ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

History 610
Senior Project

Blood or Soil? Environmentalism and the Third Reich

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Department of History

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Abstract: (*200 words*)

The Nazi party is infamous for its dehumanization, imperialism, and nearly successful run at fascism. While these aspects have been studied and observed constantly, there is one aspect of the Nazi party most people would laugh at the thought of -- Nazi Environmentalists. Prior to 1989, the field was mostly unknown to the academic world until Anna Bramwell's groundbreaking book entitled, "The Ecology of the 20th Century." Since her research, historians have debated her accuracy by usually arguing completely against or for Bramwell's main arguments. For my evidence, I will use primary source materials from the Wilhelmine, Weimar periods, and Nazi Period as well as secondary sources from authors like Michael Imort, Raymond Dominick, etc. Through the culmination of these sources, I will argue along with Bramwell by stating German ecology stemmed from anti-semitism and "return to nature" ideologies while also arguing against Bramwell through evidence proving the Nazi party was ecological only in an anthropocentric sense -- meaning they viewed human needs first and the environment's needs second-- and used the conservationists solely for their own political gain. With these arguments, I hope to add a nuanced history of a modern topic and hopefully create more depth in this developing field.

Introduction

Environmental policies have been gaining popularity throughout the globe over the past few decades as carbon emissions spike and sea levels rise with them. Although this movement has gained traction pretty much everywhere, there are a few countries who are front runners. One of those leaders is Germany. By decoupling greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, enforcing strict technology regulations, and implementing policies on renewables, Germany has played a significant role in leading the European Union and the international community in environmental policy.[1] Yet, this progress did not happen overnight. Germany has been working towards these carbon and conservation goals in the modern era since the 1970s, but their environmental history goes all the way back to the nineteenth century. How could people in the nineteenth century understand the usefulness of conservation and the importance of protecting ecology? Although the answer is complex; hence a senior project dedicated to it, the short answer is simple: pride.

Throughout the world, countries take great pride in the nature of their land. In the United States of America, there are songs that praise the "amber waves of grain" and "purple mountain majesty"; in Canada, there is pride in the mountains as their national identity; and in Iceland, it is their pure untouched land that fills their citizens with joy. The same national pride that fills these aforementioned countries, fills German citizens when they think of their German forest. Due to this love for the German forest and work put in to protect it since the nineteenth century, some historians claim the Nazis were environmentalists. In my senior project, I will investigate these claims and critique these claims by reviewing Nazi environmental laws and actions. I will argue

[1] OECD, "Executive Summary," in *OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Germany 2012*, OECD Environmental Performance Reviews (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012), 10.

that despite the Nazi's environmental policies, they were hardly concerned with the environment and instead used it as a guise to promote their own political agenda. Additionally, I argue there is a lineage between early nineteenth century environmentalism and National Socialism that cannot be ignored and could even be applied to the *Sonderweg* thesis, or the argument that there was a special path that led to the rise of fascism in Germany.

Throughout the 13 year reign of German National Socialism, the party which led to Hitler and the Third Reich of Nazi Germany, there were four laws and a handful of government documents and decrees produced on environmental protection by Hitler and the Nazi party. These laws included the Reich Nature Conservation Act, the 1933 Law of Animal Protection, and many directives and decrees concerning the removal of lumber and usage of other supplies. Due to the production of these laws, some historians including Anna Bramwell, claim that the Nazis were forerunners in the environmental movement.[2] However, I argue Hitler and his party did not follow their original laws as they intended and instead used them for their own political gain. Historians, like Michael Imort, claim the environmental policies were another propaganda stint in order to persuade people to buy into their genocide.[3] This is significant not just because of the compelling historiographical argument created by the interesting contradiction between Anna Bramwell's works, her supporters, and other historians, but also because it can be critical to understanding the Nazi's ideology as a whole, such as their belief in the return to the old, the protection of the purity of their land and their race, and the genocide of Jews. Finally, this topic is significant because it is an infamous part of Germany's environmental history of which is not

[2] Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 16.
[3] Michael Imort, "Eternal Forest - Eternal Volk: The Rhetoric and Reality of National Socialist Forest Policy," in *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005)., 44.

often spoken. Association with the Nazi party is never good, but it is a historian's job to correctly remember history and to bring out all of history's aspects, whether they are for the better or worse.

Due to this history not being discussed for much of the latter 20th century, the state of this field of research is still debated. The debate surrounds Anna Bramwell's arguments and ideas. First, she argues the Nazis were nonanthropocentric, meaning they viewed the earth as the center of the world and humans were just another animal to inhabit it.[4] This is in contrast to anthropocentrism which views *humans* as the center of the world and the earth and animals are there for our advance. Non-anthropocentrism, or ecocentrism, are viewed by environmental scientists as the proper way to view the earth if we want to inhabit it in a sustainable manner. Anthropocentrism eventually leads to running out of resources and depleting our earth, whereas ecocentrism allows us to coexist. Although there is tangible evidence that Bramwell explores to prove this, such as the environmental policies and decrees, it is difficult to prove without a shadow of a doubt that the Nazis were ecocentric. Michael Imort, who has a Ph.D. focused on nineteenth and twentieth-century forestry in the formation of nationalism and symbols, agrees that the Nazi policies were productive and ecocentric. However, he states, "Nazis must have been referring to a different (though comparable concept) when they stressed the importance of what we now call green forestry or ecoforestry."[5] I argue that the Nazis were anthropocentric as evidenced by the language of their laws, as well as because of the Nazi's abondonment of their forestry policies as presented by Michael Imort. Anna Bramwell's second argument is that

[4] Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 16.
[5] Michael Imort, "Eternal Forest - Eternal Volk: The Rhetoric and Reality of National Socialist Forest Policy," in *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*(Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), 45.

modern ecology and National Socialism share some commonality that is problematic.[6] She says "the hunt for a scapegoat who made society go wrong is a symptom of ecology"[7] and warns that modern ecological arguments are strikingly similar to the Third Reich's.[8] This is the part of environmental history that many people want to ignore: the idea that ecology, a force that seems pure, played a role in one of the greatest atrocities in history. Frank Uekotter argues against Bramwell by including arguments like utilizing anti-Semitic language were rare in conservationists literature.[9] Ultimately, Uekotter acknowledges the connection but claims it to be insignificant. On the contrary, authors Staudenmaier and Reicher (in separate articles), argue that there were significant anti-Semitic roots in ecology that cannot be dismissed.[10]

Although these arguments may never be settled, this historiography is vital because it illuminates a key element of the National Socialist state.. My arguments and writing on the history of environmentalism in Germany intervene with the historiography. Many of my arguments branch out or nuance these authors who were the first to produce these ideas on Nazi Environmentalism and in order to understand my arguments, one must understand where the original argument comes from and how it stands up against other's thinking on the subject. By understanding the historiography you can find what is lacking in the field of research and in my own statements. Due to their significance, the first chapter is dedicated to understanding the arguments and different perspectives of the history of so called environmentalism in Nazi

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[6] Bramwell, 11-13.
[7] Ibid., 16.
[8] Ibid., 11.
[9] Frank Uekotter, "Green Nazis? Reassessing the Environmental History of Nazi Germany," *German Studies Review*, 2007, 271.
[10] Peter Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and Its Historical Antecedents* (San Francisco, California: AK Press, 1995), and Burkhardt Reichers, "Nature Protection during National Socialism," *Historical Social Research/ Historische Sozialforschung* 21, no. 3 (79)(1996).

Germany. In the subsequent chapters, I develop my own understanding on the two arguments discussed in Anna Bramwell's book.

Chapter Two will further the discussion paved by Anna Bramwell on the history of ecology in Germany and how it led to the Nazi's ideas. Some authors on environmentalism in Nazi Germany, like Frank Uekotter, fail to acknowledge the environmental movements prior to National Socialism. This creates a massive hole in the history of ecology in Nazi Germany. Without investigating this history we are not able to understand how ecological movements in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century affected conservation in the Third Reich and also how they affected National Socialist politics. Furthermore, this history creates an understanding of how the Nazi environmental movement can be compared to modern movements, as well as providing us an understanding of the German obsession with their forest. In this chapter, I outline anti-Semitism in ecology, the "volkisch" movement, and how these two things paved the way for National Socialism by examining art, academic books, ecology, and poetry. Ultimately, I will argue there was a clear connection between nineteenth-century ecology and National Socialism that cannot be ignored.

As stated earlier, many Germans had great pride in their forest throughout centuries. When modernization practices developed in the nineteenth century, the forests were most vulnerable to depletion. Frustrated by the depletion, academics like Ernst Arndt, Ernst Haeckel, and Wilhelm Riehl studied and wrote on forest conservation and the importance of the forest.[11] The modernity of these writers' thoughts and proceedings on deforestation are undeniable, but

[11] Examples of their works include: Ernst Arndt, *On the Care and Conservation of Forests,* 1815; Ernst Haeckel, *Monism as Connecting Religion and Science. The Confession of Faith of a Man of Science,* London and Edinburgh, 1894; and Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, *Die Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Socialpolitik*. 1854.

their thoughts also had roots in blatant anti-Semitism and nationalism. This is demonstrated in Ernst Moritz Arndt's writing *On the Care and Conservation of Forests* and Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl's *Field and Forest.*[12] For example, in his book *Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and Its Historical Antecedents*, nineteenth and early twentieth century German ecological historian, Peter Staudenmaier, stated that mid-nineteenth century ecologist Wilhelm Riehl's, "overtly anti-Semitic glorification of rural peasant values and undifferentiated condemnation of modernity established him as the 'founder of agrarian romanticism and anti-urbanism.'"[13] When discussing this anti-Semitism one must also point out German *Volkisch* mysticism. This idea focused on a return to the land, simple life, and national purity. The movement was meant to set Germans free of modernization and make them whole again by creating a free, racially pure German state. In her book *The War Against Jews*, Lucy Dawidowicz describes the quest for the German *Volksgemeinschaft* or the utopian fulfillment of the *Volkisch* ideas.[14] She says "The Germans were in search of a mysterious wholeness that would restore them to primeval happiness, destroying the hostile milieu of urban industrial civilization that the Jewish conspiracy had foisted on them."[15] This illustrates the trend of Germany blaming Jews for issues in their country and the connection of ecology to this specific scapegoating. I argue you can see the connection between ecology and Nazism. This is important because it adds another element into the roots and path that led to fascism in Germany.

Finally, in Chapter Three, I engage in Anna Bramwell's argument of whether or not the Nazis were nonanthropocentric. From research and evaluation of extensive primary source

[12] Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology,* 16.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), 61-62.
[15] Ibid.

material, I argue that although the leaders of Nazi Germany did show signs of being ecologically friendly, they were not. The Nazi party was ecological in an anthropocentric sense and they used the conservation movement to further their own personal motives of genocide, nationalism, and complete government control through propaganda and policy. In order to prove this, I explore primary sources such as propaganda and laws to show how the Nazi Party utilized environmentalism to push their ideologies and gain political control. Second, by comparing the relationship between the German economy and the Nazi environmental laws I demonstrate that the Nazi party was focused on the anthropocentric use of the environment. The importance of this is twofold. First, it disproves Anna Bramwell's thesis that the Nazis were nonanthropocentric. Second, by proving the Nazis were interested in political gain and not environmental protection, it debunks any true connection between environmental and fascism. Instead it proves that environmentalism was manipulated for the Nazi party's ambitions.

