences of Judaism and Materialism. It would be wrong to say that vivisection is a Jewish pursuit, yet medicine is, in Germany at least, an eminently Jewish profession, and the press being still more Jewish than the medical career, the difficul-

ty of denouncing medical abuses or vivisectional brutalities is considerably greater than in any other country (Anonymous 1881).

The association between anti-Semitism and vivisection was not confined to Germany. It was also strong in Switzerland (Neff 1989), and the British reviewer obviously shared Zöllner's anti-Semitic views. The latter, however, sometimes expressed them in a particularly extreme manner, maintaining that Jews were by nature callous and bloodthirsty.

Zöllner, for example, attacked a Jewish zoologist named Semper, accusing him of showing gross insensitivity (a "thick skin" like that of an elephant) by hunting the birds that attacked his botanical gardens, with the following sarcastic remarks:

[O]ne would be justified in describing the anti-Semitic movement that has just recently appeared in Germany not as "persecution of Jews" but metaphorically as a "hunt for elephants." Because surely Professor Semper would recognize a right to hunt not only thrushes but also elephants if they broke into his garden and laid waste to the "garden for alpine plants and herbs constructed at considerable cost" with their crude feet. If one now compares Semper's garden in Würzburg with Germany and the expense of the alpine plants and ferns with the "considerable costs" of maintaining the universities, then the German people have the same right to hunt over-educated, Semitic "elephants" as Semper does to hunt the thrushes (Zöllner 1885).

The reversal of roles between hunter and animal is an old motif (Sax 1990) that appears frequently in literature against misuse of animals.

Although Zöllner did not unequivocally advocate physical attacks on Jews, this passage is an anticipation of the Nazi persecutions. Despite what the quotation sug-

gests, Zöllner seems to have been far less a vicious man than a complacent one. Confident that concern for animals proved his moral superiority, he could, elsewhere in his book, content himself with the most abstract expressions of compassion for the Jews. Many of his attitudes were later adopted by Nazi doctors; who attempted to purify medicine of "Jewish" influence (Proctor 1988).

Animals, People, and the New Natural Order

While stressing the biological distinctions among types of human beings, the Nazis saw human life as part of the larger biological order that they sought to create. As part of this order, all human life, including Germans, were treated as animals. In the case of Germans themselves, they were regarded as livestock to breed the purest biological forms; non-Aryans were viewed as pests that could contaminate the racial purity so important to National Socialist aims. Such treatment of humans as animals was another reason why the combination of animal protection measures with cruelty toward humans may not have seemed so paradoxical to Germans. By animalizing human life, moral distinctions between people and animals were obliterated, making it possible to treat animals as well as humans, and humans as poorly as animals.

In *Mythos*, a book intended to have virtually scriptural authority within the Nazi movement, Alfred Rosenberg (1935) found it terribly ironic that more concern was shown about the racial pedigree of horses and donkeys than of human beings. To correct this, the National Socialists treated Germans themselves, in the most literal sense, as animals. Just as the breeding stock of "less pure" animals had been improved, so too was the "pure blood" of

Germans to be restored. According to Darré: "As we have restored our old Hanoverian horse from less pure male and female animals by selective breeding, we will also, in the course of generations, again selectively breed the pure type of the nordic German from the finest German bloodlines . . ." (Glaser 1978, 154).

Several leading Germans used their experience in farming, as well as their training in agriculture and veterinary medicine, to pursue this goal. For example, Martin Bormann had been an agricultural student and in 1920 became the manager of a large farm (McGovern 1968, 11-12). The new rector of the University of Berlin in the mid-1930s was by profession a veterinarian. He instituted 25 new courses in Rassenkunde—racial science—and by the time he finished rewriting the curriculum had instituted 86 courses connected to veterinary sciences as applied to humans (Shirer 1960, 250). And for a period of time in the 1920s, Himmler was a chicken breeder (Fest 1970, 116). Thus, veterinary medicine and agricultural science became the means of teaching racial doctrine in German universities (Bendersky 1985, 156). Indeed, National Socialism viewed Europe, including Germany, "as if it were a thoroughly neglected animal farm which urgently needed the elimination of racially poor and unhealthy stock, better breeding methods, etc. All of Europe and the East were finally to make biological sense" (Maltitz 1973, 289).

