# The Aryan Race Concept in Europe

## Excerpts from Groliers Encyclopedia
## 1. Early Aryan Writers

**Alfred Rosenberg**, ( born Jan. 12, 1893, d. Oct. 16, 1946)

As an ideologist of German Nazism. Russian-born, Alfred Rosenburg studied architecture before joining (1919) the National Socialist (Nazi) party in Munich. As editor of the party newspaper, Volkischer Beobachter, he developed anti-Christian and anti-Semitic theories. His book Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts (The Myth of the 20th Century, 1934), an exposition of German racial purity, provided a theoretical framework for the policies of Adolf Hitler. Minister for the occupied eastern territories during World War II, Rosenberg was hanged as a war criminal after he was found guilty at the Nuremberg Trials. English translations of his memoirs (1949) and selected writings (1970) have been published. Bibliography: Cecil, Robert, The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology (1972); Nova, Fritz, Alfred Rosenberg (1985); Taylor, Telford, The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials (1992).

**Chamberlain, Houston Stewart (b. Sept. 9, 1855, d. Jan. 9, 1927)**

The Anglo-German writer and thinker Houston Stewart Chamberlain is remembered for his advocacy of the superiority of the so-called Aryan peoples and his denigration of Jews. In his best-known work, Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (The Foundations of the 19th Century, 1891), he postulated that all history is a struggle between races, and that Germans are superior to others. He married Richard Wagner's daughter Eva in 1908 and became a naturalized German in 1916. Chamberlain also wrote works on music, religion, and philosophy. His racist ideas influenced Adolf Hitler and other leading Nazis. Bibliography: Barzun, Jacques, Race: A Study in Superstition, rev.ed. (1965).

**Gobineau, Joseph Ar thur, Comte de Joseph Arthur, comte de Gobineau** (b. July 14, 1816, d. Oct. 13, 1882)

A French novelist, historian, and anthropologist best known for his racial theories, which are said to have influenced such major figures as Richard Wagner, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Adolf Hitler. Prominent in French social circles, Gobineau first attracted attention among his contemporaries with his novels, of which the best known is Les Pleiades (1874). While serving as a diplomat in Europe, Iran, and South America he wrote *his Essai sur l'inegalite des races humaines* (*Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*, 1853-55), setting forth his theory of the supremacy of the white race and describing what he considered to be the characteristics inherent in other races. Gobineau wrote several scholarly works, including a two-volume history of Persia and a study of cuneiform. Bibliography: Biddiss, Michael D., Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau (1970); Rowbotham, Arnold H., The Literary World of Count Gobineau (1929; repr. 1973).

**Schacht, Hjalmar** (b. Jan. 22, 1877, d. June 4, 1970)

The German financier Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht, helped halt the dangerous inflation of 1922-23 under the Weimar Republic and later served in Hitler's government. Appointed special currency commissioner in 1923, Schacht introduced stringent monetary reforms and a stable currency. From 1923 to 1930 he was president of the Reichsbank, Germany's leading financial institution. After Hitler came to power in 1933, Schacht served in the National Socialist (Nazi) government as Reichsbank president (1933-39), minister of economics (1934-37), and minister without portfolio (until 1943). He curbed unemployment, largely through rearmament expenditures, but his rivalry with Hermann Goering led him to resign as economics minister. Schacht was dismissed from the Reichsbank presidency for opposing Hitler's massive rearmament program as inflationary. His growing disenchantment with Nazi foreign policy

and his alleged involvement in a plot to assassinate Hitler led to his internment (1944). Schacht was acquitted (1946) at the Nuremberg Trials and later continued his career in banking and finance. He wrote an autobiography, 76 Jahre meines Lebens (1953; trans. as Confessions of the Old Wizard, 1956)..