One of the clearest and most convincing reasons for the Nazi Party's implication of environmental policy was because it served as a way to further ideologies like the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This correlation between the *Volksgemeinschaft* and environmentalism was portrayed by the German forest through 1930's propaganda and federal laws. One of the very first forest policies that created this strong tie between the German forest and the German Volk was the Dauerwald doctrine. The Dauerwald doctrine stated regulations such as, "cut the worst rather than the best trees so as to improve the overall quality of the stand and allow only the best specimens to reproduce."[16] From this piece of the doctrine, it is not hard to draw comparisons

[16] Heinrich Eberts, "Die Neuordnung des Forstwesens in Deutschland," Zeitschrift für Weltforstwirtschaft 3 (1935-1936): 667-77 (English summary at 677). Taken from Michael Imort's essay entitled "Eternal Volk - Eternal Forest" in Franz-Josef Bruggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas cont. Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens, UNITED STATES: Ohio University Press, 2005).

between the laws on foresting and the Nuremberg laws of 1935 which allowed for the purification of Germany by setting strict guidelines on reproducing and, like the Dauerwald Doctrine states, allowed "only the best specimens to reproduce." In addition, the 1935 Nature Conservation Act was similar to the Dauerwald Doctrine because it was ecologically successful and because it was a clear analogy for the Reich's ideological principles by giving complete control of land to the Nazi government for the "common good over the individual good."[17] This idea is a key principle of Hitler and the German *Volk*.

Also in Chapter 3, I continue the conversation on whether the environmental laws were ecocentric or anthropocentric by looking at the success of laws and doctrines. I argue that although the Nazi environmental laws can be understood as advanced ecological restrictions for the time period, they were still very anthropocentric. The clearest example of this was the failure of the Dauerwald Doctrine, which rolled back on its deforestation restrictions in 1935.[18] In addition, by reviewing the terminology of the Nature Protection Act, we can see the Nazis were only concerned with the environment when it did not get in the way of the military, infrastructure, or economic development.[19] By discovering these examples and addressing them I prove how the Nazi's were not focused on the well being of the forest as much as they were focused on the well being of the economy, their ideologies, and the manipulation of nature to a new degree.

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[17] Adolf Hitler, "25 Points of the NSDAP Program," February 24, 1920.
[18] Decree of 30 October 1934 Concerning Cutting Quotas and Wood Utilization for 1935, in *LwMBl* (1934), columns 749–752 (this decree was followed by similar decrees for subsequent years); and Directive of 7 December 1936 Concerning the Increased Supply of Raw Materials, in Reichsgesetzblatt, part 1, 1936, 1011. Primary source found in Franz-Josef Bruggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens, UNITED STATES: Ohio University Press, 2005), 57.
[19] Preamble in the "Reich Nature Conservation Act," June 26, 1935.

This project attempts to prove the ideological motives behind the environmental policies of Nazi Germany but also furthers the background on environmentalism in nineteenth century Germany.. By looking at primary source materials such as laws, propaganda, and NSDAP decrees and documents it is clear the Nazis were anthropocentric, and that they had clear ideological motives behind their environmental policies. All in all, these show that conservation was not a legitimate piece of the Nazi Party's ideas and goals, instead it was used as a way to slyly gain more control over the land of Germany. Although the National Socialists were willing to pass conservation laws, they were only willing to do so when the laws were convenient to the goals of Hitler and the Third Reich. However, all the blame is not strictly placed on Hitler and the NSDAP. Conservationists of the period, described as "leaders of the *Naturschutz* (translates to conservation) movement...who distinguished themselves in directing private conservation groups or working within the government conservation bureaucracy both before and after 1933," [20] did join them, and whether it was for political gain or ideological gain does not matter. It is clear conservationists and ecologists in Germany prior to Nazi Germany carried a common theme of anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, just as Hitler did to everyone else, he manipulated the conservationists for political control by making unkept promises.

[20] Raymond H. Dominick III, *The Environmental Movement in Germany. Prophets and Pioneers 1871–1971* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 112.

Chapter 1

The Historiography of Nazi Environmentalism

The history of the conservation movement in Nazi Germany has gone through a number of transitions in recent years, from Anna Bramwell's 1989 groundbreaking work, *Ecology in the 20th Century*, which was one of the first reports to uncover the so-called "green party" within Nazi Germany, to works such as Frank Uekotter's 2007 article entitled, "Green Nazi's? Reassessing the Environmental History of Nazi Germany". In this chapter, I will explain the different historiographies of the topic of Nazi Germany and determine whether they were environmentalists. I will first explore the workings and critiques of Anna Bramwell's *Ecology in the 20th Century* and discuss the shortcomings of her work as well as the possible motivations behind it. I will then move on to Michael Imort's piece in Franz, Bruggemeier, and Zeller's work entitled *How Green Were the Nazi's?* and discuss how their opinions change the overall landscape of the environmentally friendly Nazi Party argument. Finally, I will explore Frank Uekotter's "Green Nazi's? Reassessing the Environmental History of Nazi Germany" to give us a more recent representation of historians thought on the subject. By exploring these main authors and adding sprinkles of other authors' opinions on top, a nuanced representation of the state of the field of Nazi environmentalism will be presented in order to move forward into the following chapters. By analyzing other historians' work, I will begin to introduce the main arguments of the following chapters. These arguments are: Hitler and the National Socialist Party (NSDAP), did not follow the environmental policies influenced by conservationism and instead used these policies for their own political benefit; and Environmentalism can help us to

understand the Nazi's belief in "return to the land", protection of the pure German land and race, as well as their reason behind the genocide of the Jews.

The modern environmental movement, since Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in 1962, has faced a constant struggle with opposition. They have faced claims of illegitimacy from the government, including, in 1966, the Chairman of the United States House of Representatives' Appropriations Subcommittee for Agriculture, Jamie Whitten[1] and the current United States President Donald Trump.[2] Furthermore, opposition to the environmentalist movement has gone as far to call green initiatives fascist and communist. This opposition came in many forms in the 1990s. In 1994, James Catron spoke at the Environmental Conservation Organization conference and said, "We are not in a struggle with environmentalists but with tyranny. There is no moral difference between Earth First! And Stalin. If the radical environmentalists took power you would not live, you would not be left alive."[3] Examples of fascist insults came from a British television show entitled *Against Nature*, which deliberately compared green supporters, and opposition to deforestation, to Nazi wildlife initiatives by showing video footage of Nazi soldiers singing next to newly planted trees.[4] Again, the connection was made by Chuck Cushman of the American Freedom Coalition when he called ecologists "eco-Nazis" and National Parks "scenic gulags"[5] In a more scholarly form, opposition and comparison to Nazi Germany was found in Anna Bramwell's *Ecology of the 20th Century*. Bramwell currently works as a research member

[1] Jamie L. Whitten, *That We May Live,* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1966).
[2] Donald J. Trump, "The Concept of Global Warming Was Created by and for the Chinese in Order to Make U.S. Manufacturing Non-competitive.," Twitter, November 06, 2012.
[3] Andrew Rowell, *Green Backlash: Global Subversion of the Environment Movement,* (London: Routledge, 1996), 131.
[4] Piers H. G. Stephens, "Blood, Not Soil: Anna Bramwell and the Myth of "Hitler's Green Party," *Organization & Environment; Thousand Oaks* 14, no. 2 (June 2001): 173.
[5] Rowell, *Green Backlash,* 131.

of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) but has studied at Trinity College and Oxford, as well as having represented the EU Commission for the 1994 *Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe*.[6] Finally, she has also published multiple works on environmentalism in Nazi Germany including *The Fading of the Greens: The Decline of Environmental Politics in the West*, and *Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darre and Hitler's "Green Party",* and the book previously mentioned*, Ecology of the 20th Century.* Although she is the leading pioneer of the field and has released more research on this topic than anyone else, she has also been strongly criticized. Critiques come for her sympathy towards the Nazi's or certain Nazi leaders, like Richard Walther Darre, her aggression towards the environmental movement, and for using carefully selected sources.[7] In her most wide-ranging book, *Ecology of the 20th Century*, Bramwell makes three claims that are key to her argument. First, Bramwell connects nature conservation, naturalistic holism, and nonanthropocentrism (the ideology of putting the earth first and people second, otherwise known as ecocentrism) with the basic principles of National Socialism, including "return to the land," nationalism, and anti-Semitism. Next, Bramwell used the Nazis implementation and research of Rudolf Steiner's ideas about biodynamic farming as a key piece of evidence to prove the Nazi Party was concerned with ecology.[8] Lastly, Bramwell uses the concept of nature as a motivational character of Nazi ideology. Specifically, she proposed that these ecological

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[6] Richard Ackerman, Gordon Hughes, Clyde Hertzman, Laszlo Somlyody, Georgieva, Kristalina Georgieva, Wendy Ayres, Gretta Goldenmann, *Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe: Setting Priorities,* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Publications, 1998), iv.
[7] Criticism comes from book reviews including Malcolm Chase, Review of *The Fading of the Greens: The Decline of Environmental Politics in the West*, by Anna Bramwell, *Environment and History* 1, no.1 (Feb., 1995): 125–126. as well as scholarly works of Peter Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology: the 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents,* (San Francisco, California: AK Press, 1995)., and Piers H. G. Stephens, "Blood, Not Soil: Anna Bramwell and the Myth of "Hitler's Green Party," *Organization & Environment; Thousand Oaks* 14, no. 2 (June 2001).
[8] Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History,* (London, Yale University Press, 1989), 195-208.

movements, like Nazism, create a "scapegoat who made society go wrong."[9] These points of emphasis are significant because all of them create a connection of environmentalism to Nazism, instead of the loose connection of Nazism and environmentalism. In other words, Bramwell is making an argument to her readers that somehow the ideas of protecting nature motivated Nazism, which means environmentalism could spark another similar radical movement, instead of Nazism simply having a concern for nature. Further evidence of this thought comes from her other books like *Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darre and Hitler's "Green Party"* where, professor and published author, Piers H. Stephens argues that Bramwell furthers a linkage between Nazis and green politics creating anti-green rhetoric.[10] This is significant because it gives historical and intellectual backing to names like "Green Gestapo" given to the Environmental Protection Agency by Michael Coffman of the Alliance for America.[11] The popularization of these names and opposition make it increasingly more difficult to create initiatives to help protect the environment. This background on my topic creates a certain sort of sensitivity that needs to be addressed. From my evidence and analysis, any link between modern environmentalism and fascism, or socialism will be discredited. However, there are connections between conservation and fascism; and ecology and anti-Semitism; and environmentalism and socialism, but these connections do not give support to the opposition created by the green backlash movement. Even if Nazi Germany was 'green', their version of conservation was far from our version today. They were parochial in their practices, meaning they focused on regional and local conservation, whereas today environmental movements are focused on global

[9] Ibid., 16.
[10] Piers H. G. Stephens, "Blood, Not Soil: Anna Bramwell and the Myth of "Hitler's Green Party," *Organization & Environment; Thousand Oaks* 14, no. 2 (June 2001), 186.
[11] Ibid.

conservation which is different and incomparable to the Nazi's version of ecology. In that vein, physicians and christians had subscribed to the ideologies of National Socialism, but no one is suggesting that medicine and worship are intrinsically Nazi like Bramwell does with environmentalism.[12] As we move forward discussing environmentalism in Nazi Germany, we must keep this common understanding in mind: just because there is a correlation between the two topics, does not mean one causes the other.