Much of Himmler's knowledge about animal breeding practices was directly applied to plans for human breeding to further Aryan traits (Bookbinder 1989). One of Himmler's obsessions was the breeding of many more superior Nordic offspring (Shirer 1960, 984). Financial awards were made for giving birth if the child was of biological and racial value, and potential mothers of good Aryan stock who did not

give birth were branded as "unwholesome, traitors and criminals" (Deuel 1942, 164-65). Encouraging the propagation of good German blood was seen as so important that several Nazi leaders advocated free love in special recreation camps for girls with pure Aryan qualities. In one of Himmler's schemes, he argued that if 100 such camps were established for 1000 girls, 10,000 "perfect" children would be born each year (Deuel 1942, 165).

Despite the criticism of the Reich Minister of the Interior, who opposed the "idea of breeding Nordics" when it reached the point of "making a rabbit-breeding farm out of Germany" (Deuel 1942, 203), plans were developed for a series of state-run brothels, where young women certified as genetically sound would be impregnated by Nazi men. The intent was to breed Aryans as if they were pedigreed dogs (Glaser 1978). From a eugenic point of view, a weak animal will probably be of little use, no matter what the species. Young German women chosen to breed with specially selected good biological German male stock had their infants immediately taken away from them and put outside, unprotected, to see if they would survive in order to weed out inferior stock (Gailey 1990).

Other proposals and policies reflected a similar view of the German people as livestock to be improved through proper breeding. Laws passed to regulate marriage were based on "racial blood"; the goal was to prevent contamination of Germanic blood such that children born in Germany would be either purely Jewish or purely non-Jewish (Deuel 1942, 217). Even selection for membership in certain Nazi organizations, such as Himmler's SS, emphasized pure Aryan qualities, the object being to draw the sons of the best genetic families into Nazi ranks.

Preference was given to those applicants having a certified family tree extending five or six generations, blond hair, blue eyes, and a height of six feet. They were to become the biological elite, the most pure Germans (Bayles 1940, 155). One proposal (Gasman 1971) suggested sending biologically unfit Germans into battle so that biologically superior individuals could be preserved for reproduction.

Medical research under the Third Reich also approached Germans as livestock. For instance, those familiar with Mengele's concentration camp experiments believed that his thoughtlessness for the suffering of his victims stemmed from his passion about creating a genetically pure super-race "as though you were breeding horses" (Posner and Ware 1986, 42-43). The principal purpose of his experiments was to discover the secret of creating multiple births with genetically engineered Aryan features and improve the fertility of German women as well as find efficient and easy ways to mass sterilize "inferior races" (Posner and Ware 1986, 31).

While the German people themselves were dealt with as biological stock or farm animals, certain groups of people considered contaminating or threatening to German blood and culture were viewed as "lower animals" to be dispatched accordingly. When it came to discussing the goal of selecting out "inferior" races from the world's breeding stock, the language used is full of references to contamination from contact with others considered dirty or polluting. Hitler referred to race "poisoning," and others used terms such as "race defilement" and "corruption," "decay," "rot," or "decomposition" of German "blood" (Weinstein 1980, 136) to refer to everything from innocent acquaintanceships to sexual relations with Jews (Deuel 1942, 210-11) and contact with their "harmful animal serum" (Brady

1969, 53). Even animals owned by Jews were seen as racially contaminating to other animals. Viereck (1965, 254) cites the case of a German mayor who decreed that in order to further race purity, "cows and cattle which were brought from Jews, directly or indirectly, may not be bred with the community bull."