**Thomas Mann**,

The foremost German novelist of the 20th century, was born of a patrician family in the north German city of Lubeck on June 6, 1875. The setting of his youth was one of gradual decline, especially after the death, in 1891, of his father, a respected businessman and city senator. His mother, who was of Brazilian origin, then moved to Munich, where Mann worked briefly in an insurance agency; attended lectures at the University of Munich; and became a contributor to Simplicissimus, a satirical literary journal, which he subsequently edited. He then became a free-lance writer, living (1895-97) in Italy, where he worked in close proximity to his older brother and rival, Heinrich Mann. Mann's first collection of short stories, Little Herr Friedemann (1898; Eng. trans., 1972), won critical acclaim; his partially autobiographical first novel about the decline of a patrician family, Buddenbrooks (1901; Eng. trans., 1924), established his German fame and European reputation. Tristan (1903), a collection of novellas that includes "Tonio Kroger" (1903; Eng. trans. in Stories of Three Decades, 1936), portrays the artist as an onlooker, or exile from society.

Mann's marriage (1905) to Katja Pringsheim, daughter of a wealthy Jewish family of bankers and scholars, fulfilled his ambition to become father of a family (they were to have six children) and also secured his financial independence. Mann satirized his engagement in The Blood of the Walsungs (1906; Eng. trans., 1921) and celebrated his marriage, with gentle irony, as the union of a German prince and an American heiress in Royal Highness (1909; Eng. trans., 1916). Mann lived in or near Munich until 1933, taking up his country's cause during World War I and arguing passionately against his own doubts and the beliefs of his pacifist, democratic brother, Heinrich, in Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen

## History of Germany

The ancient Germans worshiped a variety of gods and goddesses, whom they viewed as powerful but not as omnipotent or eternal. Because these deities were thought to be capricious and vengeful, human and other sacrifices were made to propitiate them.

## The Aryan Concept

Aryan is a term formerly used to denote both a linguistic and an assumed racial category related to the language family now known as Indo-European. Early scholars, struck by similarities among ancient Indian languages such as Sanskrit and ancient European languages such as Latin and Greek, hypothesized the existence not only of a proto-Indo-European language but also of a proto-Indo-European racial group, the Aryans. This group, it was argued, had spread into South Asia and Europe from a Central Asian homeland in a series of migrations during the second millennium BC. Thus it was argued that, in contrast to the darker-skinned Dravidians of southern India, the northern Indians were, racially speaking, Aryans, sharing a common descent with the peoples of Western Europe. Today, such arguments about racial origins are usually seen as little more than speculation. The term Aryan is now used to designate the Indo-Iranian languages, or more narrowly, the Indo-Aryan (Indic) branch of that family. It was among the Aryan-speaking peoples of northern India during the 2d and 1st millennia BC that the religion of Hinduism and the institutions of caste first developed.

## Alchemy

Source: John Turkevich

Bibliography: De Rola, Stanislas K., Alchemy: The Secret Art (1974; repr. 1986); Eliade, Mircea, The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy, trans. by S. Corrin (1979); McKnight, Stephen, ed., Science, Pseudo-Science, and Utopianism in Early Modern Thought (1992); Patai, Raphael, The Jewish Alchemists (1994).

Alchemy is an ancient pseudoscience concerned with the transmutation of base metals, the more reactive metals, into gold (see transmutation of elements) and with the discovery of both a single cure for all diseases and a way to prolong life indefinitely. Alchemy emerged as a pseudoscience in China and in Egypt during the early centuries of this era. In China it was associated with Taoist philosophy and purported to transmute base metals into gold by use of a "medicine." The gold so produced was thought to have the ability to cure diseases and to prolong life. The mystical element was always strong in alchemy and became dominant with time so that alchemy in China degenerated into a complex of superstitions.

In Egypt, the methods of transmutation of metals were kept secret by temple priests. Those recipes became widely known (2d century) at the academy in Alexandria. Alchemy had its basis in the skills of Egyptian artisans, Eastern mysticism, and Aristotelian theory of composition of matter. Aristotle taught that all matter was composed of four elements: water, earth, fire, and air. According to his theory, different materials found in nature had different ratios of these four elements. Therefore, by proper treatment a base metal could be changed into gold. These ideas were further supported by astrological speculations from Mesopotamia.

