

What Hitler Believed
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All my life, it's been Hitler this and Hitler that. For me, it was like the Norm Macdonald joke, the more I heard about the guy, the more I didn't care for him. Finally, I took it upon myself to read Hitler's magnum opus, *Mein Kampf*, and see what I could pick up about him for myself.

Hitler dictated *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*) while he was in prison for an unsuccessful putsch (political insurrection) in November of 1923. The book gives his account of his life, outlines the ideology of National Socialism, and relates the history of the National Socialist German Worker's Party (commonly known as the Nazi Party) and its plans for the future. The book was published in two volumes, in 1925 and 1926. It became a best seller in Germany, though with its 688 pages of pedestrian prose, it might have been more purchased than read.

I skipped over parts of the book in deference to my purpose for reading it: I was looking for Hitler's core beliefs. Behind his own story and all the politics and programs and particulars, what were Hitler's fundamental assumptions and values? This is a report of what I came up with.

I think it's important that you keep in mind what this writing *isn't* as well as what it is. I'm not a trained social scientist or philosopher. My knowledge of Hitler and his time doesn't go beyond what the average reasonably literate person picks up in the normal course of things. I'm not getting into Hitler's merits as a human being, or the wisdom or morality of anything he did while he was in power. I'm not making a case for him or putting him down. I read his book (or pretty much), and this is what I got out of it about his basic convictions. That's all this is. Reading the book and putting this material together has given me a better handle on what Hitler believed than before; that's as much as I can say with any certainty. So take this for what it's worth.

The quotes are from *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's words:

Hitler had a *biocentric worldview*. His perspective on life was first of all referenced in Nature. Hitler contended that before anything else we must attend to Nature, the world of living things and their environments. Man is not separate from or above Nature but rather a part of Nature. We need to come to grips with how Nature actually operates. We must align our lives with Nature. We must obey Nature's laws. That is how we will best prosper and fulfill our destiny as human beings. We should not be so presumptuous as to imagine that we can ignore or overcome Nature's realities and Nature's imperatives. We need to learn to live Nature's way. Hitler's basic message was: Get out of your head. Get out of the realm of fanciful intellectualization. Get out of what you think is true or ought to be true. Instead, literally come down to earth.

Hitler held to a *biocultural concept of race*. While race has to do with biology, physiology, blood, it is about more than genetics. It is also about culture: values and morals, philosophies, traditions, modes of artistic expression, religious orientations, ways of working, forms of government, national and ethnic identifications, family arrangements, conceptions of masculinity and femininity, approaches to raising children, and connections to the earth. Hitler used the term "folk" (*volk* in German) to get at the idea that he was referring to a people who share a biological inheritance *and* a way of being. They have an approach to life in common as well as a gene pool.

Hitler's emphasized the *interplay of biology and culture*. Each affects the other: biological realities or impulses shape the culture of a people and, conversely, the culture of a people has an impact on their biological or physical nature. He focused particularly on culture's impact on breeding patterns. Ideas, values, and associational arrangements influence who has children with whom. Racial interbreeding profoundly affects the biological composition of a race.

Hitler focused on what he considered the fundamental human reality: *the life-and-death struggle for survival and a higher quality of existence among the races of man*. Aggression and violence are inherent in this struggle; they are an integral part of Nature's way. What is responsible and right in human affairs is that which contributes to the continued existence and upward development of the race.

Hitler affirmed *the aristocratic principle*. The aristocratic principle contrasts with the *egalitarian principle*. Rather than races and individuals being equal, Hitler posited, they are hierarchically ordered. "The basic aristocratic idea of Nature . . . sees not only the different value of races but also the different value of individuals." While some may be attracted to the idea that individuals and races are, or could be, equal to one another, the fact of the matter is they are not equal now and won't be equal in the future unless the superior ones are hobbled in some way so as to bring them back to the level of their inferiors.

Hitler held that *the Aryan race embodies mankind's highest possibility*. "Human culture and civilization on this continent are inseparably bound up with the presence of the Aryan. If he dies out or declines, the dark veils of an age without culture will again descend on this globe." "The man who thwarts the triumphal march of the best race and hence also the precondition for all human progress, remains, in consequence, in the animal realm of helpless misery."

