

# Vacher de Lapouge and the Rise of Nazi Science

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In the literature on the history of the Shoah the existence of a tradition of explicit anti-morality has been generally ignored.<sup>1</sup> This article argues that the materialist anthropology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries waged a direct attack on morality, which was described as inherently linked to religion. Strict materialism also denied any human access to the eternal except through biological lineage, linking the past, present, and future. This concern with procreation, which culminated in a desire to change the racial content of the world, led anthropology to aim its attack on morality on restrictive sexual mores and the injunction not to kill. Still, anti-morality was not conjured up in order to further eugenics; it was an independent idea and an explicit response to the loss of God. The anthropologist who best illustrates this scientific anti-morality is Georges Vacher de Lapouge, the French inventor of “anthroposociology.” The present article explicates Lapouge’s anti-morality and establishes a connection between his racial theories and those of a coterie of German colleagues. Most notable among these German colleagues was Hans Günther, whose vision had a role in shaping Nazi racial policy, in particular the Nazi interest in head measurements. Scholars investigating the origins of German racism have discovered French influence but have focused on Gobineau and his almost anti-scientific literary racism. This article argues that Lapouge and his scientific racism were also important.

The relative significance of ideology in the “Final Solution” is the subject of some debate. This article seeks not to enter that debate but rather to reevaluate the nature of the ideology. It seems clear that whatever may have been the relative importance of ideas to, for instance, mundane careerism and conformity, the

The author wishes to thank the anonymous readers of *JHI* for their valuable criticisms.

<sup>1</sup> See Michael R. Marrus, “Reflections on the History of the Holocaust,” *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), 92-116.

ideas did play a role.<sup>2</sup> Within that context it will be demonstrated that Lapouge's anthroposociology helped to legitimate racist utopianism. The scientific status of anthroposociology was deliberately engaged as propaganda for the regime, even after the specifics of its injunctions were no longer of much interest to the programmers of genocide.

Whatever made people enact and accept genocide as daily routine, the idea of it came from somewhere, and somehow "the moral sensitivities" of the people were dulled.<sup>3</sup> Increasingly, historians stress that along with older forms of anti-Semitism, new scientific doctrines had a direct effect on events. There are a number of studies on the role of science in National Socialist doctrine, but they tend to be more about the role of doctors and the medical model of society than they are about anthropology.<sup>4</sup> Those that do deal with anthropology tend to mention Lapouge as an interesting forerunner but consistently fail to recognize his direct influence on Nazi doctrine.<sup>5</sup>

Lapouge's contribution to racism was a quantitative, well-written race theory that was replete with the language and tools of science. It was particularly appealing because it described a collection of human groups which sounded too scientific and clinical to be political. The value-laden descriptions of these clinical types (based on head shape) were easily transferred to known "racial" or social groups—with the simple claim that this or that group tended to have this or that head shape. Lapougian race theory was convincing because it was alien and yet confirmed familiar suspicions. It was thus highly instrumental in vitalizing dormant or mild prejudice. These ideas (and the endless columns of measurements and descriptions of head shapes) have grown so foreign to present day beliefs that they have become somewhat invisible to our eyes. Because of this, historians have not fully appreciated one of the important factors contributing to the "respectability" and credibility of a genocidal doctrine.

In studying people who were guilty of unparalleled cruelty, historians expected to find moral agony and found instead a bureaucratic, mechanistic, ba-

<sup>2</sup> See Christopher R. Browning, *The German Foreign Office and the Final Solution: A Study of Referate DIII of Abteilung Deutschland* (New York, 1978), and *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> The phrase is Browning's.

<sup>4</sup> See Robert J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and Genocide* (New York, 1986); Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1964) and *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison, 1978); Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism: Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League* (London, 1971); Benno Müller-Hill, *Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews and Others, Germany 1933-1945*, tr. George R. Fraser (Oxford, 1988).

nality. In considering scientific racism, on the other hand, historians tend to describe a rationalist objectification of humanity that simply gave no thought to the amoral nature of the schema. In the original texts, however, one finds evidence of the vague titillation, the existential terror, and the flirtation with horror that reappears in popular histories of the Shoah but is relatively absent in the actual “bureaucratic” desk-perpetrators of the acts. This horror was persuasive. Along with the paraphernalia of science (numbers, instruments, and technical language), Lapouge convinced by exhibiting a pessimistic atheism which verged on suicidal nihilism.

### Anti-Morality

In the next century people will be slaughtered by the millions for the sake of one or two degrees on the cephalic index. That will be the sign, replacing the biblical shibboleth and the linguistic affinities which are now the markers of nationality. Only it will not have anything to do, as it does today, with questions of moving frontiers a few kilometers; the superior races will substitute themselves by force for the human groups retarded in evolution, and the last sentimentalists will witness the copious extermination of entire peoples.<sup>6</sup>

Vacher de Lapouge first presented this thesis in a series of lectures held at the distinguished University of Montpellier in the early 1880s. He subsequently published the idea in 1887 in the *Revue d'anthropologie*. The article, entitled “L'Anthropologie et la science politique,” contained Lapouge’s first descriptions of “anthroposociologie”—the application of anthropology to social politics. Phrases like “slaughtered by the millions” and “copious exterminations of entire peoples” remove this quote from the run of the mill nineteenth-century eugenics, and it is often cited as an oddly prescient curiosity.

Lapouge was not calling for copious exterminations. The above statement was a warning for what would happen if government did not take rational control of breeding practices. But by inventing (in his mind, discovering) a motive for such slaughter and proselytizing that motive—with what his contemporaries called “incontestable erudition”—Lapouge had a role in actualizing his terrifying scenario. One of the crucial phrases in the above quote refers to “the last sentimentalists.” It is crucial because it demonstrates the sneering bile he reserved for moralists—particularly those who were of a scientific cast of mind. Lapouge had been taught anthropology by a rather cultish group of freethinking anthropologists who believed that the purpose of the young science was to van-

<sup>6</sup> Lapouge, “L'Anthropologie et la science politique,” *Revue d'anthropologie*, 16 (1887), 151.

quish religion and replace its social functions.<sup>7</sup> But they were egalitarian republicans. In general Lapouge believed that these and other atheists had stopped just short of the awful truth: no God meant no meaning and no morality. For Lapouge, this translated into a complete indictment of the present society, culture, and government, based as they were on principles derived from deistic morality. As Lapouge wrote,

Here is why I have been speaking to you of the abyss and of a cataclysm. It is obvious, to my eyes anyway, that if one eliminates the supernatural element from the universe, it is necessary to eliminate, at the same time, a number of fundamental notions—all of which were, in the past, deduced from supernatural tenets. All of morality and all of the ideas which serve as a base for law and for the political sciences, in their present-day conceptions, constitute a series of deductions of which the first term assumes the existence of a personal divinity.... Remove all validity from this source and there is nothing left.<sup>8</sup>

He was not happy about this meaninglessness, except in so far as it allowed him to eradicate barriers to a “selectionist state.” He did, however, relish the amorality of his imagined future and its the brutal rule of science.