Those peoples deemed genetically contaminating were thought of and treated as animals. Such animal-labeling of people, typically emphasizing beastly or wild instincts, was not confined to Jews. "Foreign workers" were "pigs, dogs, they are creatures who are the counterfeits of human beings" (Grunberger 1971, 166). An SS propaganda booklet, *The Subhuman*, described all peoples of the "East" as "animalistic trash, to be exterminated" (Herzstein 1978, 365). Russian soldiers were a "conglomeration of animals" (Lochner 1948, 206), "unrestrained beasts" and "wild animals" (Maltitz 1973, 61) and had "primitive animality" (Herzstein 1978, 357). Even the Rumanian peasants, allies of the Germans, were described as "miserable pieces of cattle" (Maltitz 1973, 61).

When groups of people, most commonly Jews, were likened to specific animal species, it was usually "lower" animals or life forms, including rodents, reptiles, insects, or germs. Hitler (1938), for instance, called the Jews a "pack of rats," and Himmler, in order to help soldiers cope with having just shot one hundred Jews, told them "bedbugs and rats have a life purpose . . . but this has never meant that man could not defend himself against vermin" (Hilberg 1961, 219). The propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* superimposed images of rats over presumed "degenerate people" such as the Jews, and the 1940 film *The Eternal Jew* portrayed Jews as lower than vermin, somewhat akin to the rat—filthy, corrupting, disease carrying,

ugly, and group oriented (Herzstein 1978, 309). Weinstein (1980, 141) reports that because Jews were thought to be like chameleons—able to merge with their surroundings—they were made to wear the yellow Star of David so innocent Aryans would not be contaminated by the unwitting contact. Jews were also likened to bacteria and "plagues" of insects (Herzstein 1978, 354).

If in creating the human animal, insufficient distance was created from the pure German, there was also the notion of "untermenschen," or subhumans, lower than animals. As described in one SS document:

The subhuman—that creation of nature, which biologically is seemingly quite identical with the human, with hands, feet, and a kind of brain, with eyes and a mouth—is nevertheless a totally different and horrible creature, is merely an attempt at being man—but mentally and emotionally on a far lower level than any animal. In the inner life of that person there is a cruel chaos of wild uninhibited passions: a nameless urge to destroy, the most primitive lust, undisguised baseness . . . But the subhuman lived, too . . . He associated with his own kind. The beast called the beast . . . And this underworld of subhumans found its leader: the eternal Jew! (Maltitz 1973, 61–62).

Thus, the evolution of the notion of the human animal was to develop into an even lower and more distant (i.e., more dangerous in terms of pollution) form of life, the subhuman. This was the final twist on the Nazi phylogenetic inversion. Aryans and certain animals symbolized purity and were above human animals that were a contaminant involving impure "races" and "lower" animal species; the subhumans were below everything. Hitler, in fact, came to believe that Jews, as subhumans, were biologically demonic. He

speculated that they descended from beings that "must have been veritable devils" and that it was only "in the course of centuries" that they had "taken on a human look" (Hitler 1938) through interbreeding with Aryans. As the personification of the devil, Jews, to Hitler, were the main danger to the purity of the Aryan world (Staudinger 1981). Himmler, also buying into the notion of the subhuman, had studies made of the skulls of "Jewish-Bolshevik commissars" in order to arrive at a typological definition of the "subhuman" (Fest 1970, 113).

When coupled with a desire for racial purity, the conception of certain people as animal-like may have facilitated experimentation on concentration camp inmates as though they were as expendable as laboratory rats. At the Ravensbrück concentration camp for women, hundreds of Polish inmates—the "rabbit girls" they were called—were given gas gangrene wounds while others were subjected to "experiments in bone grafting" (Shirer 1960, 979). In some cases, concentration camp inmates were substituted for animals before human trials would normally occur. For example, in 1941 Himmler approved use of camp inmates in a sterilization study of a plant extract based on premature findings from rodent research, and in 1943 he authorized the reversal of a research study on jaundice that formerly injected healthy animals with virus from jaundiced humans so that humans could be injected with virus from diseased animals (Hilberg 1961, 601–602, 604). More typical were medical experiments on people that had not even been tried previously on animals. Experimenters such as Mengele referred to camp inmates as human "material" and their body parts as "war materials" (Posner and Ware 1986, 17, 39). At Belsen, staff viewed their work in terms of how many "pieces of