Hitler warned of *the danger of miscegenation*. Interracial procreation, or race-mixing, compromises the superior of two races being intermingled. A "racial porridge" prevents the achievement of the highest goal of mankind, a goal inherent in Nature: the evolution of man into a higher form of being. "Nature doesn't want the blending of higher and lower races since the work of higher breeding will be ruined." It is particularly important that the Aryan race not intermix with other races. "The stronger must dominate not blend with the weaker, thus sacrificing his own greatness."

What about the idea widely attributed to Hitler that the Aryans are the *master race*? A consideration of this concept hinges on what is meant by the term “master.” Master can refer to mastery over other people, that is to say, the domination and control of others. The master of a ship is one who is in control of the people and cargo on board. However, the term master can have another meaning: it can refer to the best, to those who have attained mastery at what they do. Master carpenters or electricians don't rule over other tradesmen; rather, they are the *best*, the *finest* in their field, the most knowledgeable and skillful.

I didn't find the term master race in *Mein Kampf*, but it seemed to me that Hitler employed the idea of master with reference to race in both of its meanings in this last paragraph. Aryans are the best—they have the strongest genetic and cultural features--and in Nature the best should dominate. “[National Socialism] by no means believes in an equality of the races . . . and feels itself obligated . . . to promote the victory of the better and stronger and demand the subordination of the inferior and weaker.”

What form should the dominance and subordination take? Does it mean dictating to the dominated race or races in every aspect of life? Or does it mean the master race having access to the resources of a subjugated race in order that the master race can move ahead on its evolutionary path as fast and as far as possible? My reading of *Mein Kampf* is that Hitler's focus is on domination in this latter sense. “We all sense that in the distant future humanity will be faced with problems that only the highest race, a master people, supported by the means and possibilities of the entire globe, will be equipped to overcome.” “And so the folkish philosophy of life corresponds to the innermost will of Nature, since it restores that free play of forces until at last the best of humanity, having achieved possession of this earth, will have a free path of activity.”

Hitler asserted that *race needs to be at the center of individual and collective concerns, and that the first priority must be given to keeping the race pure.* “There is only one holiest human right, and

this right is at the same time the holiest obligation . . . to see to it that the blood is preserved pure and, by preserving the best humanity, to create the possibility of a nobler development of these beings." He warned: "All great cultures of the past perished only because the originally creative race died out from blood poisoning. The ultimate cause of such a decline was their forgetting that all culture depends on men and not conversely; hence that to preserve a certain culture the man who creates it must be preserved."

When assessing the states of mind and motivations of individuals, Hitler employed the basic distinction between *idealism* and *egoism*. Idealism is being oriented toward serving one's people, one's race. Egoism looks at things from the perspective of a narrowly conceived self-interest and without a sense of connection to one's community of kindred people and commitment to their welfare. In Hitler's mind, idealism is favored over egoism. Someone who is an idealist is more laudable than one who is an egoist or, another term, individualist.

This state of mind, which subordinates the interests of the ego to the conservation of the community, is really the first premise for every truly human culture. From it alone can arise all the great works of mankind, which bring the founder little reward, but the richest blessings to posterity. Yes, from it alone can we understand how so many are able to bear up faithfully under a scanty life which imposes on them nothing but poverty and frugality, but gives the community the foundations of its existence. Every worker, every peasant, every inventor, official, etc., who works without ever being able to achieve any happiness or prosperity for himself, is a representative of this lofty idea.

Since Hitler saw life as a struggle, *supporting the race will involve doing battle.*

What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and reproduction of our race and our people [here he seems to

distinguish race and people when at other times he equates them], the sustenance of our children and the purity of our blood. . . . This preservation is bound up with the rigid law of necessity and the right to victory of the best and stronger in this world. Those who want to live, let them fight and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live. Even if that were hard—that is how it is!

Like every other social institution, including economic arrangements, *the state should be in service to the race*. That is to say, the state is a means to the end of preserving and improving the race. The state supports the aristocratic idea of nature by promoting the victory of the noblest and strongest elements of the race and demanding the subordination of the inferior and weaker.