Lapouge was writing at a time when French popular and academic culture was deeply immersed in the question of the foundations of morality. The issue was inflamed because of the coincidences of the secularization of the state and the perceived rise of urban crime and general unrest. One can also discern a general disappointment in the realities of democracy. Government scandals, the proliferation of functionaries, and rapid changes in leadership all stood in sharp contrast to the utopian dreams harbored by republicans under the Second Empire. Republican claims regarding the interdependence of virtue, democracy, and secularism were beginning to seem quite problematic; and there was a great deal written on the possibility that a republic needed strong, dogmatic religion even more than a monarchy did. What was at stake was social order, not individual spirit or truth. Indeed, one of the leading champions of the return to religion, the literary critic and ex-freethinker Ferdinand Brunetière, suggested that the republic ought to embrace Catholicism, “which is a government,” while “Protestantism is nothing but the absence of government.”

Lapouge heard an outrageous hypocrisy in this pragmatic about-face and in the dominant culture’s willingness to jettison materialist science in favor of peace

<sup>7</sup> See Hecht, “French Scientific Materialism and the Liturgy of Death: The invention of a secular version of Catholic last rites (1876-1914),” *French Historical Studies*, 20 (1997), 703-35.

<sup>8</sup> Lapouge, “L’Anthropologie et la science politique,” 142.

and comfort. Brunetière wrote that, “[i]f we ask Darwinism for lessons in moral behavior, the lessons which it gives us will be abominable.”<sup>9</sup> Lapouge championed the abomination; yet it was not the barbarism of the Darwinian vision of nature that turned him away from morality. Lapouge did invoke the brutality of the natural world, but when arguing against morality, he explicitly referred to the loss of God rather than the law of the jungle:

We have attempted many systems in order to maintain morality and the fundamentals of law. To tell the truth, these attempts were nothing but illusions.... Without the existence of a distinct soul, without immortality, and without the threat of the afterlife, there are no longer any sanctions.... All our morality and laws ... have, in themselves, the exact same value as a game of cards.<sup>10</sup>

Mid-century Positivism had an amazing capacity for ambiguity, suggesting as it did that there were non-empirical questions in the world and that they simply should not be answered. Positivism allowed faith in God, requiring only that positivists not mix this faith with any of their narratives about history, science, law, etc. The strict scientific materialism that arose later in the century was less tolerant of ambiguity; its adherents had a fierce desire for certainty—and a belief that all truth could be discovered. Their conviction regarding the accessibility of knowledge rested on the belief that the universe was mechanical, decipherable, finite, and without cosmic meaning. In its extreme expression atheism was coupled with a dismissal of all metaphysics, and philosophy and theism were seen as equally erroneous. The experience of atheism was extremely difficult for people who had no philosophical context for it and who lived in a culture which had not yet set up rituals and doctrines for unbelievers (political activity, secular celebrations, etc.). Lapouge and others like him acted out their unbelief with as much gusto as displayed by the most zealous believer. It was at the nexus of atheism, profound pessimism, and an education in physical anthropology that racist science was born.

For Lapouge there was no such thing as an atheistic morality, so the world would have to do without morality. He wore his pessimism as a badge of honor, arguing that his bravery in accepting such a dismal situation proved that he was honest and, by extension, correct. The religiosity of his anti-religion is striking, as is the passion of his rationalist nihilism. “Progress,” he wrote,

is a purely human conception. Evolution is happening all around us, moving forward, backward, to the side, progressing, regressing, turning

<sup>9</sup> Ferdinand Brunetière, “Après une visite au Vatican,” *Revue des deux mondes*, 127 (1895), 113, 104.

<sup>10</sup> Lapouge, “L’Anthropologie et la science politique,” 143.

and returning. It does not tend indefinitely toward the best, it tends toward nothing. It is, at the moment, made to tend toward whomever has the greatest consciousness of it, but that consciousness will be extinguished along with the conscious being, who must eventually die. There is no heaven, not even on earth. One must not ask science to give more than it can give. It can give man consciousness and power. It does not have a direct control over happiness: for that you have to go to a priest, a sorcerer, a seller of alcohol, of morphine, or best of all, go to the gun shop—the seller of suicide.<sup>11</sup>

The pessimism of this statement is not unique in his work, nor is the relativism. His books are not teeming with statements of meaninglessness, but every hundred pages or so Lapouge began to muse on the ramifications of his materialist position, and on the cosmic pointlessness of even his own project, within this schema. “There is no such thing as superiority in and of itself,” wrote Lapouge, “any more than there is a top and bottom of the universe, or a good and bad, but we are used to orienting ourselves in space according to certain conventions.”<sup>12</sup> Lapouge felt that as long as humans were nothing more than a physical conglomeration of matter, the only possible way of relating to the past and the future was to foster biological continuity. He saw this creation of meaning as retroactive as well as future oriented, so that to fail to reproduce was a crime not only against the future of humanity but also against one’s own ancestors. Without God or soul to give an individual life meaning and a place in eternity, only “le plasma germinatif” could serve this role. As Lapouge wrote,

What is immortal is not the soul—that unlikely and probably imaginary personage—it is instead the body, or rather, the germ plasma.... The individual who dies without leaving descendants puts an end to the immortality of his ancestors. He manages to kill his own dead.<sup>13</sup>

Lapouge was very aware of the relationship between his anti-philosophical atheism and his eugenics. He even referred to it as a crisis, writing that

our epoch of apparent indifference is the beginning of the greatest crisis of religion and morality which has struck humanity since it has begun to think. Even politics is touched; to the celebrated formula which summarizes the secular Christianity of the Revolution: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, we respond: Determinism, Inequality, Selection!