As time has gone on, Bramwell's work has been discredited and has not stood up to historical scrutiny. The majority of the issues with her work come from the accusation that she carefully selected her sources, the use of anti-environmental archives, and a heavyweight laid on a weak foundation of evidence. Disregarding this, I still use her work as the skeleton of this historiography for a couple of reasons. First, a large portion of the historical works on environmentalism in Nazi Germany use Anna Bramwell's arguments as the major talking points in their pieces. Piers Stephens' *Blood, not Soil* being just one example. Furthermore, if they do not use Anna Bramwell's arguments as a backbone, they still debate the same arguments she presented in 1989. As I have said, the issues within Bramwell's arguments have been brought out by many historians, but there may be no better rebuttal of Bramwell's argument than Michael Imort in Franz-Josef Bruggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller's monologue "How Green Were the Nazi's?" and his argument against the statement that the Nazis were nonanthropocentric.

Bramwell worked hard to prove that the Nazi's were nonanthropocentric, or acted and believed that humans and nature should live cohesively together without exploiting each other.

[12] Raymond H. Dominick III, *The Environmental Movement in Germany. Prophets and Pioneers 1871–1971* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 112.

However, evidence shows otherwise. In the different essays within *How Green Were the Nazis?*, a clear argument is presented that the Nazi's were, in fact, anthropocentric, meaning they viewed humans as the center of the world and plants, animals and land were there to be used by humans. In Chapter 2 of *How Green Were the Nazi's?* Michael Imort discusses the reality of the Forest protection policies within the Third Reich. Imort is now an Associate Professor at Wilfrid Laurier University where his research focuses on "the use of landscape imagery (forests in particular) in the formation and maintenance of nationalism and its symbols."[13] His degree in conservation forestry from the University of Freiburg makes him especially qualified for this topic. In his research on Nazi forestry, he states that the ecological awareness of leaders like Hermann Göring were well beyond their time, but the actions of the Third Reich were far from ecological. He says, "Forestry during the Nazi period, was like the forest itself: green on the surface, brown underneath."[14] Imort has found the modernity of ecological thought in Nazi Germany incredible. The policies the Nazis employed would be considered green or environmental today. Imort concludes that "Nazis must have been referring to a different (though comparable) concept when they stressed the importance of what we now call green forestry or ecoforestry."[15] Furthermore, Imort argues that, within forestry today, the concepts used in Nazi Germany have positive connotations.[16] The question; however, is did the Nazi's follow these policies and were the motivations ecocentric?

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[13] "Michael Imort," Wilfrid Laurier University, , accessed March 29, 2019, https://www.wlu.ca/academics/faculties/faculty-of-arts/faculty-profiles/michael-imort/index.html.
[14] Michael Imort, "Eternal Forest - Eternal Volk: The Rhetoric and Reality of National Socialist Forest Policy," in *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*(Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), 44.
[15] Ibid., 45.
[16] Ibid.

At the onset of these policies, they were both ecocentric and economy-centric. The Dauerwald Doctrine, which was in response to a failed forest policy, pushed for a biodiverse forest that kept strong and healthy trees. These policies were ecologically friendly and even economically friendly as well since it was created to benefit the collective productivity and not the individual. Due to the limitations on cutting and the motivation for forest owners to postpone non-profitable cuts during the depressed wood market in the early 1930s, these policies produced future revenues, while cutting costs during the depression.[17] Unfortunately, as the economy improved the demand for lumber continued to rise and forced the Nazi party to cut more trees, thus going against their original environmentally friendly policies.[18] In addition to this evidence toward anthropocentrism, Michael Imort believes there is evidence even without it to prove anthropocentric motivations behind the implementation of the Dauerwald Doctrine in Nazi Germany.

In his article, Michael Imort uses the correlation between the Dauerwald Doctrine and the *Volksgemeinschaft* to prove the main motivation behind the doctrine was for propagandist purposes. He says, the Dauerwald concept, "allowed 'commonsense' analogies to be drawn between individual trees and the forest on one hand, and individual citizens and the nation on the other."[19] This analogy was created by an emphasis on only protecting the *bodenständige* or native species, as well as by focusing on the "collective and perpetual" forest which relates to the Nazis classless, racially pure, and "eternal" Volk.[20] Finally, he pulls it all together with a quote from the *Reichsforstmeister,* or Reich master of forestry, Herman Göring. He says, "Forest and people

[17] Ibid., 52.
[18] Ibid., 57.
[19] Ibid., 52.
[20] Ibid.

are much akin in the doctrines of National Socialism. The people is [sic] also a living community, a great, organic, eternal body whose members are the individual citizens. Only by the complete subjection of the individual to the service of the whole can the perpetuity of the community be assured. *Eternal forest and eternal nation are ideas that are indissolubly linked."* [21] The evidence presented by Imort supports my argument, presented in Chapter Three, that the real reason for the implementation of forest policies was for political gain, not an ecological success and I will pull similar arguments that Imort uses to support my thesis in Chapter Three.

The next argument on the roots of German ecology are well represented in Frank Uekotter's *Green Nazis? Reassessing the Environmental History of Nazi Germany*. Uekotter draws from an array of primary source material, such as political party memberships, 1930's conservation publications, and the opposition's lack of evidence to prove his point that the Nazi's adopted the Conservation Party into their political identity as a way to gain popularity and spread their own ideologies.[22] Furthermore, Uekoetter points out how far-fetched of an idea it is to claim that conservationists were anti-Semitic. Within conservationist circles, industrialization and urbanization were to blame for the deforestation and depletion of nature. It is hard then, to shift the blame onto Jews.[23] Uekotter argues that because of this, statements utilizing anti-Semitic language were rare in conservationists literature even as the conservationist movement was adopted by Nazism.[24] Uekotter's work continues in assessing laws passed during the reign of Hitler and the Third Reich including the most notable National Conservation Law. Uekotter's constant presentation of how the Nazi's changed for conservation, but proof of Nazi

[21] Ibid.
[22] Frank Uekotter, "Green Nazis? Reassessing the Environmental History of Nazi Germany," *German Studies Review*, 2007, 268.
[23] Ibid., 271.
[24] Ibid.

benefit from these changes provides a strong argument of how the Nazi party used the conservationists to provide themselves with more power and broaden the range of their strength. Yet for as strong as Uekotter's argument is, once the other evidence is presented, it is hard to remain on his side, no matter how ethically pleasing it may be.

In addition to Anna Bramwell's argument contrasting Frank Uekotter's, other historians have also stepped in and provided their own interpretations on anti-Semitism and environmentalism. One of these historians is Peter Staudenmaier. In his article "Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents," he opens by outlining the anti-Semitic roots of ecology.[25] Staudenmaier looks at a handful of ecologists and conservationists including Ernst Moritz Arndt, Wilhelm Heinrich, and Ernst Haeckel. First, he looks at Ernst Moritz Arndt who was a leader in forest ecology and anti-Semitism in the early nineteenth century after writing an article in 1815 entitled *On the Care and Conservation of Forests*. To a rational mind, anti-Semitism and ecology seem to have nothing in common, and rightfully so. In fact, Arndt himself seemed to be contradictory of his thoughts. Staudenmaier quotes him saying, "When one sees nature in a necessary connectedness and interrelationship, then all things are equally important--shrub, worm, plant, human, stone, nothing first or last, but all one single unity."[26] The previous quote seems very socially liberal and accepting of all races, species, and even greenery. However, according to Staudenmaier, Arndt's ecology was "bound up with virulently xenophobic nationalism" and he demanded "Teutonic racial purity."[27] Staudenmaier can say this with confidence because Arndt's ecological thought was always in

[25] Peter Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and Its Historical Antecedents* (San Francisco, California: AK Press, 1995), 16.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

terms of *German* soil and the *German* people.[28] Staudenmaier concludes his thoughts on Arndt by saying, "at the very outset of the nineteenth century, the deadly connection between love of land and militant racist nationalism was firmly set in place."[29] However, these ideologies presented by Arndt did not stop after him. In 1853, his student Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl published an article, *Field and Forest*, which went along with Arndt's ideologies. His nationalism was shown in this article where he said, "We must save the forest, not only so that our ovens do not become cold in winter, but also so that the pulse of life of the people continues to beat warm and joyfully, so that Germany remains German."[30] After studying this work and comments similar to these, Staudenmaier claims, "His overtly anti-Semitic glorification of rural peasant values and undifferentiated condemnation of modernity established him as the 'founder of agrarian romanticism and anti-urbanism.'''[31] The ideologies continued even further when in 1867, the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel coined the term 'ecology' and began to establish it as a scientific discipline.[32] Coining ecology is no crime. However, Staudenmaier points out that Haeckel was also the chief popularizer of Darwin evolutionary theory for the German-speaking world.[33]

In addition to unraveling the glaring anti-Semitism at the roots of ecology and forestry, Staudenmaier also proposes the similarity of German ecology to their romanticism of the German "volk."[34] Both of these ideologies, Staudenmaier points out, preach "return to the land,"

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 18.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 17.

simple life, and national purity.[35] Another author, Burkhardt Riechers draws on this same idea by comparing the organic thoughts of the national socialist and "volkisch" movements to the organic thoughts of the ecology movement. He says, "The mental proximity of the nature protectors to national socialism with its strong components of "volkisch"-nationalism, pessimism with regard to civilization, and antisemitism also proved to be much influenced by social Darwinism, racial hygiene and lastly by the "organic" thoughts."[36]

The evidence authors like Staudenmaier and Reichers put together is compelling and makes it very difficult to side with Uekotter on his argument that conservation in Nazi Germany was a political move and that environmentalism did not have any anti-Semitic roots. However, what Uekotter points out, that I find important, is the significant political gains the Nazis made by adopting these conservationist ideologies. Although Uekotter's overarching argument may be wrong, his evidence is still important and must be engaged with. From looking at both sides of this argument, I side with the arguments presented by Staudenmaier and Reichers. From this research, I will argue further in Chapter Two that the nineteenth century environmental movements of Germany help explain the reason for the Nazi's belief in the "return to the old", the protection of the "pure" German land and race, and the genocide of the Jews.

