

# **The Role of German Philosophers in Violent Social Movements: the Innate Potential of German Philosophy for Violent Movements and War Crimes**

**Amirali R. Davoudpour**

**Iranian Canon of Medicine and Law, Administrative Wing of Law and Healing association,  
Iranian Watchdog of Medicine and Law, Tehran-Iran**

Email of the corresponding author: [davoudpour@canmedlaw.org](mailto:davoudpour@canmedlaw.org)

Accepted and published July, 2024

---

## **Abstract**

The convergence of historical events and philosophical doctrines has profoundly shaped the trajectory of numerous social movements. Notably, the role of German philosophers in the emergence of ultranationalist ideologies and movements has been substantial. This article explores the influence of German philosophical thought on the development of movements such as communism, Nazism, and Zionism, tracing their shared roots and divergent paths.

Karl Marx's critique of capitalism laid the groundwork for socialist and communist ideologies, advocating for proletarian revolution and a classless society. Friedrich Nietzsche's concepts of the Übermensch and the will to power provided ideological underpinnings for fascism, despite Nietzsche's own disavowal of such interpretations. Arthur de Gobineau's racial theories influenced Nazi ideology, reinforcing notions of Aryan superiority and justifying policies of racial hierarchy.

In the realm of Zionism, Theodor Herzl's vision of a Jewish homeland responded to pervasive anti-Semitism in Europe, culminating in the establishment of Israel. The Holocaust further galvanized the Zionist movement, emphasizing the need for Jewish self-determination and security.

This study also examines the ethical and philosophical implications of these ideologies, emphasizing the responsibility of philosophers to critically engage with their ideas and counter their potential misuse. The legacy of German philosophy in shaping these movements serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the dual-edged sword of intellectual influence in political and social contexts.

This research underscores the ongoing relevance of philosophical and ethical inquiry into the roots and consequences of ideological movements, offering insights into their contemporary manifestations and future potential for social change.

**Keywords:** German philosophy, ultranationalism, communism, Nazism, Zionism, ethical implications

---

## **Introduction**

The convergence of historical events and philosophical doctrines has profoundly shaped the trajectory of numerous social movements. Notably, the role of German philosophers in the emergence of ultranationalist ideologies and movements has been substantial. As we stated in an earlier research (Mikaeil et al., 2024) the innate nature and prevalence of social movements are not something to be explained solely by education or governments. German people are prone to substantial philosophical changes over time including their involvement in Marxism, Nazism and Socialism. Additionally, Zionism has been rooted in Germany and the impact of such tremendous changes in their philosophical system is tremendous. This article delves into the influence of German philosophical thought on the development of movements such as communism, Nazism, and Zionism, tracing their shared roots and divergent paths.

## **German Philosophers and the Emergence of Ultranationalism**

### **Karl Marx and Socialism**

Karl Marx, one of the most influential German philosophers, laid the foundation for socialist and communist ideologies through his critique of capitalism. In "The Communist Manifesto" (1848), co-authored with Friedrich Engels, Marx argued that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. He envisioned a proletarian revolution that would overthrow the bourgeoisie and establish a classless society. Marx's ideas inspired numerous socialist and communist movements worldwide, leading to both revolutionary successes and authoritarian regimes.

### **Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Anarchism**

Although French, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's influence on German thought cannot be overlooked. His writings on anarchism, particularly his assertion that "property is theft," resonated with German intellectuals and radicals. Proudhon's vision of a society without hierarchies and his

critique of state power influenced the development of revolutionary movements in Germany and beyond .

### **Friedrich Nietzsche and Fascism**

Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, particularly his concepts of the Übermensch (Overman) and the will to power, significantly impacted the ideological foundations of fascism. Nietzsche's critique of traditional moral values and his call for the creation of new values were co-opted by fascist thinkers to justify authoritarian and ultranationalist agendas . Although Nietzsche himself was not a proponent of fascism, his ideas were selectively interpreted and misused by the Nazis to support their ideology of racial superiority.

### **Arthur de Gobineau and Racial Theory**

Arthur de Gobineau, a French diplomat and writer, profoundly influenced Nazi racial policies through his work "An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races" (1853). Gobineau's pseudo-scientific theories on the superiority of the Aryan race provided a justification for the Nazis' racial hierarchy and their policies of extermination and eugenics . His ideas reinforced the belief in Aryan supremacy, which became a central tenet of Nazi ideology.

## **The Evolution of Zionism**

### **Theodor Herzl and the Birth of Zionism**

Zionism, initially a movement for the establishment of a Jewish state, was profoundly shaped by the vision of Theodor Herzl. In "Der Judenstaat" (1896), Herzl argued that the solution to the Jewish question in Europe was the establishment of a Jewish homeland. Herzl's vision was rooted in the idea of Jewish self-determination and was a response to the pervasive anti-Semitism in Europe .

### **The Impact of the Holocaust**

The Holocaust had a transformative impact on Zionism, intensifying the urgency and global support for a Jewish state. The systematic extermination of six million Jews by the Nazis galvanized the Zionist movement, which now sought not only a homeland but also security and

sovereignty. The Holocaust underscored the existential threats faced by Jews, leading to a more assertive and militarized Zionist stance .