The state is a means to an end. Its end lies in the preservation and advancement of a community of physically and psychologically homogeneous creatures. The state is the vessel and race is its content. . . . The highest purpose of a folkish state is concern for the preservation of those original racial elements which bestow culture and create the beauty and dignity of a higher mankind. We, as Aryans, can conceive of the state only as the living organism of a nationality which not only assures the preservation of this nationality, but by the development of its spiritual and ideal abilities leads it to the highest freedom. . . . A bad state is assuredly able to kill originally existing abilities by permitting or even promoting the destruction of the racial culture-bearer.

Hitler believed that *the reins of the state must be in the hands of the finest individuals, those who are the wisest and the most efficacious*. The political process must be designed so as to identify the very best people given the aim of racial survival and progress, and then to bring them to "office and dignity." Hitler is adamant that mass democracy is *not* the best way for this to occur;

the finest should be in charge, not the masses. Rather than the rule of the democratic majority, Hitler affirmed the *rule of personality*, that is, the great man who takes control through what amounts to a process of natural selection.

In world history, the man who really rises above the norm of the broad average usually announces himself personally. A philosophy of life which endeavors to reject the democratic mass idea and give this earth to the best people—that is, the highest humanity—must logically obey the aristocratic principle within this people and make sure that the leadership and the highest influence in this people fall into the best minds. Thus, it builds, not upon the idea of the majority, but upon the idea of personality.

Hitler asserted that in all areas of life other than politics—business, the military, and the rest—it is generally accepted that the best need to be in charge, and that it is not left to a vote to decide who that is. Hitler said many have a misplaced faith in the results of democratic elections: "Sooner will a camel pass through a needle's eye than a great man be 'discovered' by an election."

Hitler held that *the family, with child-raising at its core, is the central element of society*. Everything else works around the family and serves to enhance its functioning. In the folkish state—the state which centers itself around a shared biological and cultural heritage and destiny—marriage needs to be a "consecrated institution," and children are "the most precious treasure of the people." Marriage is not, in the first instance, a means of enhancing the happiness and well-being of those involved but rather, as with the other institutions of society, a means of preserving and improving the race.

Hitler called for *control of breeding as a way to improve the quality of the race*, i.e., eugenics.

It [the National Socialist state] must see to it that only the healthy beget children; that there is only one disgrace:

despite one's own sickness and deficiencies, to bring children into the world; and one highest honor: to renounce doing so. And conversely it must be considered reprehensible to withhold healthy children from the nation. Here the state must act as the guardian of a millennial future in the face of which the wishes and selfishness of the individual must appear as nothing and submit. . . . Those who are not physically and mentally healthy and worthy must not perpetuate their defects in the bodies of their children. In this the National Socialist state must perform the most gigantic educational task. And someday this will seem to be a greater deed than the most victorious wars of our present mediocre era. . . . In the National Socialist state, finally, the National Socialist philosophy of life must succeed in bringing about that nobler age in which men no longer are concerned with breeding dogs, horses, and cats, but in elevating man himself.

Hitler called for *an education for nobility*. He criticized German schools for focusing too much on "pure knowledge" and neglecting the development of personal character. He decried "half-education," as he called it, which pumps a certain amount of knowledge into young people but at the same time removes them from nature and their instincts and their connection to anything beyond themselves. He claimed that students were emerging from the schools of his time knowing little or nothing of the joy of responsibility. He referred to students "crammed full of knowledge and intellect, but bereft of any healthy instinct and devoid of all energy and boldness." He said the German educational system was turning out weak-willed people who lack forcefulness and decisiveness. Rather than strong and courageous men and women, the schools were producing "clever weaklings" and "cowardly physical degenerates."

Hitler held up *the Greek ideal* of an education that promotes a noble soul, physical beauty, and a brilliant mind. He called for an emphasis on the development of firm character, especially self-

confidence, willpower and determination, and a sense of responsibility.

Don't heap on material, Hitler implored. Help students gain the store of material that they actually need as individuals and that will benefit the community. This will necessarily include specialized training suited to the particular student.

Hitler emphasized *the study of Nature* in order that students learn to understand and respect Nature and live by its laws: "A man must never fall into the lunacy of believing that he has really risen to be the lord and master of Nature—which is so easily induced by the conceit of half-education; he must understand the fundamental necessity of Nature's rule, and realize how much his existence is subjected to these laws of eternal fight and upward struggle."