Going forward, I hope to add to these arguments of anthropocentrism in Nazi Germany and the roots of ecology in Germany. The majority of my historiography revolves around Anna Bramwell and although many historians often distance themselves from her views, I do not believe all of her opinions are wrong. In fact, I straddle most of her opinions and we will see that in the following chapters. In chapter two, I will create my own argument on the connection

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Burkhardt Reichers, "Nature Protection during National Socialism," *Historical Social Research/ Historische Sozialforschung* 21, no. 3 (79)(1996), 45.

between the root of ecology and the ideologies of Nazi Germany. Here, I will argue that although we do not want to create a connection of environmentalism to Nazism, the facts are simple and there is no denying the lineage between the ideas of early environmentalism and Nazi Germany. This follows more so along the lines of Bramwell, Staudenmaier, and Reichers. However, in Chapter Three, I also will acknowledge the political gains pointed out by Frank Uekotter. Also in Chapter Three, from research and evaluation of primary source material, I will argue that although Nazi Germany did show signs of being ecologically friendly, they were not. The Nazi party was ecological in an anthropocentric sense and, like Frank Uekoetter, I argue they used the conservation movement to further their own personal motives. In order to prove this, I will explore three main areas of focus. First, I will prove that the Nazi's and the conservationists used each other for political control. Second, through the use of primary sources such as propaganda and laws, I will show how the Nazi Party utilized environmentalism to push their ideologies. Finally, by comparing the relationship between the German economy and the Nazi environmental laws I will prove that the Nazi party was focused on the anthropocentric use of the environment, thus adding to the narratives of Michael Imort and Piers H. G. Stephens.

This historiography has laid out the different perspectives on environmentalism in Nazi Germany. By critiquing and reviewing all of the sources, I feel I have a very interesting stance on the issues because my arguments fall on both sides of the polarizing views of Anna Bramwell and I present my own interpretations of the evidence. Where Anna Bramwell argues that the Nazis were nonanthropocentric and true environmentalists, I side with the opposition who state the Nazis were anthropocentric and viewed the earth as a commodity to profit from. However, when Bramwell argues that the conservation movement was rooted in anti-Semitism, I believe

the facts are on her side. At the same time, there are some aspects of her argument that I believe carry too many absolutes. For example, her argument that the conservation movement is a huge part of the National Socialist Party is over-emphasized and Frank Uekotter is more correct when saying that the Nazis used the conservationist party more for political gain. As a whole, this history is still in need of more research and hopefully, more evidence will come to the surface as it becomes more popularized. However, in the meantime, my research can add to the field by giving a more moderate interpretation on the foundation of research laid by Anna Bramwell, while also taking some of the loaded insults she puts on environmentalism off of the table.

Chapter 2

Was Ecology the Seed for National Socialist Ideologies?

Many contemporary writings on environmentalism in Nazi Germany fail to acknowledge environmental movements prior to National Socialism; and for the handful of pieces that are available, as Peter Staudenmaier points out, they either have a predisposed affinity to their subject, like Anna Bramwell, or they completely refuse to examine the ideological overlap between environmentalism and National Socialism, like Raymond Dominick.[1] By doing this, they fail to capture the whole story of what environmentally occurred in Nazi Germany during the thirteen-year reign and what occurred in the nineteenth century that laid the foundation for these beliefs. In this chapter, I argue there is a clear connection between nineteenth-century ecology and National Socialism that cannot be ignored. In this chapter, I will establish the roots of ecology in Germany and the common ground these roots shared with the National Socialist party. My analysis of this subject is important because it provides a middle ground. Anna Bramwell, and even Peter Staudenmaier, really push the narrative that there is a connection between environmentalism and fascism. On the other hand, Frank Uekotter and Raymond Dominick try very hard to ignore any lineage at all. In my interpretation, I will not shy away from the connection between early ecology and National Socialism and even discuss how these ecological movements played a role in the *Sonderweg* theory, which believes in a special path that caused the rise of fascism in the twentieth century.

This chapter will look at the roots of different movements and ideologies in the National Socialist Party and how they may have transitioned from unpopular ideologies to a major part of

[1] Peter Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and Its Historical Antecedents* (San Francisco, California: AK Press, 1995), 14.

the Nazi Regime. First, I will look at the *Volkisch* movement by exploring nineteenth-century art, ecologists, and ideologies that may have helped lead to this ideology in Nazi Germany. Next, I will look at the idea of social Darwinism and how ecologist Ernst Haeckel may have fostered this thought into the National Socialist Party. In doing this, we will see where ecology started, what ecologists believed, and the kind of action ecologists wanted to take. Finally, I will end with a discussion on where the ecological actions and ideologies fit in with the *Sonderweg* thesis, or the idea that there was a special path that led to fascism in Germany. Through all of this I will establish a connection between ecology and National Socialism. Ultimately, I will prove that environmentalism alone did not create a special path towards fascism, but instead, it was a small piece of a lot of larger aspects that led to Hitler and the Third Reich.

Roots of the *Volkisch* Movement

Many believe our view of the sustainability of our world changed forever in 1962 with the publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*; however, the roots go much deeper. Although lacking the existentialist issues, the original pioneers came from Germany in the nineteenth century. Instead of the political movement it is today, the nineteenth century movement was a nineteenth and early twentieth-century populist movement that romanticized folklore and an organic, or naturally grown, unified community, which essentially was a pure German state. Entitled the *Volkisch* movement, it portrayed peasants as the guardians of the native soil who fought for traditional values and preserved the purity of German blood. However, these peasants and their values were threatened in the nineteenth century by industrialization, urbanization, and mobilization because they disrupted the purity of the land and the purity of the

German population. Some of the academic founding fathers in this movement were Ernst Moritz Arndt and Ernst Haeckel. Although these leaders did give birth to the science of ecology and conservation, they also gave birth to a much darker twin that tied naturalism to nationalism. However, in addition to conservation becoming an academic focus, it was also an artistic and romantic focus. This romanticism helps explain the motivation behind the *Volkisch* movement and the ideas of it too.

Art and *Volkisch* Romanticism



Carl Friedrich Lessing, "Die tausendjährige Eiche" (The Millennial Oak), 1837

With the dawn of industrialization, the German forest was being depleted at a much faster rate than before. Yet as the deforestation rose, so too did the German love for the forest. One of the best ways to understand this romanticism for the forest is by viewing the art of the time.

Nineteenth-century forest art was focused mainly on romanticism. Artists like Carl Friedrich Lessing and Casper David Friedrich led much of this movement with their art that combined the forest, religion, and return to the old all into one. In Lessing's famous "The Millennial Oak" painting (shown above) you see a man and a woman wearing medieval robes, kneeling down at the base of a tree. This work was done in 1837, after the age of enlightenment and could be a critique of religion. Specifically, it can be interpreted as an openness to a new religion that is connected with nature. However, there is no question of its romanticism towards the forest and return to the old. One painting is not enough to prove or display the romanticism of the German people to their forest. In order to further prove this we must also look at poetry.

In Friedrich Schlegel's 1806 poem "In the Spessart" he shows just how loved the German forest is and the deep history behind it. "For Millennia you have stood already,/O forest so darkly bold,/ speaking scorn to all human arts/ and weaving further your greenness."[2] When interpreting this line early in the poem, you start to recognize the author is speaking to the forest almost as if it is a loved one or romantic partner. He is praising her beauty and strength. It finishes by saying, "Then I think of how in the olden times,/ You dark forest night!/ The son of freedom rejoiced in you,/ And of what he thought here./ You were the ancient's house and fortress./ Into this green canopy/ No enemy's name penetrated;/ The world was still free then."[3] In these two stanzas, the author is remembering the old times and praising the freedom they felt from the forest. He is almost directly romanticizing it by doing this. He also states the "the world was still free then" when the ancients used the forest as their house and as protection from their enemies. This also romanticizes the idea of what was once good and pushes for the "return to the old" ideology.

[2] Friedrich Schlegel, "In the Spessart", 1806.
[3] Ibid.

From just these two pieces of art, we get an understanding of many of the ideologies behind the conservation movement. First, we see romanticism in the romantic language of the poem and the style of the painting. Next, we see praise for the forest by the two people kneeling at the foot of a tree and by words like, "O forest so darkly bold, speaking scorn to all human arts".[4] Third, we see the ideology of the strength and freedom of the German people through the strength and purity of the forest when the poet states, "You were the ancient's house and fortress./ Into this green canopy/ No enemy's name penetrated/ the world was still free then." This then leads into the final ideology at play which is a "return to the old." The poem continues in saying, "The world was still free then" which clearly states the author's displeasure with the current state of Germany which is filled with "enemy's name", presumably Jews and other nationalities. Finally, in the painting, we see this by the romanticizing of the medieval wardrobe of the subjects. Even in the early 1800s all of these ideologies were at play. However, throughout this century these ideologies would continue to grow.

Academia

Living through the creation of the German Confederation, our first founding father, Ernst Moritz Arndt, was best known in Germany for his "fanatical nationalism,"[5] a movement that gained ground after the expulsion of the French from German-speaking lands.[6] However, Arndt was also known for being the earliest modern ecological thinker. In 1815, he published *On the Care and Conservation of Forests*. In this article, Arndt condemns deforestation and its economic causes. He states, "When one sees nature in a necessary connectedness and

[4] Ibid.
[5] Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology* 15.
[6] George L. Mosse, The Nationalization of the Masses, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 17

interrelationship, then all things are equally important--shrub, worm, plant, human, stone, nothing first or last, but all one single unity."[7] What separates Arndt from modern ecology and environmentalism, is that his focus on "single unity" was only in terms of German unity. He was solely focused, not on the earth as a whole, as modern environmentalists do, but instead on the *German* soil and the *German* people.[8] In this same vein, he demanded racial purity while every page dripped with xenophobia and hatred towards the French and Slavs.[9]

Unfortunately, this connection between racist nationalism and conservation did not stop with Arndt. In fact, he passed it down to one of his students, Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl. However, Wilhelm Riehl quit before he got any sort of credentials from Arndt.[10] After dabbling in academic discourse, Riehl moved on to journalism where his experience covering the 1848 revolution turned him from a moderate liberal to a lifelong conservative.[11] Despite not finishing his studies, he enjoyed a rise in his intellectual capital. From this, he grabbed a position as a Professor of Cultural History and Statistics, Rector of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Unversität,[12] and was invited to write a series of essays on German social groups.[13] This writing led to one of his most famous essays, *Field and Forest.*

In his essay, *Field and Forest*, Riehl pushed for the protection of the forest while tieing in similar or even worse racist jargon than Arndt. Once again, rhetoric similar to today's environmental activists were used, like calling to fight for "the rights of the wilderness,"[14] but his

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[7] Ernst Mortiz Arndt, *On the Care and Conservation of Forests,* 1815, in Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*, (San Francisco: AK Press, 1995), 16.
[8] Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology,* 16.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Mary Beth Stein, "Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl and the Scientific-Literary Formation of "Volkskunde"" from *German Studies Review* Vol. 24 (3) (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 489.
[11] Ibid., 490.
[12] Ibid., 488.
[13] Ibid., 490.
[14] Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology* 16.

work was ultimately racist. For example, in *Field and Forest*, he said, "We must save the forest, not only so that our ovens do not become cold in winter, but also so that the pulse of life of the people continues to beat warm and joyfully, so that Germany remains German."[15] The racial and nationalist language shared between Riehl and Arndt fall in line and give scientific context to the popular nineteenth-century *volkisch* movement.

