Human Dignity

Adolf Hitler, Thomas Mann, and Munich

By

A. Reis Monteiro

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Afonso, Manuel

and their much beloved moms

Maria Lucília and Berta

About the book

This is an interdisciplinary study on the extreme vilification of human dignity by Nazism. It is focused on the two greatest protagonists of the sides that were confronted in those years of the most tragic uncertainty about the fate of the human species: Adolf Hitler, the 'genius' of Nazi ideology, and Thomas Mann, his most prominent opponent in exile, spokesman for the values of Humanism and Civilisation that blew pulverised from the chimneys of concentration camps.

How was Nazism possible? How do we can prevent its avatars?

This book presents that Nazism and the wickedness of its ghastly crimes against human dignity have anthropological roots, able to reproduce at any time and any place, and that the most powerful resource against its reproduction and for the flourishment of the human dignity is the human right to education, as a phenomenon of rebirth to a second nature. Education is the greatest power and the greatest responsibility of the human species, because human beings are their names, their faces, their bodies and everything education and life can generate inside themselves.

About the author

A. Reis Monteiro has a PhD from the University of Lisbon and from the University of Paris 8 in the field of International Education Law. Retired from the University of Lisbon, he is an independent researcher and lecturer in post-graduate courses in Portugal and abroad, including Mexico and the European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation at the Human Rights Centre of the Faculty of Law of the University of Coimbra. He has published numerous books and other writings in Portuguese, Spanish, French and English, in the fields of human rights, rights of the child, right to education, history of education, theory of education, and the teaching profession. The books include: *Revolution of the Right to Education* (Brill | Sense, 2021), *Uma Teoria da Educação* (A Theory of Education, Lisboa, Edições Piaget, 2017), *The Teaching Profession – Present and Future* (Springer International Publishing, 2015), *Ethics of Human Rights* (Springer International Publishing, 2014), *La Revolución de los Derechos del Niño* (The Revolution of the Rights of the Child, Madrid, Editorial Popular, 2008), *História da Educação – do antigo 'direito de educação' ao novo 'direito à educação'* (History of Education – from the ancient 'right of education' to the new 'right to education', Brazil, Cortez Editora, 2006).

Ich glaube an die neue Zeit, die Zeit der Menschenwürdigkeit.

I believe in the new era, the era of the human dignity.

Verses from a popular German song used by Nazi propaganda on posters addressing youth.

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FOREWORD

I was a young, unpolitical student, exited from a catholic college and a political dictatorship, when I arrived in Munich – *Die Welt Stadt mit Herzen* (The World City with Heart) – on the morning of 24 August 1968, by train, coming from Paris.

On the afternoon of that same day, I participated in a demonstration against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Months later, I marched, in Nuremberg, against the American war in Vietnam. I would visit Prague, East Berlin and attended a session of the *Bundesrat* (Parliament) at the invitation of a Social Democrat Deputy. Among other studies, I enrolled in Political Sciences.

At the *Sprachen- und Dolmetscher Institut* (Languages and Translators Institute), I met young people from dozens of countries, including Sílvia, daughter of a Brazilian mother and a German father, who would become Queen of Sweden. At the *Ausländer Freundschaft Kreis* (AFK: Circle of Foreigners' Friendship), we celebrated, every week, the multiculturality of the world and drank the liquors of our loves. *El Argentino* lent me a copy of *El Diario del Che en Bolivia* (Journal of Che in Bolivia). I bought *Le droit d'être un homme* (The Right to Be a Man), a UNESCO publication to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I traveled to Dachau, on my old bicycle, to visit the first German concentration camp, about 15km from Munich, built in 1933 (later I would visit Mauthausen). But I still did not know that Nazism was born in Munich, where Adolf Hitler moved when he left Vienna, in 1913, and where he owned an apartment since 1929 until 1945. His country house – Berghof – was in Obersalzberg (Berchtesgaden), about 160km south of the Bavarian capital, where the second part of *Mein Kampf* was written in 1926 (the first part had been written the previous year in the Landsberg prison). I did not know either that the *Sprachen- und Dolmetscher Institut* had been founded in 1952 by the former personal translator of Adolf Hitler, Paul Otto Schmidt (1899-1970).