prisoner per day" were handled, and letters from IG-Farben's drug research section and Auschwitz camp authorities made reference to "loads" or "consignments" of human guinea pigs (Grunberger 1971, 330).

Conceiving of certain people as animal-like also facilitated their execution. Those deemed "unfit" or "unworthy" of life were considered "degenerate" and if permitted to breed, they would only contaminate German stock and reduce its physical, mental, and moral purity (Deuel 1942, 221, 225). Hence, the need for "hygienic prophylaxis" (Herzstein 1978, 66). Jews, in particular, were viewed as "breeders of almost all evil" (Shirer 1960, 250). The expectation was that those humans deemed polluting and dangerous "racially" would be eliminated through a program of euthanasia, "mercy killing," or "Gnadentod" for those with "lives not worth living" (Lifton 1986; Proctor 1988), a notion that is strikingly similar to the 1933 animal protection regulation regarding euthanasia. The first to be given a "mercy death" were incurably insane persons or deformed infants (Hilberg 1961, 561; Peukert 1987) under a 1939 plan that became known as the "euthanasia program." The killing was then extended to older children. Ironically, Jewish children were at first excluded from the killing. According to the bizarre, dreamlike logic of the National Socialists, Jews did not deserve such an "act of mercy" (Proctor 1988).

The Holocaust was eventually broadened to include Jews, Gypsies, alcoholics, homosexuals, criminals, and almost anyone else the regime objected to. Extermination of humans considered to be contaminating extended beyond the killing of millions in concentration camps. By giving only limited medical and dental care, and encouraging abortions, the em-

pire envisioned by the Nazis would not maintain native populations, such as those in Southern Russia. It was a philosophy of utter contempt and revulsion for those thought of, in Himmler's terms, as "these human animals" (Maltitz 1973, 288-89). Speaking to his SS officers, Himmler commented: "We Germans, who are the only ones in the world who have a decent attitude toward animals, will also show a decent attitude toward these human animals, but it would be a crime against our own blood to worry about them" (Maltitz 1973, 41).

CONCLUSION

If the real Nazis were the comic-book figures of popular melodramas, their deeds would be no less horrible. The phenomenon we have examined, however, would be less profoundly disturbing. Our analysis raises what is to most contemporaries a troubling and unsavory contradiction, namely, that Establishment concern for animals in Nazi Germany was combined with disregard for human life.

This paradox vanishes, however, if we see that the treatment of animals under the Third Reich really tells us about the treatment of humans and the cultural rules and problems of human society. All cultures seek to order human existence in terms of certain basic assumptions, including that which is seen as pure and that as polluting. In this conceptual apparatus shared by all cultures, things considered to be contagions become dangers that have to be contained in order to protect what is perceived to be pure. By containing the danger of pollution, people can further the illusion of their power as they seek to guard the ideal order of society against the dangers that threaten it. "Laws of nature" are cited to sanction the moral code and social rules that define what is considered

to be a dangerous contagion. The elimination of polluting elements may simply be a positive effort to organize a "safe" environment by preserving the integrity of what is considered pure.

At the core of this dichotomy of purity and danger is a design of society, or what constitutes its boundaries and margins (Douglas 1966). In many societies, differences between humans and other species serve as fundamental reminders of what is considered to be pure and what is thought to be contaminating; indeed, they define what it means to be human by maintaining reasonably clear boundaries between humans and animals. In Nazi Germany, however, the conception of what it meant to be German, or pure, relied more heavily on seeing other groups of people as the societal danger rather than other species. German identity was not contaminated by including within it certain animal traits or by seeing itself closely related to animals in moral, if not biological terms. In short, Nazi German identity relied on the blurring of boundaries between humans and animals and the constructing of a unique phylogenetic hierarchy that altered conventional human-animal distinctions and imperatives.