The *volkisch* movement was a nineteenth and early twentieth-century populist movement that romanticized folklore and an organic, or naturally grown, unified community, which essentially was a pure German state. The movement portrayed peasants as the guardians of the native soil who fought for traditional values and preserved the purity of German blood. However, the peasants and their values were threatened in the nineteenth century by industrialization, urbanization, and mobilization because they disrupted the purity of the land and the purity of the German population.[16] The understanding of this shift and the problems with it, were pushed by ecologists like Arndt and Riehl. The ecologist's beliefs created support and explanation for the solutions prescribed by the *Volkisch* movement by using a quasi-science. Riehl emphasized in *Field and Forest* that the strength of the German character came from the strength of the German forest.[17] With industrialization being the cause of the deforestation, it now transitively became a threat to the German people. In addition, since industrialization and urbanization were at the root of this issue, it was easy to look at who lived in urban centers and seemed to benefit from the materialist nature of industrialization. Of course, nineteenth-century limitations of Jewish land

[15] Ibid.
[16] Roderick Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 51.
[17] Wilhelm Riehl, Section 1, Chapter 1 of *Die Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Socialpolitik,* 1854, trans. Julia Ludewig.

ownership limited their business opportunities and the land they could acquire,[18] which led 70% of the Jewish population to live in urban cities[19] and thus subjecting them to the scapegoat roles prescribed in order to protect the German forests. This commonality between the ecological and *volkisch* parties benefited them both and helped give support to each other. In addition to anti-Semitism, they shared similarities in the glorification of rural peasant values, condemnation of modernity and push for organic racial purity. This tie between an ideology so popular and rooted in the Nazi movement and ecology is one reason why some argue there is a direct connection between ecology and fascism. However, there is another common ideology, Social Darwinism.

Ernst Haeckel and Social Darwinism

Arguably the most popular of the ecological founding fathers, Ernst Haeckel was a zoologist and lover of animals. He believed that man, well at least some men and beast were equal and deserve equal protection; an ideological approach that today we would call ecocentric. Although he did not speak on pollution, soil erosion or energy, he still was a leader in ecological thought. In fact, Haeckel was the man who is credited with coining the term 'ecology' and establishing it as a scientific discipline in 1866.[20] His premise for ecology was mostly centered around the equality of animals and humans on earth, because in his eyes "man and animals had

[18] "The Reception of the Jews". report on the status of the Jews in the Duchy of Nassau, records of the Ministry of State, "Concerning the Citizenship Status of the Jews in the Duchy of Nassau", author unknown, 1822. Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Abt. 210 Nr. 2777 Bl. 65-68.
[19] John L. Heineman, Documents on the Jews and the Third Reich 1933-1938, from www2.bc.edu/john-heineman/Jews.html.
[20] Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History,* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 39.

the same moral and natural status."[21] However, despite his animal-loving cover, he too had thick strands of racism in his dialogue.

The legacy of Ernst Haeckel is largely still up for debate. Daniel Gasman, the author of *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism*, believes Haeckel is at the root of the Nazi movement and responsible for their social Darwinist ideas. Gasman's book has been cited so often that it has become a near truism among many historians.[22] However, others like Anna Bramwell, sympathize with Haeckel and believe he was simply an ecologist whose beliefs were used for demonic purposes after his life. Due to the polar opposite opinions of many leading historians, and the acceptance of truism by following historians, it is very difficult to determine which side of history Haeckel should be on.

Personally, I believe Haeckel was a product of his time. He did popularize social Darwinist ideas and possibly provided backing to Nazi ideas, but he also was an optimist who believed in science as the foundation for human impulse and cohesion. For example, he derived human morality from animal instincts. In *Monism as Connecting Religion and Science*, he stated the rules "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" and "love thy neighbour as thyself" were "ethical instinct...derived from our animal ancestors."[23] Furthermore, he professed that we are "children of the earth who, for one or two or three generations, have the good fortune to enjoy [its] treasures...to drink to the inexhaustible fountain of its beauty, and to trace out the

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[21] Ibid.
[22] Robert Richards, "Ernst Haeckel's Alleged Anti-Semitism and Contributions to Nazi Biology", (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 2.
[23] Ernst Haeckel, *Monism as Connecting Religion and Science. The Confession of Faith of a Man of Science* (London and Edinburgh, 1894), 64, in Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History,* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 49.

marvellous play of its forces."[24] This optimism in nature and values from its instincts, show his faith in the goodness of the evolutionary process of the world. He placed a nearly religious belief in how nature worked and believed that society should function in the same way nature does. This attempt to move the fundamentals of nature into the structures of society is where Haeckel puts himself in a sticky situation.

Haeckel's strong belief and trust in the success of nature pushed him to push for similar ideologies in politics. Ultimately, he professed an ideal government state by using an organic analogy. He theorized the ideal state would be centralized, like the brain and nervous system.[25] In addition to a belief in centralized government, he also believed in the significance of duty. However, he viewed duty as less of a necessity for government, and instead as a necessity for humans. He argued ultimately that duty was a biological impulse.[26] This impulse led all living organisms to a primitive law of care for the family and "a collective desire to survive."[27] When comparing these ideologies to the success of the Nazi party, you start to draw lines between Haeckel's thoughts and a couple of the reasons why Hitler was demonically successful. Hitler's ability to rise to the top and impose his atrocities came from his ability to convince people to support a centralized state and buy into the sense of duty to the German government. Haeckel's biological backing to these foundations could have potentially benefited Hitler's political demands. However, these were not the main foundations Haeckel gets credited with giving the National Socialist Party.

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[24] Ernst Haeckel, *The Riddle of the Universe* (London, 1900), 352, in Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History,* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 49.
[25] Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century,* 50.
[26] Ernst Haeckel, *The Wonders of Life* (London, 1905), 137, in Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History,* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 50.
[27] Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century,* 50.

In addition to coining the term ecology, Haeckel also was a chief popularizer of Darwin and evolutionary theory for the German-speaking world.[28] His ties to social Darwinism start with his creation of the Monist League, a group that believed the mind and body were connected and that humans were a small part of the larger creation of the earth.[29] This belief does not seem very problematic on the surface, in fact, it can almost seem beautiful; however, ultimately the belief created an anti-humanist narration. Leaders of the Monist League, like Raoul Francé, created a *Lebensgesetze,* or "laws of life" which state natural order determines the social order. In this theory, anything that disrupted the flow of life was unnatural and therefore should be expelled. This expulsion included racial mixing, because to him it was "unnatural."[30] Then, a colleague of Francé's, Ludwig Woltmann, also a student of Haeckel, stressed the importance of environmental purity and its connection to 'racial' purity. Finally, Haeckel influenced a man named D.H. Lawrence who, by using some of Haeckel's ideas, influenced the founders of the Soil Association. This association and the reiteration of Haeckel's ideas provided the biological backing and genuine environmental concern in a turbulent time that inspired the 1920's Back-to-the-Land movements, which eventually led to the rise of the Nazi Party.[31] From this lineage, you start to see how Haeckel's ideas on racial purity and social order got passed on and moved through time and space to end up in the hands of leaders of the National Socialist Party.

By reviewing the actions of Haeckel's life, it is easy to see how his legacy is tarnished. He supported or paved the way for three major aspects of the Nazi party: social Darwinism, centralized state, and duty. Still, there is no direct lineage between Haeckel and Hitler, like there

[28] Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology,* 18.
[29] Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century,* 42.
[30] Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology*, 20.
[31] Ibid.

is for D.H. Lawrence, who used Haeckel's ideas to influence the infamous Soil Association. Despite records of books Hitler borrowed from libraries, there is no evidence Hitler ever read Haeckel's writings. In addition, Haeckel's ideas were pacifist in nature; whereas Hitler's most definitely were not.[32] Due to the lack of connection, I believe that my thesis on Haeckel is supported. He was most certainly a product of his time. However, that does not mean he is responsible for the rise of the Nazi party. His ideas were formidable and they correlated with similar ideas pushed by the National Socialist party, but in no way did his ideas cause the rise of the Nazi party, nor did he intend for them to do so.

Ecology and the Sonderweg Thesis

In the broader study of Nazi history, a belief that the *Volkisch* and ecological movements paved the way for the National Socialist party could fall into the *Sonderweg* thesis, or the notion that Germany's anti-democratic development and unique history created a special path towards fascism. I argue that if you were to fully embrace the *Sonderweg* thesis, you would have to acknowledge the significance of ecology as one of the pieces of Germany's unique historical development that led to the uprising of the Nazi party. However, in full, I argue nineteenth-century German ecological history only provides a small explanation for twentieth-century fascism. More important than nineteenth-century history, were the interwar years that ignited the fascist flame. In this section, I will break down how ecology works its way into the *Sonderweg* thesis and how different ecological theories and movements enforced

[32] Bramwell, *Ecology of the 20th Century,* 51.

anti-democratic ideas and pro-centralized state ideas, which in turn helped the rise of fascism in the twentieth century.

One of the questions most commonly asked and attempted to be answered by historians of Nazi Germany is, 'how did a movement as demagogic as Nazism rise in a country as seemingly advanced as Germany?'. In a very strange way, I am attempting to answer that question as well. One answer historians have come up with is that there was a special path that Germany took which led to fascism in their country. This thesis is called the *Sonderweg* thesis. Simply put, the thesis states: "From a Western perspective Germany's political development was tragically retarded by its failure to develop an effective democratic system until after the Second World War."[33] Furthermore, *Sonderweg* believes that the German bourgeoisie was too weak and therefore failed in fulfilling their mission of creating a liberal parliamentary form of government. [34] By readdressing the themes of pre-nazi ecology, we will see how ecology fits into the *Sonderweg* thesis.

First, as we discussed in the previous section, Ernst Haeckel believed in a centralized state because his studies on nature proved centralized states to be the most harmonious and efficient for means of ensuring survival.[35] If according to *Sonderweg* theorizers, the major scapegoat for the rise of fascism in Germany is the inability for the German-speaking world to create a democracy, then Ernst Haeckel and his followers' belief in a centralized state must also be recognized as a factor in this nineteenth-century shortcoming because they pushed against a democratic state. By creating a popular narrative against democracy, Haeckel and others who proposed the centralized state played a small role in keeping the German bourgeoisie from

[33] Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies*, 24.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

fulfilling "its historic mission of creating a liberal parliamentary form of government."[36] Then, once the democratic state was formed, it was too weak and inefficient to satisfy the ecologists of the time. Evidence of environmentalists dissatisfaction with the Weimar Republic is ample. In 1925, 1927, and 1929, national conservation congresses called for national conservation legislation to no success. During the final meeting in 1931, a speaker yelled, "How long do the [national] government and the Reichstag intend to stand idle on this matter?"[37] Also, in the preamble of the 1935 Reich Nature Conservation Act, it is stated, "The natural protection of the turn of the century only had limited success, because important political and ideological prerequisites were missing; only with the transformation of the German man the prerequisites for effective environmental protection were created."[38] From this evidence we see how the previous forms of politics and ideologies were unsatisfactory for nature protection advocates. In turn, ecologists added to the dissatisfaction in Weimar Germany towards the republic that led so many people to vote for National Socialism. Although there were many more aspects to why the democracy failed, citizen's approval was a portion and conservationists had a role in the disapproval.