<sup>11</sup> Lapouge, *L’Aryen, son rôle social* (Paris, 1899), 512.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

<sup>13</sup> *Les sélections sociales* (Paris, 1896), 306-7.

Still, despite the excitement expressed in such claims, Lapouge returned quickly to the crisis. No matter what arrangements were made for selectionist breeding, all that could be achieved thereby was a “relative immortality,” which would last “so long as the rites of fecundation are repeated, this is the only immortality: all others are chimera.”<sup>14</sup>

It is at this point that morality really began to get in the way. If the most crucial role of every human being is reproduction and if failure to reproduce wipes out the reproductive effort and the very essence of all of one’s ancestors, then there can be no true morality which prevents the individual from reproducing. “Selectionist morality,” wrote Lapouge, “places responsibility-to-the-race in the supreme place—there where the morality of Christianity put responsibility-to-God.”<sup>15</sup> Individuals were temporally finite and thus meaningless.<sup>16</sup> Properly understood, they did not even exist. Lapouge was confident that civilization was on its way “towards the elimination of the idea of morality.” He saw this as both advantageous and inconvenient but was convinced that the progress of human knowledge made it inevitable. Christian belief in life after death had precipitated a moral system which, he believed, “sacrifices society to the individual, and real life to imaginary mystical interests.” Yet if the loss of morality was imagined as difficult, the loss of comfort in grief and death was more heartily mourned: “Oh, the millions of grievers who have been consoled by the golden promises of Christianity! Oh, the millions in agony that it has soothed—up until the supreme instant of the fall into nothingness!” The drama of misfortune seems to have replaced religious comfort: “The great consoler is gone. If religion has done harm to society, it is also true that individuals will never again have such promises of happiness.”<sup>17</sup> Even his utopia was miserable, but he seemed to draw strength from his commitment to mournful independence.

Certainly, Germany had its own promoter of a world beyond good and evil, and Nietzsche often wrote with the same frustration on the logical inconsistency of maintaining a Judeo-Christian value system in a post-religious society. He also toyed, even in his younger work, with notions of anti-morality for the sake of the hereditary race. Nietzsche’s superman, however, was individual, not racial, so that for him life’s purpose was in personal ascension; eternity was addressed in the notion of eternal recurrence. Ultimately, what separates these two thinkers is that Nietzsche was more deeply intelligent and imaginative—it would be difficult to be mired in a paradigm so base and material and hateful, while elsewhere sparks of wild insight fly in all direction. Both men wrote as if they felt cursed by an intelligence and a fortitude that caused them to know things beyond the knowledge of their contemporaries—most essentially that stark ma-

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>16</sup> Lapouge, *L’Aryen*, ix.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 509, 508.

terialism unmitigated by metaphysics destroyed either the truth of human values or the notion that truth can be demonstrated. Nietzsche was able to think himself out of this disaster, while Lapouge accepted the disaster with bravado. Indeed, he made a career out of accepting it and attempting to convert others.

### Lapouge and His German Colleagues

Propaganda for the Nazi racial program was not supported entirely on literary tales of demonic and parasitical Jews and accounts of history as racial conflict. At crucial junctures various members of the Nazi inner circle took steps to associate exterminationist racism with quantitative, objective science. There was ready at hand a racist branch of science which sounded objective and untainted by politics. It came from outside the social “question” of Jews and indeed from outside the “question” of Blacks, Whites, and Yellows. In place of these vulgarities the German middle class was introduced to dolichocephals and brachicephals and a vast collection of numerical measurements and descriptions defining these long-heads and round-heads.

Lapouge’s anthroposociology was not only free of the gutter-associations of traditional racism, it was also, in its beginnings, free from caustic declarations of hatred. The division between dolichos and brachies was between great and good, not good and evil.<sup>18</sup> In their genius, beauty, and love of adventure, dolichocephals had invented and now forwarded civilization. This higher race, which he often referred to as Aryan, was in the majority in England, the United States, Scandinavia, and northern Germany. Brachicephals, however, were also necessary. Through their loyalty, dependability, deep work ethic, love of home, and innate servility, they maintained and supported civilization. Lapouge argued that the French revolution was an evolutionary disaster, having dethroned the dolichos (long-heads). He argued that Jews were a strong, villainous, superior race—a dolichocephalic evil-mirror image of the Aryans. The brachies now thought they had power, but they were increasingly controlled by the dolicho Jews. What was needed was a “socialist-selectionist” state which would outlaw breeding between groups, control the Jews, make certain that Aryan dolichos reproduced prodigiously, and assist the Aryan dolichos in finding the necessary “living space” so that their greatness could blossom. This state would employ anthroposociologists to measure heads and sort people out.

Part of the reason that anthroposociology has been seen as a forerunner but not a direct progenitor of Nazi doctrine is that it was so strange, and part of the reason is that Lapouge wrote his two most influential books in 1896 and 1899, which may seem a bit early. Because it was strange, however, this scientific

<sup>18</sup> Lapouge, “L’Anthropologie et la science politique,” 136-57; and “Questions Aryennes,” *Revue d’anthropologie*, 18 (1889), 181-93.



racism arrived in Germany as an exciting new discovery, unfettered by the crass associations of traditional hate-speak. It was championed by a few deeply enthusiastic, well-known German writers and grew in popularity to its eventual status as official Nazi doctrine. As for the dates, Lapouge lived until 1936, consistently corresponding and visiting with a plethora of German colleagues and disciples, the most important of whom was Hans F. K. Günther—known by contemporaries as “Rassen-Günther”—the official race theorist of National Socialism.

Lapouge had tremendous influence on the ideas, publications, and academic career of Günther, and yet few modern scholars identify the connection between their theories. Those that do, tend to include Madison Grant, Ludwig Woltmann, Otto Ammon, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain with Lapouge as Günther’s sources.<sup>19</sup> A perusal of Günther’s works, however, show him to have depended upon Lapouge much more than any of these others. Often, as in the case of his influential *Racial Elements of European History*, Günther cited Lapouge more often than any writer except Gobineau.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, in the above mentioned work, Günther specifically stated that Lapouge had written, “the first scientific work from the racial historical standpoint.”<sup>21</sup> Beyond Günther’s praise and direct citations of Lapouge, Günther’s works were profoundly influenced by Lapouge’s very particular paradigm and Günther’s prose draws heavily on Lapouge’s odd lexicon.

