



# The Roots of Nazi Psychology: Hitler's Utopian Barbarism

*Jay Y. Gonen*

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" Was Hitler a moral aberration or a man of his people? This topic has been hotly argued in recent years, and now Jay Gonen brings new answers to the debate using a psychohistorical perspective, contending that Hitler reflected the psyche of many Germans of his time. Like any charismatic leader, Hitler was an expert scanner of the Zeitgeist. He possessed an uncanny ability to read the masses correctly and guide them with ""new"" ideas that were merely reflections of what the people already believed. Gonen argues that Hitler's notions grew from the general fabric of German culture in the years following World War I. Basing his work in the role of ideologies in group psychology, Gonen exposes the psychological underpinnings of Nazi Germany's desire to expand its living space and exterminate Jews. Hitler responded to the nation's group fantasy of renewing a Holy Roman Empire of the German nation. He presented the utopian ideal of one large state, where the nation represented one extended family. In reality, however, he desired the triumph of automatism and totalitarian practices that would preempt family autonomy and private action. Such a regimented state would become a war machine, designed to breed infantile soldiers brainwashed for sacrifice. To achieve that aim, he unleashed barbaric forces whose utopian features were the very aspects of the state that made it most cruel.

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