In addition to supporting a centralized state and not supporting the democracy, pre-nazi era conservationists also fostered a romanticism of the old. This 'return to the old' ideology was pushed through the protection of the forest. They believed that if they could protect their forests from industrialization and urbanization, then the "pulse of life of the people" would continue to

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Hans Klose, *Fünfzig Jahre staatlicher Naturschutz. Ein Rückblick auf den Weg der deutschen Naturschutzbewegung*, (Giessen: Brühlscher Verlag, 1957), 31, in Raymond H. Dominick III, *The Environmental Movement in Germany. Prophets and Pioneers 1871–1971* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 85.
[38] Preamble, Reich Nature Conservation Act, 1935.

beat "warm and joyfully."[39] This promoted the romanticism of the German *volk*, which is the belief in traditional values and authentic folk culture. However, this ideology was threatened by "industrialization, urbanization, and foreign influence," which includes democracy as a "foreign influence".[40] Therefore, once again, the writers of ecology are a part of the anti-democratic movement or at the very least, a lack of a pro-democratic movement that *Sonderweg* theorizers believe caused the rise of National Socialism in the twentieth century. Ultimately, the *Sonderweg* thesis is not about one action or idea that made democracy fail and fascism rise. Instead, it is about an accumulation of different minor aspects of Germany's unique history, and there is no doubt conservation and ecologist's roles in supporting a centralized state and opposing democracy was another minor piece of this puzzle. These few examples show how ideologies that are critical to the *Sonderweg* thesis, line up with the ideologies of the ecological movements of the nineteenth century. This correlation does not prove that ecology and environmentalism can directly lead to fascism, as Anna Bramwell argues, instead, it proves that the ecological movements are a small piece of this historical lineage to Nazism.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have seen a clear connection between nineteenth-century ecology and National Socialism that cannot be ignored. We see how early ecologists, like Ernst Arndt and Wilhelm Riehl, held ideologies and published beliefs that were ecological, but also very anti-Semitic and nationalistic. Their books, writings, and teachings embraced the same idea of the *Volkisch* movement, which portrayed peasants as the guardians of the native soil, and

[39] Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, *Feld und Wald, Stuttgart,* 1857, 52, in Peter Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and Its Historical Antecedents,* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1995), 16.
[40] Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies*, 51.

fought for traditional values, and purity of blood. This movement viewed industrialization, urbanization, and foreign influence as the enemy of the people because it disrupted what was natural. This ideology was streamlined to the Nazi's in their nationalistic ideas. Next, we looked at the man credited with coining the term ecology, Ernst Haeckel. Haeckel is a very credited ecologist, but his life's work promoted social Darwinism and promoted other thinkers who supported this doctrine. Although Haeckel himself does not have a direct connection to Hitler, some of the men he promoted did. The legacy of these three ecologists and their beliefs have often been ignored. However, by looking at their life and work, we can conclude that there most definitely were ideological connections between what they believed and studied to what the Nazis believed and utilized. This connection can easily be pushed into the *Sonderweg* theory. However, it must be noted that none of these ecologists, individually, are accountable for the rise of Nazism. Instead, they are small parts of a larger historical trend that fought against democracy and fought for German nationalism. Similarly, modern environmental beliefs are not representative or replicas of the nineteenth-century ecological movements. Modern environmentalism is universal and global in its pursuits, whereas the German, nineteenth-century environmentalism, was parochial in their practices. Hopefully, this knowledge and presentation of history will help readers separate the difference between these two fields and prevent detrimental comments that attempt to convict modern environmentalists as eco-fascists and help to add to our understanding of what led to the rise of fascism in Germany.

Chapter 3

Economy over Ecology: The True Environmental State of Nazi Germany

The conservation movement in Nazi Germany is still highly debated and analyzed by historians like Anna Bramwell, Frank Uekotter, Dominick Raymond, Peter Staudenmaier, and others. As we saw in Chapter 1, the brief overview of the historiography of the subject gives us a clear view as to just how divided some people are on the subject matter and how many different aspects of the topic you can use to further your argument. From research and evaluation of primary source material, I argue that although Nazi Germany did show signs of being ecologically friendly, they were not. The Nazi party was ecological only in an anthropocentric sense and, like Frank Uekoetter who argued the tie between the Nazi Party and the Conservation Party was not based on ideological similarities but instead based solely on the Nazi Party's manipulation for more control, I argue the Nazis used the conservation movement to further their own personal motives of genocide, nationalism, and complete government control. However, I will go further to also argue the conservationist party was willing to let this happen for political gain of their own. In order to prove this, I will explore three main areas of focus. First, I will prove that the Nazi's and the conservationists used each other for political control and that neither initially supported each other's parties before Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, despite their similarities. Instead, the NSDAP used the conservationists for support of genocidal and anti-Semitic ideologies, and the conservationists used the relationship as an opportunity to pass environmental policies. Next, through the use of primary sources, such as propaganda and laws such as the Dauerwald Doctrine of 1934 and the Reich Nature Conservation Act of 1935, I will show how the Nazi Party utilized the cover of environmentalism to push non-obtrusive genocidal

and anti-Semitic policies. Finally, by comparing the relationship between the German economy and the Nazi environmental laws, I will prove that the Nazi party was solely focused on the anthropocentric use of the environment not only once times got hard, but even from the beginning of their relationship with conservation.

Nature Protection and Politics

As the Nazi Party began to grow in popularity and power, more and more people began to apply for party membership in hopes of securing a better future for themselves, their families, or their beliefs. Conservationists were no different. By thorough investigation of the National Socialist Party (NSDAP) Membership records, Raymond Dominick, a former History professor at Ohio State University, Mansfield and author of *The Environmental Movement in Germany: Prophets and Pioneers*, found only one conservationist, out of 18, who had joined the party before 1933. Nine more joined in the following five years, presumably as opportunists.[1] In this case, because membership rosters of major conservationist groups of the 1930s cannot be recovered, conservationists were described as "leaders of the *Naturschutz* (translates to conservation) movement...who distinguished themselves in directing private conservation groups or working within the government conservation bureaucracy both before and after 1933."[2] In addition to a lack of membership of conservationists in the Nazi party, there was a lack of recognition of conservationist thought in the basic principles of National Socialism. Nowhere in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is there any mention that conservation was to be a part of the Nazi plan.[3]

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[1]Raymond H. Dominick III, *The Environmental Movement in Germany. Prophets and Pioneers 1871–1971* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 112.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Frank Uekotter, "Green Nazis? Reassessing the Environmental History of Nazi Germany," *German Studies Review*, 2007, 269.

However, in *Mein Kampf* he "described how his years in Vienna had opened his eyes to the darkest depths of human existence. It was then that he began to see cities as centers of the 'Jewish-capitalist world conspiracy,' as places of moral decline and suffering. Henceforth he idealized pre-industrial rural life and saw in the peasant population the backbone of racial stability and national strength."[4] This is at the root of the overlapping connection between the National Socialist and conservationist ideology that nature shapes the national character, or better known by the simpler slogan of 'Blood and Soil'.[5] Although we see that there was no real political connection between conservationists and National Socialists prior to the formation of the Third Reich, we do begin to see how Hitler viewed nature in contrast to cities and how he may be able to manipulate the conservationist ideas of anti-industrialization and anti-urbanization into his anti-Semitic plans.

The reason for the ties between the Nazi Party and the conservationists comes down to politics and propaganda for NSDAP ideas. In order to maximize the connection between conservation and anti-Semitism, Hitler employed two conservationist leaders into the Third Reich. The two leaders in this transformation were Walther Schoenchen and Hans Schwenkel. Both Schoenchen and Schwenkel worked in the State Office for Natural Preservation in Prussia and then moved on to the Third Reich's Federal Agency for Nature Conservation. After the Second World War, and the destruction of the Third Reich, both conservationists enjoyed successful careers as academics. However, during their time working for the Nazi Party, their teachings were highly xenophobic and connected the conservation of nature to the ideas of National Socialism. One of the most obvious examples of this comes from Hans Schwenkel,

[4] "Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler Heights, the Obersalzberg, Postcard (March 21, 1933)," German History and Documents Index.
[5] Raymond H. Dominick III, *The Environmental Movement in Germany*, 114.

where he used the Bible to explain how Jews were unable to be conscientious and protective of the environment. For example, "[a]ccording to the first book of Moses, the Jew knows no conservation, because God gives all the plants and animals to the children of Israel, 'everything that creeps and flees' to food. Only civilized man, almost exclusively Nordic man, gains a whole new relationship to nature, that of reverence to the even nature protection is established."[6] By using biblical references in relation to nature conservation the Nazis now had evidence to scapegoat the Jews. In addition, there was a promotion of *Volkisch* romanticism, which connected the health of the land to the health of the German culture and country. Together they promoted this ideology by saying that the main goal of nature conservation was "to take care of the native landscape and to prevent its disfigurement."[7] This conservation is important because Schwenkel also stated that, "the homeland is silently forming our being...it is the quiet co-creator of our culture. The country where we are born is our destiny and our doings determine the destiny of our native country."[8] Together, their comments regarding Jews' inability to be protective of the land, combined with the necessity to protect the land for the good of German culture, deliberately made Jews the scapegoat of society and provided seemingly biblical and scientific evidence as to why Jews were dangerous to Germany. This argument encouraged the rural farmers and German citizens because it meant they were vital to the Nazi's plans to preserve the natural land which in turn made them and the German country strong. Although this

[6] Excerpt from Hans Schwenkel, *Press and Nature Conservation (1937),* 117, found in Burkhardt Reichers, "Nature Protection during National Socialism," *Historical Social Research/ Historische Sozialforschung* 21, no. 3 (79)(1996), 41.
[7] Excerpt from Schoenichen (1931), 158, found in Burkhardt Reichers, "Nature Protection during National Socialism," *Historical Social Research/ Historische Sozialforschung* 21, no. 3 (79)(1996), 41.
[8] Hans Schwenkel, Die Gestaltung des Flurbildes, in: Naturschutz, ser. 11, (1929), 142, found in Burkhardt Reichers, "Nature Protection during National Socialism," *Historical Social Research/ Historische Sozialforschung* 21, no. 3 (79)(1996), 41.

may have been exciting at the time for German conservationists because they were seeing some of their beliefs being put to use in the regime, it was ultimately just the beginning of a parasitic relationship where the Nazis used conservationists for their own benefit and manipulated the conservationists into thinking they were getting something in return.