In the anarchic power arrangements of the Third Reich the two leading official Nazi race theorists were Hans Günther and Alfred Rosenberg. Theories of race and social hygiene abounded, but these two were early on the scene, were much honored, and represented two distinct styles and concerns. They also occupied very different roles in the Reich. For a time Rosenberg was among those at the edge of Hitler’s inner circle, and he was tried and hanged at Nuremberg. His written work was generally understood as “literary” and discursive, following the pattern of his explicitly referenced inspirator: Houston Stewart Chamberlain.<sup>22</sup> Rosenberg’s confused, rambling, and immense *Foundations of the Twentieth Century* was homage to and continuation of Chamberlain’s *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*.<sup>23</sup> Günther, in contrast, was seen as rather bookish. He joined the National Socialist Party in 1932 but was not a leading member

<sup>19</sup> See Geoffrey G. Field, “Nordic Racism,” *JHI*, 38 (1977), 523; and Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton, 1974), 292.

<sup>20</sup> Hans F. K. Günther, *Racial Elements of European History*, tr. G. C. Wheeler (New York, 1927).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>22</sup> See Robert C. Walton, “The Holocaust: Conversion to Racism through Scientific Materialism—‘The People Like Us Who Killed the Jews,’ ” *The History of European Ideas*, 19 (1994), 787-94; and Geoffrey G. Field, *Evangelist of Race, The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York, 1981).

<sup>23</sup> Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, tr. John Lees, intro. George Mosse (New York, 1977).

and was not tried at Nuremberg.<sup>24</sup> He continued publishing his theories until he died, unindicted, in 1968. A plethora of national and academic awards confirmed him as the primary scientist of Nazi racial doctrine. Citations of Günther's work legitimized the ranting, impassioned diatribes of Rosenberg and of Hitler himself. Rosenberg was the rambling, literary theorist; Günther played the quantifying, objective scientist.

As Günther and Rosenberg can be usefully contrasted, an understanding of their mentors, Lapouge and Chamberlain, respectively, can also be enhanced by comparison. Lapouge's work first entered into Germany through the anthropological and historical work of Ludwig Schemann, Ludwig Woltmann, and Otto Ammon—the three men who are generally cited as the originators of race theory in Germany. All three of these famed German racial theorists were involved in lengthy correspondence with Lapouge, which developed into deep personal friendships and productive professional alliances.<sup>25</sup> Lapouge translated Ammon's work and wrote prefaces for his books and Ammon wrote articles about Lapouge.<sup>26</sup> Woltmann (Ludwig Gumplowitz's student) conferred with Lapouge when he founded the journal *Politische Anthropologie*, in which he later published a great deal of the Frenchman's work.<sup>27</sup> Schemann, who was called the "German father of Gobinism" due to his lifelong work of popularizing the work of Comte Gobineau, first approached Lapouge to invite him into his Gobineau club.<sup>28</sup> He later used Lapouge's name to legitimate and enhance his Gobineau revival and then used the revival to further popularize Lapouge.

All these theorists cited Lapouge extensively in their work.<sup>29</sup> In their correspondence with him these German thinkers displayed deep admiration for Lapouge and credited him with considerable originality and influence. For example, of Lapouge's first book, Schemann wrote: "There is not the least doubt that in time this book will produce a revolution in several domains of science and of soci-

<sup>24</sup> The only extensive study of Günther is Hans-Jürgen Lützhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland 1920-1940* (Stuttgart, 1971); and see the review in Field, "Nordic Racism."

<sup>25</sup> There is a very large collection of Lapouge's correspondence housed in the Paul Valéry library of the University of Montpellier. It includes many letters to and from Woltmann, Ammon, and Schemann, as well as a host of other racial theorists. Many of these correspondences were extensive and of long duration. The Lapouge/Schemann correspondence, for example, extended from 1898 to 1934.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, under the title, "Die Geschichte einer Idee," Ammon published six lengthy articles on Gobineau, Lapouge, and Nietzsche in the *Deutsche Zeitung*, translated and published in the *Revue internationale de sociologie*, in 1898.

<sup>27</sup> On Ammon see Hedwig Conrad-Martius, *Utopien der Menschengestaltung: Der Sozialdarwinismus und seine Folgen* (Munich, 1955).

<sup>28</sup> Fonds Vacher de Lapouge, Université de Montpellier, Bibliothèque Paul Valéry (hereafter FVL/UM) Correspondence: Lapouge/Schemann.

<sup>29</sup> See Ludwig Schemann, *Gobineaus Rassenwerk* (Stuttgart, 1910), which cites Lapouge extensively throughout, esp. 80-86, and *Die Rasse in den Geisteswissenschaften* (Munich, 1928); also Ludwig Woltmann's *Politische Anthropologie* (Leipzig, 1903), esp. 296-97. Just before he died, Woltmann dedicated his *Die Germanen in Frankreich* (Jena, 1907) to Lapouge.

ety.... It goes without saying that I will do all that I can to make your book known and widely distributed in my country. I have already gotten several friends to buy it and more will follow. I will be speaking of it publicly soon...."<sup>30</sup> Woltmann was similarly devoted, praising Lapouge in his *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, and citing him frequently.<sup>31</sup> He dedicated his *Die Germanen in Frankreich* to Lapouge, and the Frenchman complimented the work by saying that, while there were some problems, the "anthroposociology" in it was "magisterial" and that Woltmann had so well assimilated the work of his forerunners that his ideas were "no longer Ammon's or Lapouge's, they are Woltmann's." Such tutorial compliments were consistent with their relationship in general.<sup>32</sup> Ammon's letters to Lapouge also consistently promised to promote Lapouge's work and Ammon's praise was also liberal: "One often says 'poet, prophet,' but in our case it is a man of science and not a poet who has predicted everything, and that man is called Mr. de Lapouge!"<sup>33</sup> In the same letter, speaking of a work of his own which was soon to be published, Ammon wrote: "You will see material that will excite the jealousy of your colleagues, applied to the glorification of your theories." Ammon later told Lapouge: "I always regard you as a student regards his master."<sup>34</sup>

Despite the profound respect with which Schemann, Woltmann, and Ammon referred to Lapouge and his work, there were some conceptual rifts. Lapouge's theory was supra-nationalist. His Aryanism did not equate "German" with "Aryan," and though it was fiercely anti-Semitic, it did not consider the Jews to be a lower (less developed) race. Lapouge's doctrine was materialist and passionately atheistic. This was particularly disturbing to his German colleagues, and yet the power of Lapouge's stark pessimism, even for those who did not agree with it, must be appreciated. Consider, for example, Schemann's response to Lapouge's second major work, *L'Aryen: son rôle social*:

Even though, as a Christian-idealist, I was seriously saddened, not by the pessimism but by the materialism, to not say the nihilism of your

<sup>30</sup> FVL/UM, Correspondence: Schemann to Lapouge, 25 October 1899.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of Woltmann see Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 99-103; and Robert Proctor, "From Anthropologie to Rassenkunde," *Bones, Bodies, Behavior: Essays on Biological Anthropology*, ed. George W. Stocking (Wisconsin, 1988). Proctor, 143, recognizes Woltmann's theoretical dependency on Lapouge: "In 1902 Woltmann founded the *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, a journal that for twenty years would serve as Germany's leading organ for the Nordic supremacist movement. Drawing from Gobineau and Vacher de Lapouge, Woltmann argued that racial struggle was the moving force behind all of human history." Lapouge published eight articles in the *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*.

<sup>32</sup> Woltmann, *Die Germanen in Frankreich* (Jena, 1907). See also FVL/UM, Correspondence: Lapouge/ Woltmann, 1902-1907, and Alain de Benoist, "Ludwig Woltmann et le Darwinisme Allemand ou le socialisme prolet-aryen," *Nouvelle Ecole*, 38 (July 1982), 87-98.

<sup>33</sup> FVL/UM, Correspondence: Ammon to Lapouge, 17 May 1892.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 February 1893.

final pages, I still read your book with the greatest interest for its first part and the most profound emotion for the second part. Your imposing erudition, your so universal penetration, the grandeur and the profundity of your views, and more than all of that the heroism of your truthfulness made the same indelible impression on me as your *Sélections sociales* did in its time. The more I know your works, the more convinced I am that they are destined to play the most remarkable role in the science of the future.<sup>35</sup>

Schemann was clearly distressed by the materialist nihilism of the book; yet it was this nihilism that gave anthroposociology the air of truthful “heroism” which Schemann so admired. Lapouge’s materialism was thus problematic for some of his German readers but not prohibitive. They were more disturbed by his lack of concern for traditional society. His plan for a selectionist state included reproduction by artificial insemination using the diluted semen of a few perfect dolichocephalic men, which constituted a frightening challenge to paternity and the Christian family. Lapouge was also a problematic hero simply because he was French, a nationality much maligned by his own theory. Germans tended to ignore the fact that Lapouge’s superior race had little to do with nationality and had a hard time explaining why the founder of their new nationalist science was a Frenchman.

Houston Stewart Chamberlain posed fewer problems. He celebrated Germans themselves, always equating Germany with Aryanism. He did not insist on cephalic indexes, or any other numerical proof; indeed, he railed against the necessity for proofs. Where Lapouge was profoundly and painfully dedicated to materialist science as the only possible truth source, Chamberlain articulated a willingness to discard science if it got in the way of his intuitive convictions. Where Lapouge had a passionate, evangelical atheism and reveled in pushing mild anticlerics into vacuous nihilism, Chamberlain’s Christianity was only revisionist—he hoped to prove that Jesus was a Germanic gentile. Where Lapouge saw Jews as dangerous because they were dolichocephals, i.e., a higher but venal race, Chamberlain’s invective against the Jews was volcanic, bilious, and unrestrained by theory.<sup>36</sup> Chamberlain was an Englishman who married Richard Wagner’s daughter and repatriated to Germany. On all accounts Chamberlain was an easier foreign expert to accept, but because of their different relationships to science, both Lapouge and Chamberlain were useful.

In fact Chamberlain’s irrationalism was partly inspired by what he perceived as frailties in Lapouge’s scientific approach. The publication of Lapouge’s

<sup>35</sup> FVL/UM, Correspondence: Schemann to Lapouge, 24 April 1900.

<sup>36</sup> See the letter from Chamberlain to Frick in *Der revolutionaere Staatsmann* (Berlin, 1939), 44.

works throughout the decades of 1880 and 1890 had inspired a massive effort of self-defense on the part of French scientific republicans, who saw in this equation of science and inequality a threat to their fundamental ideology.<sup>37</sup> Chamberlain's *Foundations of the XIXth Century* was published in 1899, in the midst of the democratic reaction against Lapouge. Chamberlain chose not to support Lapouge's Aryanist science but rather to insist that Aryans did not need science. He insisted that whatever science said or did not say, Aryans existed, and "no measuring of skulls and philological subtleties can get rid of this great simple fact."<sup>38</sup> For Chamberlain "[o]ne of the most fatal errors of our time is that which impels us to give too great weight to the so-called 'results' of science."<sup>39</sup> This notion appealed to the Nazis. Still, Lapouge was celebrated in Nazi Germany and his *L'Aryen* was translated into German and published in 1936.<sup>40</sup> More importantly, Rosenberg and Hitler enthusiastically celebrated Günther's work because it was Lapougian: meticulous, modern, numerical, and seemingly dispassionate.

### Günther's Place in Nazi Germany

Günther began communicating with Lapouge through the self-proclaimed Lapouge-disciple Du Pont, who published under the pseudonym Warren Kincade.<sup>41</sup> Du Pont forwarded Günther's requests for material to translate, along with his more general questions regarding anthroposociology. Later Günther and Lapouge began a direct correspondence, which grew into a warm friendship.<sup>42</sup> Günther sent Lapouge his books and gratefully accepted the elder man's criticism. Even Lapouge's refusal to equate "Germanic" with "Nordic" did not disturb Günther. Indeed, he repeated it in his own work. As has been noted by both Hans-Jürgen Luthhöft and Geoffrey Field, Günther followed Lapouge in claiming that there was a higher percentage of Nordic blood in Britain and Scandinavia than in Germany.<sup>43</sup> In his letters to Schemann, Lapouge referred the young writer as "mon bon disciple Günther," and the relationship seems to have been generally acknowledged as such.<sup>44</sup>

Through Schemann, Woltmann, and Ammon, Lapouge had become quite well-known in German anthropology by the 1920s. He had outlived many of his

<sup>37</sup> See Hecht, "The Solvency of Metaphysics: The Debate Over Racial Science and Moral Philosophy in France, 1890-1919," *Isis*, 90 (1999), 1-24.

<sup>38</sup> Chamberlain, *Foundations*, 94.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Lapouge, *Der Arier: und seine Bedeutung für die Gemeinschaft* (Frankfurt, 1936).