As Thomas Mann wrote, in June 1923, on the New Yorker magazine *The Dial*: "Munich is the city of Hitler, the leader of the German 'fascisti', the city of the *'Hakenkreuz'*" (swastika) (as cit. in Heißerer, 2018, p. 23). Heinrich L. Himmler is born in Munich, and Hermann W. Göring is born in Rosenheim (also in Bavaria). A Nazi-Slogan proclaimed: *Der Nationalsozialismus ist ein Münchner Kindl!* (National Socialism is a Munich child!). "Gauleiter Adolf Wagner

claimed without further ado: 'National Socialism and Munich have become eternally inseparable terms!'" (Rösch, 2002, p. 13)

Hitler's rise as leader of the Nazi movement was driven by his numerous and repetitive speeches in many of Munich's breweries, some gone, others still existing, such as: Hofbräuhaus, Bürgerbräukeller, Hofbräukeller, Löwenbräukeller, Sterneckerbräu, Eberlbraukeller, Münchener Kindl-Keller, etc. In early July 1921, Hitler decreed that the "headquarters of the movement is and will always be Munich". The title of 'capital of the movement' was officially awarded in August 1935.[1] Königsplatz, the heart of the Nazi Party headquarters, was the 'Forum of the Movement' and one of the cult sites in Nazi mythology (together with Nuremberg). The Party offices in the Maxvorstadt reached 68 buildings, notably the 'Führer Building' and the 'Braun House', with about 6,000 employees. They were the administrative machine controlling an organisational network covering the entire Germany.

During the first decades after the Nazism defeat, Munich's place in its history remained almost invisible. Only in the 1980s did citizen initiatives succeed in assuming Munich's historical responsibility and in putting in motion a public culture of remembrance. The central memorial site of the Nazi era is now the *Platz der Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Square for the Victims of National Socialism), located between the Odeonsplatz and the Königsplatz, opposite to the former Wittelsbacher Palais that was Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei:* Secret State Police) headquarters and a torture centre. The decision to establish the memorial site dates back to 1946, but its construction was met with resistance. In April 2012, renovation measures were approved, and the new Square was opened to the public on 27 January 2014. One 18.5m wide and 1.30m high wall reads:

In memory of the victims of the National Socialist tyranny
Persecuted for political reasons
Persecuted for racist reasons
Persecuted for religious reasons
Persecuted because of their sexual identity
Persecuted because of their disability[2]

[1] http://www.thirdreichruins.com/munich.htm

[2] *Im Gedenken an die Opfer des Nationalsozialistische Gewaltherrschaft*
Verfolgt aus politischen gründen
Verfolgt aus rassistischen gründen
Verfolgt aus religiösen gründen
Verfolgt wegen ihrer sexuellen Identität
Verfolgt wegen ihrer Behinderung

Within a granite column designed by Andreas Sobeck, in 1985, a flame burns day and night, symbolising that our Humanity is able to resist oppression and survive even in the darkest of times.

Following citizens' and other initiatives during the 1990s, the city, in 2000, decided to build a Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism on the premises of the former 'Brown House', near Königsplatz. However, it opened only in 2015. As reads the Preface of the *Brief Guide to the Exhibit* (Munich Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism, 2015):

> On April 30, 1945, American troops occupied the city hall of Munich and freed the city from the Nazi regime. Exactly 70 years later, the Documentation Centre was opened. Late, but not too late.

The Introduction reads:

> The repression of the National Socialist past proceeded in Munich in the first two decades after the war much as it did in the rest of West Germany.
>
> Only when a generational shift occurred in the 1970s and 1980s did broad sections of the population gradually begin to develop a consciousness of guilt and responsibility. […] Yet the former 'Capital of the Movement' had a very special reason and a particular obligation to face up to its past. […] It was from Munich that the Dachau Concentration Camp was organised – the epitome of the Nazi system of terror and its 'school of violence'. […] And it was in Munich's City Hall on November 9, 1938, that the call for a pogrom against the Jews arose – thus launching the Holocaust.
>
> …
>
> The guiding maxim of the Documentation Centre is a quotation by Primo Levi: "It happened, and thus it can happen again."

Another place of remembrance is the square in front of the main building of the *Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München* (University of Munich), called Place of Scholl Siblings (see below), where there is a simple and original memorial on the floor. Another one is in the University atrium, close to a small exhibition salon.