We saw this blurring, for example, in the concern for animals and devotion to pets demonstrated by many prominent Nazi Germans. On the one hand, animals were seen as "virtuous," "innocent," and embodying ideal qualities absent in most humans. Indeed, to hunt or eat animals was itself defiling, a sign of "decay" and perversion. People, on the other hand, were seen with "contempt," "fear," and "disappointment." In fact, to kill certain people furthered the Nazi quest for purity. We also saw this blurring in the alliance of Germans with animals against their "oppressors," Jews and others labeled as

"vivisectors" and "torturers." In facing a common danger, Germans likened themselves, as "victims," to animals and distanced themselves from human "victimizers." Finally, we saw this blurring in the animalization of Germans themselves as well as other humans. To cope with their greatest threat, the "genetic pollution" of a pure, holistic, natural people, Germans were encouraged to fight for their survival with the same unfeeling determination as any species of life. As part of the natural order, Germans of Aryan stock were to be bred like farm stock while "lower animals" or "sub-humans," such as the Jews and other victims of the Holocaust, were to be exterminated like vermin as a testament to the new "natural" and biological order conceived under the Third Reich.

From this perspective, the paradox noted above fades. What contemporaries would consider cruel and inhumane behavior toward categories of people was seen in Nazi Germany as acceptable behavior toward polluted "lower" humans. What contemporaries would regard as inconsistently humane behavior toward animals, in light of the treatment of certain human groups, was seen in Nazi Germany as quite consistent given the consanguinity (in holistic, pure Nature) of certain "higher" humans and animals. The Holocaust itself may have depended on this unique cultural conception of what it meant to be human in relation to animals.

NOTES

1. The conventional translation of "raubtier" is "beast," but a more exact one would be "predator" or "carnivore." The Nazis, in identifying with predators celebrated in heraldry, were aligning themselves with warriors of old. While predatory instincts were praiseworthy in Germans, they were criticized in Jews. While visiting Munich in 1935, Craig (1982) reports that head gauleiter Julius Streicher offered "scientific evidence of the predatory nature of the Jews, at one point arguing insistently that, if one were attentive while visiting zoos, one would note that the blond-haired German children always played happily in sandboxes while the swarthy Jewish children sat expectantly before the cages of beasts of prey, seeking vicarious satisfaction of their blood-tainted lusts."
2. Attachment to dogs also served to tie Nazi Germany to the rural glorification of its Romantic past. It became important to portray German leaders as close to nature and having values compatible with a simple agricultural way of life; the soil was seen as the source of life and inspiration. Old Germans, Himmler argued, were nature worshipers, and so too should be new Germans, who he tried to sell on the nobility and virtues of farm life (Deuel 1942, 162-63). Companionship with dogs provided a link between the soil and humanity. A great deal was written about Hitler's fondness for dogs during the 1930s and 1940s, and many pictures were taken to prove it was so as part of a propaganda campaign to demonstrate Hitler's "modesty and simplicity," which according to Langer were key values behind rural glorification (1972, 56). One example of such a propaganda photo appears in Toland (1976, 341) of Hitler and "two friends" (two dogs), and another appears in Maltitz (1973, 232e) of Hitler relaxing with a dog.
3. A number of prominent Nazis also had animal nicknames. Martin Bormann was known as the "bull" because of his short thick neck; Klaus Barbie was known as "gorilla ears" in reference to the simian shape of his ears (Murphy 1983, 36); and Goebbels was called "Mickey Mouse" (Grunberger 1971, 335). Even special preferences in art often demonstrated Hitler's particular interest in animals. His favorite painting, for instance, was Correggio's "Leda and the Swan"; the swan is central to the painting and is in interaction with a female. Goebbels' favorite painting was Boecklin's "Sport of the Waves," which shows half human and animal characters of mermaids and mermen (Hanfstaengl 1957, 63).
4. The only headquarters not named after wolves was still named after an animal. According to Toland (1976, 832), Hitler's other headquarters in 1940 was called the Eagle's Eyrie.
5. Hermann Göring was the only member of the general staff who was a devotee of hunting, and even in his case, he expressed marked