Ideology and Implementation

As we have seen, there are a lot of ideologies from anti-industrialism to nationalism dispersed in the idea of nature conservation in the nineteenth and twentieth-century Germany. For example, the "return to the old" and anti-urbanization ideologies did promote the startup of nature conservation, because it connected with the already romantic view many German citizens had with their relationship to the forest and it pushed for the protection of the German forest, which provided so much protection for the German people over the years. However, it really did not play a huge role in the Nazi implementation of conservation. Instead, they used these ideologies to promote the larger ideas of the NSDAP, like nationalism and xenophobia. These major ideologies ultimately were combined into one, the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Throughout this project, I have discussed the German *Volk,* the *Volkisch* movement, or *Volkisch* romanticism quite often. Despite its popularity, the term can still be pretty confusing. Simply put, the *Volksgemeinschaft* is a concept of a racially unified German state. The *Volksgemeinschaft* created a mystical German community that could be achieved if they cleansed the German culture. As we have seen from nature conservationists, part of the cleanliness of the German culture came from the cleanliness and conservation of the German land. So one of the ways to further this ideology was to implement environmental policies that supported it.

This correlation between the *Volksgemeinschaft* and environmentalism was portrayed by the German forest through propaganda and federal laws. One of the very first laws that created this strong tie between the German forest and the German Volk was the *Dauerwald* Doctrine in 1934.[9] The *Dauerwald* Doctrine stated regulations such as, "cut the worst rather than the best trees so as to improve the overall quality of the stand and allow only the *best specimens* to reproduce."[10] From this piece of the doctrine, it is not hard to draw comparisons to the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 are infamous for their guidelines on how Jewishness was to be legally defined, who can marry, and who can reproduce. Essentially, the law ensured the pristine "Aryan blood" would not be tainted by marrying Jews, Sinta Roma, or blacks.[11] The Dauerwald Doctrine continues this "only the best specimens" can reproduce narrative and although it's original purpose was to sustain the development and beauty of the German forests, it took on a much more metaphorical role as the Nazi Regime developed.

Propaganda furthered this comparison with the 1936 movie entitled *Ewiger Wald,* or *Eternal Forest*. This propaganda film featured a scene that shows a close up of an ax while background music sings, "Excise what is foreign race and sick." The ax goes on to cut the dead wood of a dry tree and the music continues by voicing the lyrics, "From the multitude of species, create the new community of the eternal forest, create the eternal forest of the new community."

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[9] "Eternal Forest - Eternal Volk: The Rhetoric and Reality of National Socialist Forest Policy," in *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*(Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), 48.

[10] Heinrich Eberts, "Die Neuordnung des Forstwesens in Deutschland," Zeitschrift für Weltforstwirtschaft 3 (1935-1936): 667-77 (English summary at 677). Taken from Michael Imort's essay entitled "Eternal Volk - Eternal Forest" in Franz-Josef Bruggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas cont. Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens, UNITED STATES: Ohio University Press, 2005).

[11] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "The Nuremberg Race Laws", Holocaust Encyclopedia.

[12] The "new community" presented in this propaganda evidence clearly does not include Jews by using the guise of forestry as the reason behind it. Instead, the purity of the German forest is solely being connected to the purity of the people as we see on signs like the one below which reads, "Jews are not permitted in our German Forest."[13] Once again, this propaganda seems as though it is being ecologically friendly by imposing some of the Dauerwald forestry principles. However, it is being used for the sole purpose of benefiting the racial ideas of the Third Reich.



If questions about the reality of this relationship persist, *Reichsforstmeister* (Reich Forester) Hermann Göring made the issue crystal clear. Goring was previously the prime

[12] Albert von Pestalozza, *Ewiger Wald: Allegorie über die Geschichte und das Leben* (author's transcript), 1936.
[13] Eugene Holy, "Jews are not welcome in our German Forest." 1935.

minister of Prussia but transitioned to his position in the Third Reich because of Prussia's implementation of Dauerwald forest policies.[14] While *Reichsforstmeister* Goring stated, "Forest and people are much akin in the doctrines of National Socialism … Only by the complete subjection of the individual to the service of the whole can the perpetuity of the community be assured. *Eternal forest and eternal nation are ideas that are indissolubly linked."*[15] Although the Nazi's seemed to clearly get their point across with the Dauerwald doctrine, they still went even further with the forest analogy by passing the Reich Nature Conservation Act of 1935.

The Nature Conservation Act of 1935 was similar to the 1934 Dauerwald Doctrine in two ways. First, it was ecologically advanced and successful based on experts in forestry like Michael Imort. More important to my argument, it was clearly an analogy for the Reich's ideological principles. In this conservation law, there were 27 articles that clearly and meticulously explain what is to be done in the forests and the repercussions for those who do not follow these rules. For the most part, the Act seems simple and routine. However, if you break down the language you will see the same ideologies hidden in the text.

In the preamble, there is one statement that stands out in regards to the *Volksgemeinschaft* ideology. It says, "The government of the German Reich sees it as its duty to provide even the poorest citizens access to the German natural beauty."[16] Although on the surface, it does not seem so awful, it is a very subtle push for German nationalism and a push for the ideology that believes the strength of the German people and character comes from the strength of their forest, as outlined by ecologist Wilhelm Riehl in his book Land and People. He said, "Alien though it may have come to appear in today's world, this Germanic freedom of the woods exerts a more

[14] Michael Imort, "Eternal Forest---Eternal Volk", 49.
[15] Ibid., 54.
[16] Preamble in the "Reich Nature Conservation Act," June 26, 1935.

profound influence on the customs and character of every societal group than many an armchair philosopher might imagine."[17] By ensuring the forest's beauty to "even the poorest citizens" they are nurturing this strong character that comes from the forests to all of their German citizens and perpetuating the ideological principles of Nazism and conservationism. This, in turn, would ensure the strength of the home front and the strength of all soldiers in the coming wars.

More obvious language was present in Article 24 which states that there will be no indemnification for individuals whose land is taken and used by the government.[18] This article essentially gives total control of the land to the Nazi government and eerily resembles point 24 of Hitler's Nazi Party platform of 1920. In point 24 of the Nazi Party platform, Hitler emphasizes the principle of the "common good over the individual good."[19] By taking land control from the citizens of Germany without restriction, the Nazi party was forcing the citizens into recognizing and accepting the common good of Germany over their own, another *Volksgemeinschaft* idea. It is important to note that this land seizure goes against a political promise made prior to the 1928 general elections. Hitler realized he needed a sizable rural vote and reinterpreted point 17 of the Nazi Party's official 1920 platform. Instead of the point calling for the "unremunerative expropriation of land for the common weal"[20], which in Article 24 he implements, he explained point 17 only referred to land illegitimately acquired by "Jewish property speculation companies."[21] So, therefore, not only does the Nature Protection Act go deliberately against a campaign promise that potentially granted him power in the first place, but it also gave all

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[17] Wilhelm Riehl, Section 1, Chapter 1 in *Die Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Socialpolitik,* 1854.
[18] Article 24 in the "Reich Nature Conservation Act," June 26, 1935.
[19] Adolf Hitler, Point 24 in "25 Points of the uary 24, 1920.
[20] Adolf Hitler, Point 17 in "25 Points of the NSDAP Program," FeNSDAP Program," Febrbruary 24, 1920.
[21] William Brustein, "The Middle Class and Weimar Political Parties," in *The Logic of Evil: The Social Origins of the Nazi Party, 1925-1933,* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1996), 90.

property to the Volk, and not to individual citizens. Both of these laws were very significant in allowing Hitler to live out his legacy as we know it today, and it was all backed by the science of environmentalism that went back over a century. In addition, it shows the parasitic relationship between not just conservationists and Hitler, but also for everyday citizens. He promised point 17 would not affect rural landowners, but then later when deliberately against what he stated in order to strengthen the power of the state. For the conservationists, it is blatantly obvious that their goals of preservation were used as puppets to push Hitler's xenophobic and nationalistic ideas. In any way he could, Hitler did what he had to do in order to gain power and the conservation movement happened to be one of his most utilized pawns. However, is it fair to critique the National Socialist party so harshly if these laws were environmentally friendly? What if environmentalism was actually on the minds of Nazi political leaders? What if the Nazi's were actually nonanthropocentric like Anna Bramwell suggests?

Economic Impacts and Results

For as logical and fair as all those questions are, they are irrelevant. Although the Nazi laws were truly advanced ecological restrictions for the time based on their initiatives, they were still very anthropocentric. The clearest example of this was the failure of the Dauerwald Doctrine. As early as 1935, *Reichsforstmeister* Göring had to raise the cutting quota in publicly owned forests by 150 percent of the sustained yield in order to meet the demand for wood in the new booming economy of Nazi Germany.[22] Furthermore, in 1936 the same quota was placed on

[22] Decree of 30 October 1934 Concerning Cutting Quotas and Wood Utilization for 1935, in *LwMBl* (1934), columns 749–752 (this decree was followed by similar decrees for subsequent years); and Directive of 7 December 1936 Concerning the Increased Supply of Raw Materials, in Reichsgesetzblatt, part 1, 1936, 1011. Primary source found in Franz-Josef Bruggemeier, Mark

private forest owners.[23] Still in 1937, to avoid breaking the limitations set in 1934, Göring had to set new restrictions on the Dauerwald policies so that production could go on.[24] More evidence comes from the wording of the Reich Nature Conservation Act of 1935. In Article 6 of the act, the Nazis set limitations for the implementation of the act. It specifically says, "No areas may be limited by environmental protection which entirely or predominantly serve the following purposes: the Wehrmacht (army), the important public roads of transportation, marine transportation, vital economical businesses."[25] This evidence shows that Göring and the Nazi Party were not focused on the actual well being of the forest. They were focused on how to stimulate the economy, how to impose their ideologies, and how to use nature to their advantage. These decrees and the continued production throughout the war show that their feelings about nature were clearly anthropocentric and that the short-lived conservation laws were focused on Nazi ideology and not on the good of the environment.

More specific examples of people blasphemously ignoring the law come in Frank Uekotter's book *The Green and the Brown.* He points out how the supreme engineer of Nazi Germany, Fritz Todt, hired "Landscape Advocates" to make sure the construction of the Autobahn was built in line with the demands of the German landscape. However, the planners "routinely ignored" the Advocates' advice.[26] In addition, Hermann Göring who was one of the leaders of the passing of the 1935 Reich Nature Conservation Act and served as Germany's

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Cioc, and Thomas Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens, UNITED STATES: Ohio University Press, 2005), 57.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Decree of 1 December 1937 Concerning Principles, Purpose, and Importance of Silvicultural Planning, in *Reichsministerialblatt der Forstverwaltung* (Law Gazette of the Reich Forest Administration) (1937), 343–45. Primary source found in Franz-Josef Bruggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens, UNITED STATES: Ohio University Press, 2005), 57.

[25] Article 6 of the "Reich Nature Conservation Act," June 26, 1935.

[26] Frank Uekotter, *The Green and the Brown*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9.