When, in more recent years, I began to study human rights, I learned that the authors of the draft Universal Declaration, with their cultural, religious, ideological heterogeneity, had failed to reach a consensus on the concept of human dignity – the source of human rights – but had a common sentiment: human dignity is what concentration camps and gas chambers trampled on in an appalling scale, so that Charles Foster (2011) rightly concluded that "it was the Holocaust that secured dignity's place in the pantheon of ethical principles" (p. 40).

In 1949, the German Constitution *(Grundgesetzt)*[3] has famously and with far-reaching irradiance proclaimed: *Die Menschenwürde ist unantastbar* (Human dignity is inviolable).

Much later, I also knew that Thomas Mann, born in northern Germany (Lübeck), had lived in Munich from 1894 until 1933, when he had to exile, and his house was confiscated by Nazis. His library is safeguarded in the Monacensia (a Latin term meaning: *Münchnerisches*, from Munich), at Hildbrandhaus.[4] Munich and Bavaria were the scenario for Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, an allegory of Nazi Germany, where we find references to Maximiliansplatz, Schwabing, Brienner Strasse, Türkenstrasse, Nymphenburg, Prinzregentenstrasse, Rambergstrasse, Fürstenstrasse, Hohenzollernstrasse, Martiusstrasse, Widenmayerstrasse, Hotel Bayerischer Hof, Schauspielhaus, Berchtesgaden, Garmish-Partenkirken, Waldshut, Mittenwald, Oberammergau, Starnberg, Tegernsee, Neuschwanstein, etc.

As a refugee in the US, Mann was a unique German voice, during the war, against Nazism. "The bibliography lists over three hundred non-literary contributions from 1937 to 1945. No German author in exile displayed anywhere near such an extensive journalistic activity." (Kurzke, 1999, p. 417) Thomas Mann had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929, and his radio addresses to German listeners broadcast by the BBC between October 1940 and the end of 1945, in particular, made him a personal target of Hitler and Goebbels. Mann's face and words are significantly present in the NS Documentation Centre but there is not yet a Thomas Mann Museum in Munich.

Jorge Semprún (1994) thought that "to ask the right questions, perhaps it was already necessary to know the answers" (p. 129). André Malraux sought "the crucial region of the soul where absolute Evil opposes fraternity" (p. 63),

[3] www.bundestag.de/grundgesetz

[4] https://thomasmanninternational.com/en/muenchen

the Kantian *radicale Böse* (radical badness of human nature). Attempting to get some occasional insight on the mystery of Nazism – taking as main references its main actor (Hitler) and his most famous opponent (Mann) – to penetrate the abyss of its horrors, I have returned to Munich (and Dachau and Berchtesgaden and Nuremberg) for a month, to revisit streets, squares, places, buildings, landscapes, where Hitler sowed the deadly Nazi grains, Thomas Mann lived and wrote for about forty years, and I was reborn for the sentiments, values, ideals, dreams, of a new path of life.

Munich did not deserve Hitler, Hitler did not deserve Munich – harmonious, elegant, sometimes almost secret, opening doors to the Alps' heights and snows, and open to the world's vastness and diversity.

This is the emotional and intellectual motivation of this essay that develops as follows:

- The Introduction presents the idea inspiring this manuscript – Human Dignity – and briefly submits a conception of it as the core ethical value of International Human Rights Law.

- It follows a sketch of Adolf Hitler's biography, a summary of the ideology laid down in his *Mein Kampf* and examples of the Nazism extreme contempt of human dignity.

- A sketch of Thomas Mann's biography is provided, as well as a short summary of his *Deutsche Hörer!* broadcasts against Nazism from his American exile, and an outlook of his humanist ideology.

- Thereafter, the Nazi phenomenon is examined under three angles: its main factors, how it was addressed in Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus*, and its German and anthropological roots.

- The Conclusion argues that the most profound source of Nazism barbaric uniqueness lies in Hitler's personality, as it resulted from his familial history, and highlights the human perfectibility or educability.

The Appendix compares Stalin and Hitler, Stalinism and Nazism, indicating similarities and differences.

I'm grateful to Emily Griffith, Master in Law and research assistant at Deakin University Law School, Australia, who carefully checked the linguistic accuracy of this essay.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS HUMAN DIGNITY?