- interest and caring for companion animals and animals in general. Göring was widely known to be unusually fond of and dedicated to several pet adult lions kept at his estate. According to Irving (1989, 180), chief forester Ulrich Scherping claimed that those who saw Göring with his lions could sense the fondness that they had for each other. He was, however, also a driven hunter, a fact that bothered Hitler, who called Göring's hunting associates "that green freemasonry." So involved with his hunting expeditions, Göring kept extensive hunting diaries interspersed with notes of diplomatic and political meetings at hunts. Göring also considered being a good hunter necessary for promotion in the Luftwaffe.
6. Although a belief in Wagner's argument is the most persuasive and common explanation for Hitler's vegetarianism, several other attempts to explain this vegetarianism have been made. There is at least one instance (Huss 1942, 405) where Hitler's diet was attributed to his inability to tolerate the thought of animals being slaughtered for human consumption. For Langer (1972, 56) such an "animal person" account was a deliberate portrayal of Hitler as kind and gentle. Both accounts can be considered plausible, one having more to do with individual motivation, the other with portrayal and use in a wider, propaganda sense. Langer (1972, 191) also suggests that Hitler only became a real vegetarian after the death of his niece. In clinical practice, one often finds compulsive vegetarianism occurring after the death of a loved one. Another writer maintains that his vegetarianism was due to chronic indigestion and the medical necessity to avoid meat (Bayles 1940, 47).
 7. Accounts from this period of kosher butchering as a form of ritualistic torture resemble other slanders that have been used against the Jews, such as the kidnapping and murder of children or the killing of Christ. Cultural attitudes tend to find expression in common symbols, even when the views are never made explicit. The connection between the previously mentioned accusations against Jews and kosher butchering must sometimes have been reinforced by Christian symbolism, where Christ is represented by the sacrificial lamb.
 8. The anti-Semitic basis of Nazi antivivisection was popularly known and apparently embraced by the citizenry, as suggested in the following anecdote. During one study course arranged by the party, a lady lecturer had told in all seriousness of her experience with a talking dog. When asked "Who is Adolf Hitler?" the dog replied, "Mein Führer." The lecturer was interrupted by an indignant Nazi who shouted that it was abominable taste to relate such a ridiculous story. The lecturer, on the verge of tears, replied, "This clever animal knows that Adolf Hitler has caused laws to be passed against vivisection and the Jews' ritual slaughter of animals, and out of gratitude this small canine brain recognized Adolf Hitler as his Führer" (Toland 1976, 528).
 9. This is not to say that the Nazis were against technology. They took pride in feats of engineering such as the construction of the autobahn (Giesler 1938). In many ways, they carried technocratic control to a unique extreme. Hitler (1938) himself often invoked the ideal of "progress." But the movement also exploited a longing for a simpler, preindustrial way of life. The Nazis wished to take full credit for the advantage of technology, while using Jews as scapegoats for the accompanying problems.
 10. While the vivisectionist was explicitly identified with the Jew, vivisectionist imagery was also used to express the Romantic critique of society. For Wagner and others, animals were dynamic and sacred expressions of life that should not be destroyed politically by the atomistic state, mentally by analysis, or physically by vivisection. In at least one case, Wagner used vivisectionist imagery to attack the uninspired "dusty office desks" of government bureaucracies that he described as "modern torture-rooms . . . between files of documents and contracts, the hearts of live humanity are pressed like gathered leaves" (Viereck 1965, 109).

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