Hitler advocated a focus on *the Roman and Greek heritage* in order that students find the motivation to contribute to its continued existence: "Especially in historical instruction we must not be deterred from the study of antiquity. Roman history correctly conceived in extremely broad outlines is the best mentor, not only for today, but probably for all time. The Hellenic ideal of culture should remain preserved for us in its exemplary beauty."

Hitler called for the *development of racial consciousness*. Education must

burn the racial sense and racial feeling into the instinct and intellect, the heart and brain of the youth entrusted to it. No boy and no girl should leave school without having been led to an ultimate realization of the necessity and essence of blood purity. Thus the groundwork is created by preserving the racial foundations of our nation and through them in turn securing the basis for its future cultural development. For all physical and all intellectual training would in the last analysis remain worthless if it did not benefit a being which is ready and determined on principle to preserve himself and his special nature.

Hitler's reference in this quote to burning a racial sense and feeling into the instinct raises the question of whether he believed in epigenetics, that environment can affect the genome. Someone with a greater understanding of him than I possess will have to answer that.

Hitler affirmed the value of *a strong program of physical training* to "steel and harden" young men's bodies. He argued for the inclusion of one sport in particular, one he acknowledged many people considered vulgar and undignified: boxing.

There is no sport that so much as this one promotes the spirit of attack, demands lightning decisions, and trains the body in steel dexterity. It is no more vulgar for two men to fight out a difference of opinion with their fists than with a piece of whetted iron [he is referring to fencing]. It is not less noble if a man who has been attacked defends himself against his assailant with his fists instead of running away and yelling for a policeman.

Hitler saw boxing as teaching a young man to suffer blows and continue forward.

Hitler's desire to avoid educating a "colony of aesthetes" applied to girls as well as boys. He valued *vibrant health and steel-sprung physicality for both boys and girls*. He wanted both boys and girls to be strong, agile, bold, courageous, and able to endure and triumph amid hardship. He advocated an emphasis on physical training for girls as well as boys. At the same time, however, Hitler held that there were *inherent and complementary differences between the sexes*, and thus the ultimate purposes of boys' and girls' physical training were different. He distinguished between the manly strength to live powerfully in the world and to be a good father and the womanly strength to bear and raise healthy and vital children and to be a good wife and create and maintain a good home. Hitler considered future motherhood—which he saw as equally important to education for careers or political life—to be the major goal of female education.

Hitler believed that *Jews stand in the way of all that must be achieved.*

Jews are *alienated from Nature.* They seek to conquer Nature rather than live in accordance with it. Hitler contended that the Jewish outlook is “nonsense” given the true reality of the natural order.

Jews *destroy the racial foundations of the white race* through the promotion of miscegenation because of their basic resentful attitude and it is in their interest not to have to deal with a sturdy white race but rather a "rickety herd." If they get their way, Jews will turn European people into “raceless bastards.”

Jews *contribute to cultural decay.* They ridicule Christianity and represent traditional ethics and morality as outmoded, which leaves gentiles adrift. They "contaminate art, literature, and the theater, make a mockery of national feeling, and overthrow all concepts of beauty and sublimity, of the noble and good." “In everything base and profligate in mass entertainment and artistic trash, vice, or pornography there will most certainly be a Jew.”

Jews *gain control of finance and commerce and control of key professions,* and use this position to serve their interests at the expense of the general welfare of the people. Jews use economic power to gain undue influence in the government.

Jews “*refuse the state the means for its self-preservation, destroy faith in the leadership, scoff at history and the past, and drop everything that is great into the gutter.*” They *promote democracy,* which excludes the personality and replace it with the “blind worship of numbers” (rule by the majority).

The Jewish doctrine . . . rejects the aristocratic principle of Nature and replaces the eternal privilege of power and strength by mass numbers and their dead weight. This denies the value of the personality in man, contests the significance of nationality and race, and thereby withdraws from humanity the premise of its existence and culture. As a foundation of the universe, this doctrine would bring about the end of any order intellectually conceivable to

man. And as, in this greatest of all recognizable organisms, the result of an application of such a law could only be chaos, on earth it could only be destruction for the inhabitants of this planet.

That's it. Hitler's basic beliefs. What do you think?