The idea of 'human dignity' stems from various cultural, religious, and philosophical roots. The term has a Latin etymology *(dignitas)* and was used during centuries as an attribute of a few, before becoming a hallmark of every human being. The movement of its democratisation culminated in Immanuel Kant – the Philosopher of Human Dignity – according to whom a human being should never be treated merely as a means, but always also as "an end in itself", because of the aptitude for autonomy. The unequal Roman *dignitas* evolved from a differentiating social status into an equalising ethical quality, as a 'circle in expansion', but preserving and spreading the ideas of value and respect. It was this meaning that has been legally consecrated in the second half of the 20th century.

Human Dignity lies at the heart of Human Rights Philosophy, is the spinal column of International Human Rights Law, the supreme moral value of a New Constitutionalism, the axiological core of the Rule of Law, the embryo of a Law of Humanity. It has become a flag of all causes and struggles against oppression and injustice, a powerful device for the international and national courts to protect and develop human rights, a leitmotif of the political rhetoric. The Human Dignity Principle may be considered as the masterpiece of Civilisation. It is the highest lighthouse in the ocean of the human species' indefinite destiny.

Nevertheless, International Human Rights Law does not provide a definition of 'human dignity' (any more than that of 'human rights').

During the *travaux préparatoires* (drafting history) of the Universal Declaration, the question as to the source of the human worth and dignity justifying the entitlement to human rights gave rise to one of the hottest debates within the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee, in the autumn of 1948, revolving around the following alternative: a Creator or Nature? These two words were eventually avoided and the sole indication regarding the foundation of human dignity and rights is laid down in Article 1: the human beings "are endowed with reason and conscience". However, no agreement was reached, at the time, on "the origin of man's reason and conscience" (Hernan Santa Cruz, A/C.3/SR.99).[5]

[5] http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/SR.99

What are the unique attributes of human beings?

This author has argued elsewhere (Monteiro, 2014, 2021) a conception of human dignity that is being summarised.

• *Human dignity is the principle and the sense of human rights*

The question as to whether human dignity should be qualified as a principle or a right has already sparked a debate in the course of the drafting history of the 1948 Universal Declaration.

Human dignity is better understood and protected as a principle of foundation, interpretation, and expansion of human rights. It is in a circular relation with human rights: respecting human rights is to respect human dignity that is the source of human rights. Human rights are the answer to the following question: What do human beings need to live a dignified life, free "from fear and want" (Universal Declaration, Preamble), that is, with the minimum of suffering and deprivations, and the maximum of liberty and well-being?

• *Human dignity hallmarks the belonging to the human species*

Human life is the biological ground of "the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family", as reads the first preambular paragraph of the Universal Declaration. Consequently, each and every member of the human species is endowed with human dignity, whatever their age, gender, handicaps, merits or crimes, including unborn life, parts of the human body and deceased persons.

• *Human dignity is an ethical invention with genetic foundation*

An account of the foundation of human dignity should be a matter of answering the following central questions: What is the substance of human worth? What are the attributes or faculties distinguishing the human species from other species? What does it mean to be human? In short: What is Man?

It can be argued that human dignity has a double nature: it is an intersubjective ethical value with an objective genetic foundation.

The genetical underpinnings of the unique worth underlying human dignity are better known, at present, thanks to the findings of the neuroscientific revolution ongoing since the 1990s – the 'brain decade'. Yet, it is not enough to be genetically human to be treated and to behave humanely. Human dignity must be recognised intersubjectively, ethically. Here is then "the dual

nature of human dignity as, on the one hand, objective human property and, on the other hand, an ethical value" (Pfordten, 2016, p. 65). It is clearly stated in the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (UNESCO, 1997)[6] that begins by stating (Article 1): "The *human genome* underlies the fundamental unity of all members of the *human family*, as well as the recognition of their inherent *dignity* and *diversity*" (italics added).

• *Human dignity consists in perfectibility calling for perfecting*

Perfectibility is the most distinguishing attribute of the human species. Human dignity begins to universalise when it becomes equated with democratic perfectibility, and no longer with aristocratic superiority.

In light of the progress of the neurosciences, we are discovering the genetic roots of the human perfectibility, we are learning why the members of the human species are not born fully human. Besides recognition, they need perfecting, i.e., the cultivation of the seeds of their highest aptitudes.

The human dignity, scientifically understood, does not consist, therefore, in an inborn 'soul' or ready-to-wear 'reason', but in the species' indefinite genetic perfectibility and historical perfecting through education.