"supreme forester" published other plans and worked against conservation interests.[27] Finally, Uekotter draws on a primary source from a 1941 brochure, entitled "The Führer Wants Our Hedgerows Protected," which he says revealed Hitler's lack of support for important conservation goals.[28]

Conclusion

In Ian Kershaw's biography of Hitler, he argued that "working towards the Führer" was the key principle to policy in the Nazi state.[29] Kershaw maintains that opportunists in the Reich worked in order to have their ideologies and intentions supported by Hitler. By adjusting their ideology and falling in line with NSDAP ideas, the conservationist community was able to make their ideologies work for the Führer. This chapter has proven how conservationist ideologies helped Hitler in many different ways. Essentially, the conservation movement was able to make their ideas work in a way that benefitted and promoted the Nazi state in hopes they would get something in return. We first see the benefit the Nazi's received from these ideologies in their rise to power. When Hitler was in need of the rural vote, he adjusted his policies and adopted conservationist's ideologies in order to make the rural farmers feel as though they were a necessity to the preservation of the strength of the German people. Once Hitler gained power, he utilized the conservationist movement again to promote racial cleansing through the Dauerwald Doctrine and to promote the idea of the common good over the individual good in the Reich Nature Conservation Act. However, once these policies were established and Hitler became more

[27] Ibid., 10.
[28] Ibid., 10.
[29] Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris,* (London: W.W. Norton, 1998), 529.

war and production focused, he started to abandon the people and the ideas that got him to where he was. The conservation ideas no longer worked towards the war focused ideas of the Führer. This evidence proves that the Third Reich was not ecocentric. They were solely focused, as everything in the Third Reich was, on how it would benefit the strength and might of Hitler and the state. As soon as conservation policies no longer promoted the strength of the Führer and the Third Reich, the policies were abandoned and left to die.

Conclusion

As the Nazi military effort lost momentum, so too did the German conservation movement. With the decline of the German army's success, leaders like Heinrich Himmler had more important duties than preserving the German land. Instead of protecting the scenic *Wutach* nature reserve, the *Riechsforstamt,* the Reich Forest Office approved a dam to provide energy for the war effort.[1] This was one action in a broader trend of actions that left the conservationists on the outside looking in and with few options left. This downward spiral of environmental consciousness shown by the Third Reich is supportive of my thesis that the Nazis were anthropocentric. In addition, I have argued and demonstrated in this project that instead of strictly following environmental laws, the Nazi Party used them loosely for their own political and propagandist benefit, and that the history of German environmentalism can help us to understand the Nazi ideologies of "return to the old", the protection of their "pure" land and race, and their genocide of the Jews. Ultimately, the conservationists were puppets in the Nazis manipulation of a country into believing the aforementioned ideologies were the answer to the crisis of the time. Looking back, it may be easy to think the conservationists were dubious to believe the Nazi party would ever follow their proposals and that the conservationists were just another innocent victim in the Nazi's effort. The conservationists were far from victims, but their legacy should also not just be defined by their actions during the reign of the Third Reich.

Simply because of the conservationists role in Nazi Germany, some historians like Anna Bramwell have gone as far to inexplicably say the ideas of protecting nature somehow motivated Nazism. This thesis from Bramwell has been highly criticized by historians. Among these

[1] Frank Uekotter, "Green Nazis? Reassessing the Environmental History of Nazi Germany," *German Studies Review,* 2007, 280.

historians, Michael Imort argued that the Nazis used conservationist and environmental protection ideas to create analogies that supported their own racially pure ideologies through the Dauerwald Doctrine and quotes from Nazi political leaders like Herman Göring.[2] Furthermore, Frank Uekotter argues along the same lines with Michael Imort but goes further to say how far-fetched of an idea it is that conservationists were anti-Semitic. He argued that within conservationist circles, industrialization and urbanization were to blame for the deforestation and depletion of nature. He claims, it is hard then, to shift the blame onto Jews.[3] This is where my arguments step in.

Whereas I agree with Frank Uekotter and Michael Imort that the Nazis utilized the conservationist ideas for their own political and propaganda needs, I also acknowledge the anti-Semitic and problematic history of conservation in the nineteenth century while establishing distance between nineteenth-century German conservation to modern conservation and environmentalism. The nineteenth-century version of environmentalism was nationalistic and parochial in that it solely focused on the prosperity and protection of Germany, whereas environmentalism is a global pursuit.

As industrialization kicked into full gear in the nineteenth century, more and more of the German forest became depleted and the German people became more romantic and protective of their forest. By reviewing art, articles, poems and books we can see how the German forest became a symbol of purity and national character. Academically, Wilhelm Riehl promoted this idea in Chapter 1 of his book *The Natural History of the Folk as Basis of German Social Politics*.

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[2] Michael Imort, "Eternal Forest - Eternal Volk: The Rhetoric and Reality of National Socialist Forest Policy," in *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*(Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), 44-57.
[3] Ibid., 271.

He said, "We can still boast genuine forests, whereas England, for example, has practically no true open forest remaining --- no forest of any social significance. Many of the most striking differences between German and English national character are inevitably predetermined by this fact."[4] This statement by one of the leading ecologists and conservationists of the time clearly states the belief that the strength of the German forest somehow represents the strength of the German character. Again, this idea is presented in an 1806 poem by Friedrich Schlegel. It says, "You were the ancients' house/ and fortress./ Into this green canopy/ No enemy's name penetrated;//The world was still free then." Again, this poem romanticizes the old times when they were "free" and the ancients could use the forest for protection. In addition, it reinforces the nationalistic idea that Germany is free when their "enemy's name" or other ethnicities are not within the German forest.

Other writings on conservation and ecology reinforced the previously discussed trend of nationalism and specifically became anti-Semitic. Some of the leaders of anti-semitic, nationalistic ecological academia were Ernst Arndt, Wilhelm Riehl, and Ernst Haeckel. Arndt pushed for racial purity and hatred towards Jews, French, and Slavs. In addition, Wilhelm Riehl's *Field and Forest* continues these trends when he says, "We must save the forest not only so that our ovens do not become cold in winter, but also so that the pulse of life of the people continues to beat warm and joyfully, so that Germany remains German."[5] This quote at a base level is nationalistic because of how it focuses on Germany. However, at a closer look, it is also anti-Semitic. It is anti-Semitic because if the forests are not protected, they will then turn into

[4] Wilhelm Riehl, from Section 1 "Fields and Forests" in Chapter 1, "Land and People", in *The Natural History of the Folk as Basis of German Social Politics*, 1854, trans. Julia Ludewig.
[5] Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, *Feld and Wald*, (Stuttgart: 1857), in Peter Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and Its HIstorical Antecedents,* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1995), 16.

urban areas, which is where the Jewish population predominantly lived.[6] Therefore, when he says protecting the forests will keep Germany, German, he is also hinting that not protecting the forests will result in higher Jewish populations and places where non-German citizens can thrive.

This connection between ecology and the *volkisch* movement is significant because the *volkisch* movement is a very important and popular ideology that contained the same rhetoric of the Nazi party. This then begs the question: were the ecological and environmental movements of the nineteenth century part of the 'special path' or *Sonderweg* that caused the rise of the Nazi party? The answer is complex. The environmental movement definitely should be considered as part of the German specific events that led to the rise of national socialism. However, this movement is only a very small portion of a much larger issue. It is a part of the *Sonderweg* thesis because the ecologists supported a centralized state which interfered with Germany fulfilling "its historic mission of creating a liberal parliamentary form of government."[7] Furthermore, once democracy was formed in Germany it was too weak to satisfy the needs of environmentalists due to the weakness of the Weimar Republic. It would be naive to claim environmentalists were responsible for the rise of fascism and the fall of the Weimar; however, it definitely was a part of the path based on the rhetoric it promoted and the push against democracy.

Once democracy was demolished and the special path was fulfilled, environmentalists still pushed for policy. Strangely enough, the environmentalists grew to play a role in the Nazi's goals. Ultimately, because the environmentalists could benefit the Nazis and the Nazis could benefit the environmentalists, they created a relationship that worked hand in hand. However, as the Nazi's got what they needed from the environmentalists, the policies they implemented

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[6] John L. Heineman, Documents on the Jews and the Third Reich 1933-1938.
[7] Roderick Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies,* (London: Routledge, 1999), 24.

allowed them to follow the environmental guidelines loosely and ineffectively. Although in this relationship the Nazis definitely used the conservationists to gain power and support their ideas, after reviewing the conservationist history it is clear they were not one-hundred percent innocent either.

However, as I stated earlier German nineteenth-century environmentalism is far different from twenty-first-century environmentalism. Because of this difference, I rarely call the German version environmentalism. Instead, it is commonly called ecology or conservation because they were focused on preserving and saving their own surroundings, not the environment as a whole. In addition, it can be problematic to create this connection between the former German version of environmentalism and today's version.

In the first chapter, I addressed the recent history on environmentalism and the attacks against it that have been ongoing for decades. Starting in the 1960s with attacks against Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* to the most recent president, there has been no shortage of attacks against the environmental movement. Furthermore, in the media arena we live in today, false narratives on history are often presented in order to further a personal political stance. Examples of this come from pseudo historians like Dinesh D'Souza who make a living creating false narratives on twentieth-century party realignment in order to attack or support certain political viewpoints, or politicians using carefully selected sources in order to create support for their own party or policy. With environmentalism and Nazi Germany, it is very easy for someone to see that a form of environmentalism played a role in the rise of the Nazi Regime and turn it into an eco-fascist narrative or try to say that environmentalism paved the way for fascism. However, the correlation of the two movements does not mean one caused the other. As I referenced earlier,

Raymond Dominick states that physicians and Christians also signed onto the National Socialist party, but no one is claiming that medicine or worship is fascist.[8]

Anyway, it is clear that just like medicine has changed over nearly a hundred years, so has environmentalism. Nineteenth-century conservation and modern environmentalism differ in a couple of ways. First, environmentalism today lacks the racist and nationalist language of the nineteenth-century conservation movement. The conservation movement applied "back to land" and protection of land concepts to protection of certain people. It blamed specific races like Jews, Slavs, and French for the disruption of their natural land.[9] In environmentalism today, there is no trace of racial groups being scapegoated for the issues at hand. Second, nineteenth-century conservation was parochial in their practices, meaning they were focused on solely the German people and the German soil.[10] However, today environmentalism is focused on global change and global issues. Although there are conservation efforts that are country-specific, the entire purpose of the movement is not to protect one nation. Instead, it is to protect the earth as a whole. Due to these foundational differences, one cannot compare the environmental movements of today to the conservation movements of nineteenth-century Germany.

Although the two movements are different, there is one thing they have in common: pride. Today, there are many nations who take great pride in their land; and, in the environmental movement, people take great pride in the earth and protecting it. In nineteenth-century Germany, it was pride in their national forest that pushed them to fight for it. Unfortunately, they fought for

[8] Raymond H. Dominick III, *The Environmental Movement in Germany. Prophets and Pioneers 1871–1971* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 112.
[9] Staudenmaier, *Fascist Ecology,* 16.
[10] Ibid.

their land by othering the people who harmed it and by pairing up with one of the worst political parties in history. The conservationist's romanticization of the forest and demonization of industry, foreign influence, and modernity created a movement that was nationalistic, racist, but also ecological. However, the goodness of environmental protection was far outweighed by the racism and nationalism of the movement. Eventually, their tolerance for and protection of these ideologies helped them get involved in the Nazi party. Even though environmental protection policy was implemented under the Third Reich, it was ultimately used for propaganda and by wartime, the policies were hardly environmental at all. This manipulation of the conservation movement was ultimately a power grab by the Nazis, but it is impossible to render the German conservationists innocent based on their history of nationalism and racism.

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