<sup>41</sup> Kincade was the European correspondent for the *Review of Reviews*. FVL/UM, Correspondence: Lapouge/ Kincade.

<sup>42</sup> FVL/UM, Correspondence: Lapouge/ Günther.

<sup>43</sup> Luthhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke*; Field, "Nordic Racism," 525.

<sup>44</sup> FVL/UM, Correspondence: Lapouge to Schemann, 28 May 1931.

first colleague/disciples (Woltmann died in 1907 and Ammon in 1915) and had begun work on a second generation, actively aiding Günther's career. For instance, in 1930 Günther was interested in a post at the University of Jena, but the Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte (a group of thirty-one Professors from all over Germany) did not think that he possessed the base level qualifications that the university demanded of its faculty.<sup>45</sup> The majority of professors at Jena opposed his candidacy as well. When Lapouge learned of this, he wrote to Dr. Ludwig Plate, an anti-Semitic anthropologist and a Professor of the Zoologische Institut of the University of Jena.<sup>46</sup> Lapouge insisted on the "immense service" which Günther had paid to anthropology and "its practical applications," despite his untraditional scientific style. "He has greatly merited his celebrity," wrote Lapouge, "which has been the only recompense which he has received up until now."<sup>47</sup> Thereafter, Wilhelm Frick, Minister of the Interior and Education in Thuringia and the first Nazi Minister of a German state, took matters into his own hands, installing Günther at Jena against the continued protests of the professorial Senate and the League.<sup>48</sup> The students hailed Günther and held demonstrations in his honor. Significantly, Günther's chair was in "Anthroposociology" a term of distinctive Lapougian origin.<sup>49</sup> This chair was the first of its kind in Germany. Many similar chairs were to follow, though, to my knowledge, none of the others bore this curious moniker ("anthropology" or "racial science" were common). That Günther's appointment was a serious affair is evident in the fact that Hitler attended his inaugural address in the spring of 1933.<sup>50</sup>

Lapouge had an influence on the work and success of many racialist writers. At Madison Grant's request, Lapouge wrote copious corrections for Grant's *The Passing of a Great Race* and arranged for the book's French translation by E. Assire.<sup>51</sup> A casual letter that Lapouge wrote to Assire in 1932 lends insight

<sup>45</sup> Karl Saller, *Die Rassenlehre des Nationalsozialismus in Wissenschaft und Propaganda* (Darmstadt, 1961), 27.

<sup>46</sup> FVL/UM, Lapouge to Plate, 20 March 1930. Plate (1862-1937) was the center of a scandal in 1923, when he gave a lecture on the racial qualities of the Germans and advised Jews not to attend. In a published response to the disciplinary actions which were taken against him Plate insisted that "people should be urgently warned against interbreeding between Jews and Aryans." Cited in Field, "Nordic Racism," 537, from Hans Peter Bleuel, *Deutschlands Bekenner: Professoren zwischen Kaiserreich und Diktatur* (Munich, 1968), 151.

<sup>47</sup> FVL/UM, Lapouge to Plate, 20 March 1930. Günther later dedicated one of his books to Plate.

<sup>48</sup> Saller, *Die Rassenlehre*, 27-28. See also Proctor, "From Anthropologie to Rassenkunde," 158; Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, 166; and Eugene Davidson, *The Trial of the Germans: Nuremberg 1945-1946* (New York, 1966), 265.

<sup>49</sup> The German term for "Anthroposociologie" was "Sozialanthropologie." See Hans Fabricius, *Reichsinnenminister Dr. Frick: der revolutionaere Staatsmann* (Berlin, 1939), 44.

<sup>50</sup> Fabricius, *Reichsinnenminister Dr. Frick*, 44.

<sup>51</sup> FVL/UM, Lapouge to Grant, 23 March 1919. Madison Grant, *The Passing of a Great Race* (New York, 1916). Assire's French translation was published as *Le déclin de la grande race* in 1926.

into Lapouge's relationship to Günther and Nazism and bears an extended quotation:

They created for Günther, at the university of Jena, a chair of anthroposociology under my auspices. It was imposed by Frick, with pressure from the Nazis. Notice that the Nazis are nothing but the German branch of selectionist monists, and that their nationalism makes no sense in selectionist internationalism, but the contradiction does not worry them. Hitler's social program was patiently constructed from the facts and ideas of my selectionist publications over the past years—except the milk has turned and there is nothing in the casserole but a sorcerer's brew. The obligatory work for all.... The methodical multiplication of eugenic people, the exclusion of non-eugenic people from the right to reproduce, all of that was already in the aristocratic socialism of Woltmann and of Lapouge when they founded, twenty five years ago, the *Politisch Anthropologische Revue*, and when we lost my lieutenant his place was filled by Hitler and Günther.<sup>52</sup>

Lapouge may be overstating his case when he claims that Hitler constructed the Nazi social program through directly reading and borrowing from his anthropological works. However, historians certainly have credited Günther as Hitler's primary influence on racial questions—from *Mein Kampf* through the Final Solution—and Günther was quite clear about his reliance on and debt to Vacher de Lapouge.<sup>53</sup>

In any case, once Günther was situated at Jena, his influence was profound.<sup>54</sup> In September of 1933 "racial science" became a compulsory subject in German schools and there arose a sudden, acute need for a textbook on the subject. Teachers met this problem by giving their students selections from the works of

<sup>52</sup> FVL/UM, Lapouge to Assire, 2 April 1932.

<sup>53</sup> Consider, for example, Bracher on *Mein Kampf*: "The book borrowed from the *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (Munich, 1922) by the anthropologist Hans F. K. Günther and his theories of 'Nordification.'" *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism* (New York, 1970), 128. See also Joachim C. Fest's *The Face of the Third Reich: Portraits of the Nazi Leadership* (New York, 1970). Günther is cited here as the source of Hitler's race theory, 99-100. According to Nolte, "Hitler was probably not familiar with Vacher de Lapouge, but the ideas which Lapouge was one of the first to express were well known to him." Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism*, tr. L. Vennewitz (New York, 1966), 515, n.4.

<sup>54</sup> He is often cited above Rosenberg as the single most important racial theorist; Proctor, "Nazi Medicine," 323, speaks of Günther's "widely recognized status as father of German *Rassenkunde* and the Nordic movement," 323. Saller takes a very strong view on Günther's importance, arguing a direct relationship between Nazi theories and Günther's work.