Astrologers believed that celestial bodies--the Sun, the Moon, and the stars--had a profound influence on the activities of humans. Thus, for alchemists to transmute metals effectively, the heavenly bodies had to be in a favorable configuration. Astrological influence led to ascribing each metal to a heavenly body: for example, gold to the Sun, silver to the Moon, copper to Venus, and iron to Mars. Each metal was represented by the astrological sign of the appropriate celestial body.

As in China and later in Western Europe, the alchemical writing in Alexandria became allegorical and confusing. At the end of the 4th century, the destruction of the academy and its library scattered the alchemists from Alexandria to Byzantium, Syria, and countries of the Near East. There they were persecuted by governments and the church as practitioners of black magic. Their activity thus became limited to writing commentaries on the works of ancient alchemists.

## The Arab Influence

In the 5th century the Nestorians broke away from the official Orthodox church in Byzantium and immigrated to the Near East, where they taught Hellenistic philosophy and science (see Nestorianism). They translated Greek treatises, including those on alchemy, into their own language, the Syriac. In the 8th and 9th centuries, the Nestorians came into contact with Arabs, particularly those in the court of the Caliph of Baghdad. As a result, the Alexandrine alchemical manuscripts were translated from Syriac into Arabic.

The Arab alchemists modified the Aristotelian concept of four elements by postulating that all metals were composed of two immediate components: sulfur and mercury. They also adopted the Chinese alchemists' concept of a "philosopher's stone"--a medicine that could turn a "sick" (base) metal into gold and also act as an elixir of life.

A number of alchemical treatises were attributed to Jabir ibn Hayyan, or Geber (fl. 8th century), the most notable Arab alchemist and a member of the Ismaili sect whose present leader is Aga Khan. These manuscripts contained much unintelligible mysticism, but they were popular during the Middle Ages. Other famous Arab alchemists were al-Razi (886-925) and Avicenna (980 -1036), both important Persian physicians. Although their thinking was clouded with mysticism, Arabian alchemists discovered new chemicals such as the alkalies and such processes as distillation.

## Alchemy in the Medieval Period

With the fall of Rome, Greek science and philosophy declined in Western Europe. However, close contact with Arabs in Spain and Sicily in the 11th and 12th centuries brought to Europe a new interest in Arabic philosophers, physicians, and scientists. Indirectly through Syriac and Arabic, Greek manuscripts were translated into Latin and European languages. Alchemical explanation of the nature of matter was included in the treatises of such scholars as Arnold of Villanova (1240-1313), Roger Bacon (1214- 94), and Albertus Magnus (1193-1280).

The works of another Jabir, or Geber, a practicing Spanish alchemist of the 14th century, became the textbooks of alchemy. They contained not only mystical theory but also important practical recipes. Arnold of Villanova described distillation of wine; Roger Bacon gave a recipe for gunpowder and directions for constructing a telescope; Albertus Magnus defined a flame as ignited smoke and postulated that "like seeks like." The alchemist became a recognizable figure on the European scene, and kings and nobles often supported alchemists in the hope of increasing their resources. Frequently, however, alchemists who failed in their attempt to produce the promised gold lost their lives.

In time, alchemy fell into disrepute because of the nefarious character of its practitioners. It is said that Frederick of Wurzburg maintained special gallows for hanging alchemists. From the 15th to the 17th century, alchemical symbolism and allegory became increasingly complex. Practical alchemists turned from attempting to make gold toward preparing medicinals. A leader in this movement was Phillippus Aureolus Paracelsus (1493-1541). He was the first in Europe to mention zinc and to use the word alcohol to refer to the spirit of wine.

Classical scholarship in the 16th century shifted attention away from Aristotelian theory and toward Greek atomism. Interest in transmutation was limited to astrologers and numerologists. The chemical facts that had been accumulated by alchemists as a by-product of their search for gold became the basis for modern chemistry.