• *Human dignity is inviolable and indisposable*

Human dignity is inviolable in a descriptive and prescriptive sense:

- In a descriptive sense, human dignity is inviolable to the extent that its genetic foundation is unexpropriatable, i.e., it cannot be taken away.

- In a prescriptive sense, human dignity is inviolable as a command, i.e. it should not be violated, as famously stated the German Constitution.

Human dignity is indisposable as both dignity of the human species and of each of its members. This means that:

- Nobody may renounce it, for example by selling himself or herself as a slave. And, if someone is involuntarily enslaved, he or she retains his or her human dignity.

- Human dignity must prevail, in case of conflict, over individual autonomy. There are not human rights against human dignity.

[6] http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13177&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

• *Human dignity is vulnerable and variable*

Human dignity is vulnerable because, although it is absolute and can never be lost, it may be endangered in its objective genetic foundation or hindered as an intersubjective ethical value, by action or omission.

Human dignity is variable, in its incarnations and expressions, because of the varying conditions and levels of the perfecting of human beings. In addition, it may be socially increased by virtues and accomplishments or decreased by undignified behaviour.

Summing up, human dignity is composed of three layers, as it were:

- *Objective layer,* formed by the 'first human nature'. It can be *known*.

- *Intersubjective layer,* concerned by the 'second human nature'. It must be *recognised*.

- *Subjective layer,* depending on each one's behaviours. It should be *deserved*.

All in all: Human Dignity is a *natural attribute*, a *moral status*, and a *personal responsibility*. It is not at all a racial privilege, as it was for the Nazi ideology, legitimising the *Vernichtung* (annihilation) of the *undignified*. "All men are Man" (Victor Hugo: *Tous les hommes sont l'Homme*)[7].

[7] https://www.bonjourpoesie.fr/lesgrandsclassiques/Poemes/victor_hugo/tous_les_hommes_sont_lhomme

PART 1
ADOLF HITLER

1 Hitler's essential bio-chronology[8]

1.1 1889-1903: Childhood

On 20 April 1889, Adolf Hitler was born in Braunau am Inn, Empire of Austria-Hungary. His father, Alois Schickelgrube (1837-1903), was born out of wedlock to Maria Anna Schickelgruber. In 1876, Alois changed his name 'Schickelgruber' to Hitler, the Christian name of the man who married his mother and legitimised him five years after his birth.

Adolf's mother Klara Pölzl was his father's third wife. She was half his age and had left her family's farm in 1876 to join Alois Hitler as a maid, aged sixteen. As Alois and Klara were second cousins, their marriage needed the dispensation of the Church that arrived from Rome in late 1884. They married on 7 January 1885. Adolf was Klara's fourth child, the first to survive infancy. There was a half-brother and a half sister from Alois' second marriage, and an illegitimate half-brother.

Alois was a well-respected customs official, but a bad tempered, authoritarian, violent man to Adolf and Klara, who used to call him 'Uncle'. "And even after his death, she kept a rack of his pipes in the kitchen and would point to them on occasion when he was referred to, as if to invoke his authority" (Kershaw, 2009, p. 5).

The Hitlers moved house more than ten times. Their final move took place in November 1898, when Alois bought a house with a small plot of attached land in Leonding, a village on the outskirts of Linz. Adolf looked upon Linz as his hometown, down to his days in the Berlin bunker (1945).

After having been a pupil in the Benedictine monastery of Lambach and attending primary school for five years, Adolf entered the Linz *Realschule* (professional gymnasium), on 17 September 1900, where he was classmate of Ludwig Wittgenstein. A History teacher impressed him forever.

> This teacher was Dr. Leopold Poetsch […]. Even today I cannot recall without emotion that venerable personality whose enthusiastic

[8] This section – and this essay in general – stands largely on the shoulders of others, especially Ian Kershaw (2009).

> exposition of history so often made us entirely forget the present and allow ourselves to be transported as if by magic into the past. He penetrated through the dim mist of thousands of years and transformed the historical memory of the dead past into a living reality. When we listened to him, we became afire with enthusiasm and we were sometimes moved even to tears.
>
> … He understood better than any other the everyday problems that were then agitating our minds. […] It was because I had such a professor that history became my favourite subject. (Hitler, 1939, pp. 24, 25)

Nevertheless, his good record in primary school became poor, perhaps in opposition to his father. In effect, Alois wanted a civil service career for him, but Adolf adamantly refused: "I wanted to become a painter and no power in the world could force me to become a civil servant." (p. 26) Father's reaction: "Artist! Not as long as I live, never." Then: "I went a step further and declared that I would not study anything else." (p. 21)

On 3 January 1903, Alois died suddenly, over his usual morning glass of wine in the Gasthaus Wiesinger.