Günther and of Rosenberg.<sup>55</sup> According to one school principal, “In our school a thorough course in racial studies and hereditary studies was enacted. Special emphasis was put upon racial studies of the Jews following Günther and his skull measurements.”<sup>56</sup> A generation of German schoolchildren was thus indoctrinated. In a parallel effort, for purposes both pedagogical and classificatory, the children’s heads were measured and their cephalic indices calculated.

That Günther was an avid head-measurer is evident in all of his works, but it is rarely mentioned in historical accounts of the period. In general, the details of racial science are simply omitted in modern studies.<sup>57</sup> When mention of these measuring tasks is made, it takes on a vaguely comical tone as if the practitioners were crackpots, outside the official doctrine. In fact, they were the official doctrine. One modern scholar mentions, for example, that “[t]here were men like ... Hans F. K. Guenter [sic], who conducted an investigation in Dresden that showed the streetcar motormen to have more Northern blood than the conductors.”<sup>58</sup> Another states that “[s]kull measurements were used by the Nazis in an attempt to sort out those with Jewish ancestry.”<sup>59</sup> Neither of these works gives any explanation of these strange anecdotes. Our failure to notice the numerical basis of race theory in this period is bizarre, considering how clearly such measurements dominate the literature of the time. This blind-spot has led historians to a too-general indictment of modernity. The modern social sciences may objectify individuals, but they do not often make value judgments by measuring heads.

As anomalous as such notions sound now, Günther’s idea of race was decidedly craniometric, and he had substantial influence on both the population at large and the Nazi leadership. There is good reason to believe that Himmler’s notion of racial aristocracy had been gleaned directly from Günther’s work during the 1920s.<sup>60</sup> Hitler’s proclamation of the racial basis of art at the party congress of 1933 also drew heavily on Günther—as well as Rosenberg and Paul Schultze-Naumburg (Schultze-Naumburg was also in familiar correspondence with Lapouge).<sup>61</sup> From 1935 to 1944 Günther was awarded numerous medals

<sup>55</sup> Wolfgang Wippermann, “Das Berliner Schulwesen in der NS-Zeit: Fragen, Thesen und Methodische Bemerkungen,” *Schule in Berlin*, ed. Benno Schmoldt (Berlin, 1989), 57-73. Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933-1945* (New York, 1991), 213.

<sup>56</sup> Quotation from the Kopenicker of the Dorotheenschule, cited in Wippermann, “Das Berliner Schulwesen in der NS-Zeit,” 65.

<sup>57</sup> Bracher recognizes but only briefly (14, 15) the profound influence of early scientific racist doctrine and that of Lapouge in particular.

<sup>58</sup> Davidson, *The Trial of the Germans*, 40.

<sup>59</sup> Steve Jones, *The Language of Genes* (New York, 1993), 201.

<sup>60</sup> Josef Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologe* (Göttingen, 1970), 110-12. Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (New York, 1991), 34, notes that there is evidence that “Himmler had arrived at similar ideas of a racial aristocracy himself, in the 1920s, through reading the racist writer Hans F. K. Günther.”

<sup>61</sup> Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, 259. On the relationship between Schultze-Naumburg and Lapouge, see FVL/UM, Lapouge and *Anneau nordique* (headed by Schultze-Naumburg).



and decorations, including the Rudolf-Virchow Medal, the Goethe Medal for arts and sciences, and the Eaglesshield. Perhaps most significant, however, was Günther's role as an editor of *Rasse, Monatsschrift der nordischen Bewegung* (*Race, a Monthly for the Nordic Idea*), which published discussions of dolichocephals and brachicephals, blood-groups, and other biological determinations—all presented in strictly scientific terms, replete with numbers and comparatively devoid of bilious eruptions. As a contemporary critic noted, "It makes racism respectable among the educated classes by having a dazzling array of Herr Doktors and professors among its editors and contributors."<sup>62</sup> In this journal Günther published several short pieces by Vacher de Lapouge, and penned several more celebrating the older man as the founder of racial science.

### Nazi Reaction to Lapouge

Being a Frenchman was not ideologically uncomfortable for Lapouge because his dolichocephal was international. His belief that these "aristocratic" long-heads were in the minority in France in no way suggested that he himself could not be one. For their part Nazi reviewers took Lapouge's Frenchness as an amusing anomaly, frequently inventing an aristocratic title for him to help explain the situation; sometimes they made him a Count, sometimes a Marquis. Nevertheless, with German reviewers, there was often a mild sense of embarrassment over Lapouge's French nationality. This embarrassment was not shared by French racists, for whom Lapouge was an unmitigated hero. René Martial, the foremost French theorist of blood and race during the Vichy period, lauded Lapouge as one of the greatest anthropologists in history and explicitly based his own blood-oriented race theory on Lapouge's work regarding skulls.<sup>63</sup>

As Martial was eager to proclaim French roots for Nazi racial theory, others were eager to show the French as complicit in enacting the new racial state. Consider, for example, an article in the *Cahiers Franco-Allemands* in 1942 by Edgar Tatarin-Tarnheyden on "Georges Vacher de Lapouge: visionnaire française de l'avenir européen."<sup>64</sup> The article's proclaimed goal was to show that the changes going on in France were not "merely a result of the war." Rather, the author asserted, there had been isolated French precursors who had "given birth" to these ideas and even "given them an exact theoretical form." These precursors were Gobineau and Lapouge, but Tatarin-Tarnheyden was considerably more impressed with Lapouge as a direct source of Nazi doctrine. Lapouge, he asserted, "was the first to ... have established exact anthropological types and to

<sup>62</sup> Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind* (New York, 1961), 254.

<sup>63</sup> René Martial, "Un précurseur des groupements sanguins: Vacher de Lapouge," *Mercur de France*, 272 (1936), 620-25.