### **Zionism and Capitalism**

The post-Holocaust period saw Zionism increasingly influenced by the dynamics of capitalism. The influx of Jewish immigrants to Palestine and later Israel was accompanied by economic development and modernization efforts. This shift mirrored the broader transformations seen in other movements influenced by German philosophy.

For instance, Marxist socialism diverged into various forms, including the authoritarian communism seen in the Soviet Union and the more democratic socialism practiced in Western Europe .

## **Ideology and Religion: A Comparative Analysis**

### **Zionism vs. Judaism**

The distinction between Zionism and Judaism can be compared to the difference between Salafi thought and mystical or social Islam. Both Zionism and Salafism transform religious beliefs into political ideologies, often leading to the marginalization of dissenting views. Zionism equates opposition to its policies with anti-Semitism, much like how dissent against Nazism was conflated with anti-German sentiment or opposition to Christianity .

### **The Instrumentalization of the Holocaust**

The instrumentalization of the Holocaust by some Zionist factions to justify policies in the Middle East exemplifies the transformation of tragedy into ideology. The tragic legacy of the Holocaust is invoked not as a call for universal human rights but as a justification for specific political actions. This trend is not unique to Zionism; throughout history, movements that blend ideology and religion have often led to exclusionary and oppressive practices .

### **Comparative Examples: Salafi Islam**

Salafi Islam, which seeks to return to what its adherents perceive as the pure practices of early Islam, often marginalizes other interpretations of the faith, similar to how Zionism marginalizes

non-Zionist Jews. Both movements use their foundational texts and historical experiences to justify contemporary political agendas. The rise of Salafi jihadism, which employs violence to achieve its goals, parallels the militaristic strategies employed by some Zionist factions .

## **The Ethical and Philosophical Implications**

### **The Role of Philosophy in Social Movements**

The examination of German-made philosophies and their influence on social movements necessitates ongoing philosophical and ethical research. Understanding the historical and ideological roots of these movements can provide valuable insights into their contemporary manifestations and the potential for future social change. The ethical implications of using philosophy to justify violence and exclusion highlight the need for a critical reassessment of these doctrines .

### **The Responsibility of Philosophers**

Philosophers bear a responsibility to consider the practical implications of their ideas. The co-optation of Nietzsche's and Gobineau's ideas by the Nazis underscores the potential for philosophical doctrines to be misused. This calls for philosophers to engage in a continuous dialogue about the ethical dimensions of their work and to actively counter misinterpretations and abuses of their ideas .

### **The Legacy of German Philosophy**

The legacy of German philosophy in shaping ultranationalist movements serves as a cautionary tale. While the intellectual contributions of philosophers like Marx, Nietzsche, and Gobineau are significant, their ideas have also been manipulated to justify oppressive regimes and ideologies. This dual legacy highlights the importance of critical engagement with philosophical texts and the need for vigilance against their misuse .

## **Conclusion**

The impact of German philosophical thought on the emergence of ultranationalist movements such as communism, Nazism, and Zionism is undeniable. The evolution of these movements, driven by philosophical doctrines and historical experiences, highlights the complex interplay between ideology and practice. The transformation of Zionism from a cultural and religious movement into a political ideology exemplifies this dynamic. In 2024 the undeniable crimes against ethnic Palestinians and the indirect loss of more than 186,000 individuals (Khatib et al, 2024)\, among them majority kids, awakens our conscience regarding the role of Philosophy and Ideology without flourishing a conscience, and better say, transcendental conscience (Davoudpour, 2021).

In conclusion, the examination of German-made philosophies and their influence on social movements necessitates ongoing philosophical and ethical research. Understanding the historical and ideological roots of these movements can provide valuable insights into their contemporary manifestations and the potential for future social change.

The ethical implications of using philosophy to justify violence and exclusion highlight the need for a critical reassessment of these doctrines.

## References

1. Mikaeil, A., Zandi, B., & Davoudpour, A. R. (2024). The Innate Nature of Governance: Historical Perspectives and Cultural Implications. *Journal of Iranian International Legal Studies*.
2. Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1848). *The Communist Manifesto*.
3. Proudhon, P.-J. (1840). *What is Property?*
4. Nietzsche, F. (1883). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.
5. Gobineau, A. (1853). *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*.
6. Herzl, T. (1896). *Der Judenstaat*.
7. Bauer, Y. (2001). *A History of the Holocaust*. Franklin Watts.
8. Avineri, S. (1981). *The Making of Modern Zionism: Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*. Basic Books.
9. Hobsbawm, E. (1995). *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991*. Michael Joseph.
10. Laqueur, W. (2003). *A History of Zionism: From the French Revolution to the Establishment of the State of Israel*. Schocken Books.
11. Roy, O. (2004). *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. Columbia University Press.

12. Habermas, J. (1981). *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Beacon Press.
13. Adorno, T., & Horkheimer, M. (1944). *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Social Studies Association.
14. Dawidowicz, L. (1975). *The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945*. Bantam.
15. Davoudpour, A.R. (2023). *The Significance of Transcendental Perspectives on Major Issues (Historical Guidance)*, Azadi News, <https://english.azadineews.net/2023/12/23/the-significance-of-transcendental-perspectives-on-major-issues-historical-guidance/>
16. Khatib, R., McKee, M., & Yusuf, S. (2024). Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential. *The Lancet*, Online First. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(24\)01169-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(24)01169-3)