

‘Molding science to fit ideology’: 5 ways the Nazis leveraged pseudoscience to support fascism



azism is perhaps the most reprehensible ideology to which humans have ever subscribed. Its adherents started World War II and engineered the Holocaust, which together resulted in the deaths of 73 million people.

Looking back, it's almost hard to believe that such a heinous belief system could seduce much of the populace of mid-20th century Germany, and yet it happened. Economic instability, powerful propaganda, scapegoating Jews along with other members of society, and political violence all [played a role](#).

Scholars have also noted that pseudoscience – a collection of beliefs or practices that seems scientific but does not conform to facts or the scientific method – factored heavily in Nazism. Supporters didn't want their 'great' political party to be hamstrung by evidence, so they molded science to fit their ideology and agenda, rather than vice versa. This led to some very strange anti-scientific beliefs, some more integral to Nazism than others.

Overall, Nazi leaders found that championing these ideas, particularly the supernatural ones, resonated remarkably with voters. In his extensively researched 2017 book, [Hitler's Monsters: A Supernatural History of the Third Reich](#), Stetson University historian Eric Kurlander [pointed out](#) that political opponents to Nazism couldn't compete with Nazis' "emotional appeal to nationalism and folkish rebirth, grounded in Germans' "longing for myth".

Hitler, a ruthless, opportunistic politician, didn't personally subscribe to some of the more whacky pseudoscientific beliefs, in contrast to other prominent party leaders like Heinrich Himmler and Rudolf Hess, but he still promoted them, believing it to be to his benefit. "His rhetoric was infused with border-scientific arguments, the invocation of mythology and appeals to emotions," Stetson [said in an interview](#) with *Jacobin*.

Here are five pseudosciences touted by the Nazis:

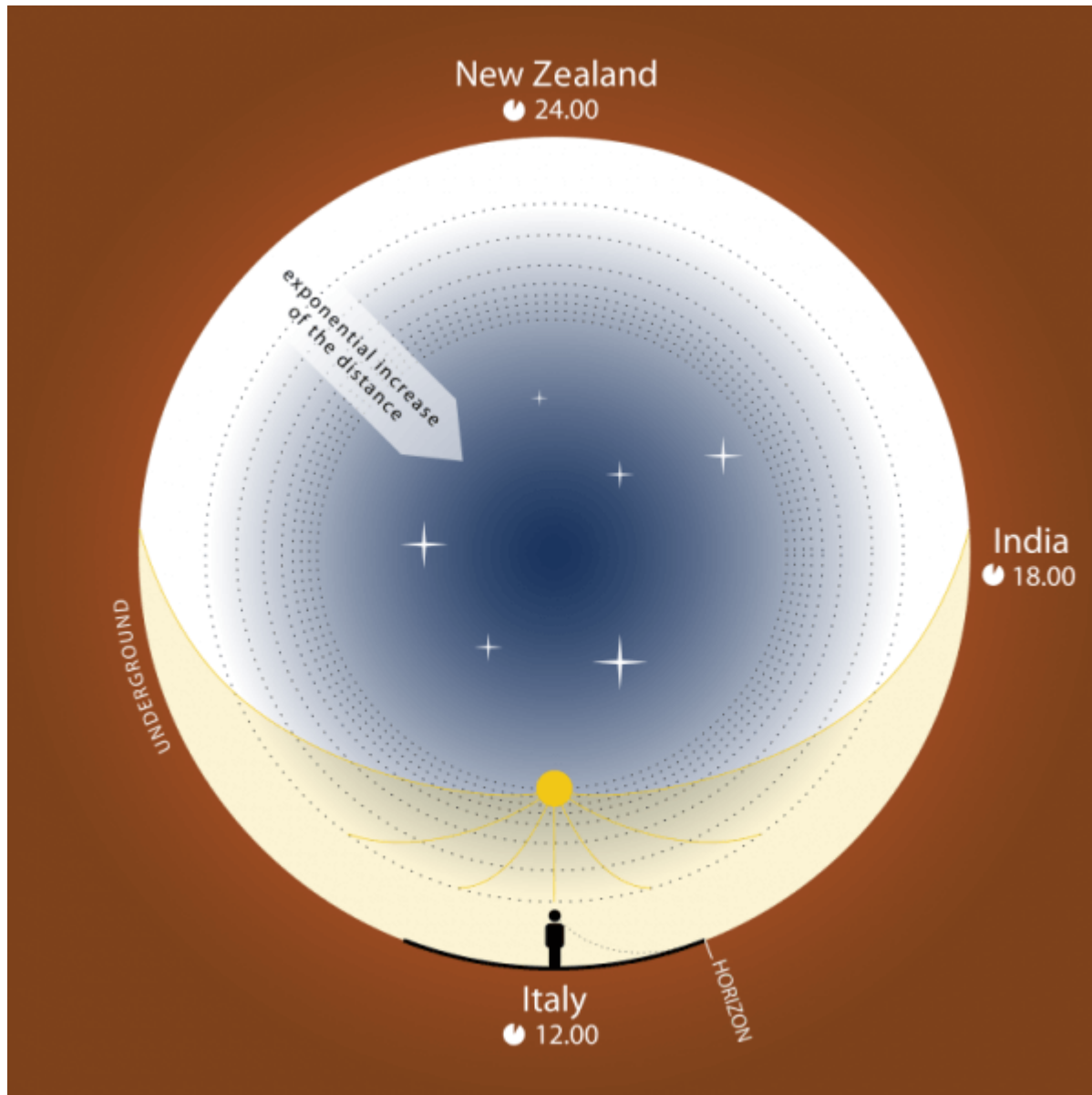
1. Eugenics

Undeniably the most pernicious pseudoscience pushed by the Nazis, eugenics [applies](#) the "Darwinian concepts of evolution to the problems of human society", blaming certain "genetically diseased" persons for societal shortcomings. The Nazis used the notion of [societal health](#) and racial purity to justify murdering anyone they deemed a liability or a threat, [including](#) Jews, homosexuals, black people, Poles, and many others.

2. Hollow-Earth Hypothesis

Though not prominent in broader Nazi thought, it's reported that many 'intellectuals' in the upper echelons of the Nazi party entertained the [concave hollow-Earth hypothesis](#), the notion that humans are living on

the inner shell of a hollow Earth. Thus, everything we see in the sky is actually at the center of our hollow planet. Germans called the idea *Hohlwelttheorie*.



Credit: Joshua Cesa

3. Biodynamics

The forerunner of modern [organic farming](#), biodynamic farming was invented in 1924 by Austrian-born occultist Rudolf Steiner. As [Peter Staudenmaier](#), an Associate Professor of History at Marquette University, described, “The approach is based on a holistic view of the farm or garden as an integrated organism comprising soil, plants, animals, and various cosmic forces, with sowing and harvesting conducted according to astrological principles. Biodynamic growers reject monoculture and abjure artificial

fertilizers and pesticides, relying instead on manure, compost, and a variety of homeopathic preparations meant to channel the etheric and astral energies of the earth and other celestial bodies.”

Biodynamic advocates frequently branded their agricultural approach as a natural, superior method to grow healthy food fit for an Aryan race, and sought institutional support from Nazi officials to make biodynamic farming a tenet of Nazism. Biodynamics never officially became a party tenet, but it drew wide support among numerous Nazi factions. As Staudenmaier [wrote](#), “However inadvertently and inconsistently, between 1933 and 1945 organic ideals of natural cultivation and regeneration, of healing the ravages of materialism and redeeming the land and its people, converged with deeply regressive political realities.”

4. Nazi Anthropology

Key to Nazism was the notion that Germans descended from an ancient, superior “Aryan” race, [who had been responsible](#) for most major developments in human history such as agriculture, art, and writing. Most of the world’s academics dismissed this outlandish hypothesis, so the Nazis employed dozens of academics to venture on numerous archaeological and anthropological expeditions around the world to return evidence of Aryan settlements and accomplishments. While on these explorations, the ‘scientists’ would grossly misinterpret findings or just flat out fabricate data to fit Aryan ideology.

5. World Ice Theory

Invented after a wild dream by Austrian engineer Hanns Hörbiger, world ice theory, or *Welteislehre*, [states](#) that ice is the basic substance of all cosmic processes, making up moons, planets, and stars. Though patently nonsense, Horgiber compellingly popularized his idea to the peoples of Austria and Germany in the early 1900s. As the Nazis came to power, they adopted Welteislehre as an [alternative](#) to “Jewish” physics, particularly to Einstein’s theory of relativity.

Ross Pomeroy studied Zoology & Biological Aspects of Conversation at University of Wisconsin-Madison and used to be a zookeeper. Ross is now an editor at Real Clear Science. Follow Ross on Twitter [@SteRoPo](#)

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