<sup>64</sup> Edgar Tatarin-Tarnheyden, "Georges Vacher de Lapouge: visionnaire français de l'avenir européen," *Cahiers Franco-Allemands*, 9 (October-December 1942), 336-46.

have proceeded to a systematic subdivision of the principal European races.” Tatarin-Tarnheyden credited Lapouge’s work as having a fundamental importance for “today’s German researchers.” According to him, it was due to Lapouge that the Aryan “became a precisely established scientific fact.” For Tatarin-Tarnheyden, Lapouge was only less known than Gobineau because Chamberlain and Wagner had celebrated Gobineau. He argued that Lapouge had “seen further and done more.” While Gobineau “was still solidly attached to the Church’s theory of the independence of the soul,” Lapouge recognized that “the essence of psychic substance was the hereditary plasma, the racial soul.” In contrast to Gobineau’s “intuition,” Tatarin-Tarnheyden praised Lapouge’s atheist materialism and his scientific exactitude. Wrote Tatarin-Tarnheyden, “It is on this point which rests the grand progress and which is the true scientific progress of Lapouge. He did not separate the body from the soul.”<sup>65</sup> As long as the greatness of a human being was understood as somatic, one could conceive of this greatness as heritable and design a state around encouraging that hereditary line.

It makes sense, of course, that a journal entitled *Cahiers Franco-Allemands* would celebrate the French origins of Nazi doctrine, and yet many entirely German publications carried similar paeans to Lapouge and anthroposociology. On the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, *Die Sonne* dedicated an entire issue to Lapouge, publishing laudatory articles by Günther, Madison Grant, the Spanish eugenicist Luis Huerta, and others, describing the issue as an homage to “a great fighter in the Nordic cause.”<sup>66</sup> *Die Sonne* published Lapouge’s articles, including posthumous publication of a German translation of Lapouge’s “How anthroposociology was assassinated in France.”<sup>67</sup> *Die Sonne* also published glowing reviews of Lapouge’s anthroposociology and, later, obituaries of Lapouge.<sup>68</sup> When Lapouge died, Günther, too, wrote a mournful obituary which he published in his journal, *Rasse*.<sup>69</sup> In it he cited Lapouge as the first to apply the studies of heredity and selection to the life of peoples, and credited him with having “gone farther, earlier, than Galton, Gobineau or Ammon in the prediction of the downfall of civilization.” Günther called for a German biography of Lapouge as well as for studies of the man and his work. He also celebrated Lapouge for having “based morality completely on biology.” Günther attributed

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 336, 339, 344, 345.

<sup>66</sup> *Die Sonne*, 6 (1929).

<sup>67</sup> Lapouge, “Wie die Anthroposociologie in Frankreich erdrosselt wurde,” *Die Sonne*, 13 (1936), 193-95.

<sup>68</sup> See “Grassen Georges Vacher de Lapouge,” *Die Sonne: Monatschrift für nordische Weltanschauung*, 7 (1930); Lapouge, “Anmerkungen zum rassenhygienischen Ausleseprogramm,” *Die Sonne*, 8 (1931), 481-90; Günther, “Unsprache von Prof. Dr. Hans F. R. Günther,” *Die Sonne*, 7 (1930); and, Dr. Werner Kulz, “George Vacher de Lapouge,” *Die Sonne*, 13 (1936), 170.

<sup>69</sup> Günther, “Zum Tode des Grassen Georges Vacher de Lapouge,” *Rasse: Monatschrift der Nordischen Bewegung* (1936) 95-98.

uncommon insight to his mentor, writing that, “We will never forget Lapouge. His name belongs among the great names of northern racial theorists!”<sup>70</sup>

An obituary in the journal *Volk und Rasse* also praised Lapouge as the founder of race science, stating that, “though Gobineau was trained in the natural sciences it was Lapouge who was the first to apply scientific studies to the theory of races.”<sup>71</sup> Lapouge was said to have exhibited French and German characteristics, and it was suggested that this alleged mixed racial identity had “poignantly” brought him to study the history of races. This obituary noted that Ammon and Woltmann brought Lapouge’s work to fame in Germany and asserted that Lapouge “was a trailblazer in the fields of racial selection and its effect on the development of social interrelationships and the lives of peoples and races in general.” *Volk und Rasse* described Madison Grant’s *Passing of Great Race* as “following in the footsteps of Lapouge.” Grant was quoted giving homage to the Frenchman, going so far as to say that “[f]ew men have had such a great effect on their time as the Marquis Lapouge.” The article stated that “the success of the development that his theories had in Germanic lands, especially in National Socialist Germany, must have given him the assurance, in his final years, that his work would carry on.”<sup>72</sup>

### Conclusion

Much of what Georges Vacher de Lapouge had to say about atheism, Jews, human breeding, nation-states, and morality was rejected by his German colleagues or, later, by Nazi leadership. As Lapouge himself noted, the Nazis were not Lapougian. Nevertheless, this Frenchman had an important, enthusiastic following in Germany during the whole first half of the twentieth century, and by their own account Lapouge’s German colleagues were fascinated by his work and moved by his deeply nihilistic conception of the universe. They saw his anthroposociology as crucial to the development of racial theory and of a different order entirely than the work of Gobineau. Lapouge’s stark anti-morality was specifically celebrated and enhanced his status as objective, truthful, and brave. The intention of this essay has been to clarify the connection between Lapouge and his German colleagues and to suggest that Lapouge’s scientific anti-morality deserves further attention. The explicit rejection of morality by scientific nihilists was an important and perhaps widespread phenomenon of nineteenth and twentieth-century Western culture, with strong currents in France as well as Russia and Germany. In writing the history of the Shoah, we must note that an extremely nihilistic anti-morality was joined to a state-run racialist eugenics program in the mind of the first theorist of scientific racism.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>71</sup> Kulz, “Marquis de Lapouge zum Gedenken!” *Volke und Rasse*, 6 (1936), 255-58.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

It seems that relatively passive anti-Semitism was activated by new scientific doctrines and unusual political events, making it possible for the efficient bureaucracy (and diffuse accountability) of the modern state to make murder its goal. Within this schema the fact of Lapouge's sustained personal influence, his numerical science, and his direct attack on morality all serve to explain further the eruption of unthinkable brutality. Through his scientific rhetoric and the power of his neologisms, Lapouge served to bring racist arguments into the homes of the German bourgeoisie. Reconceiving the world in racial terms was easier when you were talking about brachycephals and dolichocephals. In this sense the work of Lapouge (literary, scientific, and epistolary) is just a clue in a riddle about how people could come to inflict such massive abuse on other people.

I would argue that it is a major clue and that we have little idea today of how utterly convinced many people were that the European races were physiologically measurable and socially irreconcilable. Still, this part of my argument is supportive of an established interpretation of the Shoah which sets out to explain how people were distracted from morality. It may be of more considerable significance that in the mind of the first racial scientist, morality was rejected by a logic outside of racial science, a logic which rested on the apparent consequences of a materialist world.

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