> The historical record of Adolf's early years is very sparse. His own account in *Mein Kampf* is inaccurate in detail and coloured in interpretation. Post-war recollections of family and acquaintances have to be treated with care, and are at times as dubious as the attempts during the Third Reich itself to glorify the childhood of the future Führer. For the formative period so important to psychologists and 'psycho-historians', the fact has to be faced that there is little to go on which is not retrospective guesswork. (Kershaw, 2009, p. 3)

1.2 1903-1908: Linz years

In June 1905, Hitler family – Klara, Adolf, his little sister Paula and Aunt Johanna – moved to a comfortable flat in Linz (Humboldtstraße). Klara bought a piano for Adolf to have lessons (between October 1906 and January 1907). Adolf's school performance continued to be poor. "In autumn 1905, at the age of sixteen, he used illness – feigned, or most likely genuine but exaggerated – to persuade his mother that he was not fit to continue school and gladly put his schooling behind him for good with no clear future career path mapped out".

> He spent his time during the days drawing, painting, reading, or writing 'poetry'; the evenings were for going to the theatre or opera; and the whole time he daydreamed and fantasized about his future as a great artist. He stayed up late into the night and slept long into the mornings. He had no clear aim in view. The indolent lifestyle, the grandiosity of fantasy, the lack of discipline for systematic work – all features of the later Hitler – can be seen in these two years in Linz. It was little wonder that Hitler came to refer to this period as 'the happiest days which seemed to me almost like a beautiful dream'. (pp. 10, 11)

A privileged witness of Adolf's life between 1905 and 1907 was August Kubizek ('Gustl'), a friend during that time. August was some nine months older and the son of a Linz upholsterer who dreamed about becoming musician. They shared a passion for opera (where they had met in Autumn 1905), especially for Wagner.

In the Summer of 1907, Adolf travelled to the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to apply for the Vienna Academy of Arts, but his application was rejected. He also failed to get into the Vienna School of Architecture. On 21 December, Klara died of breast cancer, aged forty-seven. "I had honoured my father, but loved my mother", wrote Hitler (1939, p. 27). He painted her last portrait on her deathbed.

Adolf's two failed attempts to enter the Vienna Academies and his mother's death occurred within the space of four months.

1.3 1908-1913: Vienna years

In February 1908, Adolf returned to Vienna, leaving Linz behind. He persuaded Kubizek's parents to let 'Gustl' to join him in order to study music.

> With my clothes and linen packed in a valise and with an indomitable resolution in my heart, I left for Vienna. I hoped to forestall fate, as my father had done fifty years before. I was determined to become 'something' – but certainly not a civil servant. (p. 27)

It "was an extraordinary place. More than any other European metropolis, Vienna epitomized tensions – social, cultural, political – that signalled the turn of an era, the death of the nineteenth-century world".

> Apart from architecture, Hitler's main passion, as it had been in Linz, was music. […] Adolf's passion for Wagner, as in Linz, knew no bounds. Now he and his friend were able to see all Wagner's operas performed at one of the best opera houses in Europe. In the short time they were together, Kubizek reckoned they saw *Lohengrin* ten times.
>
> …
>
> 'When I hear Wagner,' Hitler himself much later recounted, 'it seems to me that I hear rhythms of a bygone world.' It was a world of Germanic myth, of great drama and wondrous spectacle, of gods and heroes, of titanic struggle and redemption, of victory and of death. It was a world where the heroes were outsiders who challenged the old order, like Rienzi, Tannhäuser, Stolzing, and Siegfried; or chaste saviours like Lohengrin and Parsifal. Betrayal, sacrifice, redemption, and heroic death were Wagnerian themes which would also preoccupy Hitler down to the *Götterdämmerung* of his regime in 1945. […] Hitler, the nonentity, the mediocrity, the failure, wanted to live like a Wagnerian hero. He wanted to become himself a new Wagner – the philosopher-king, the genius, the supreme artist. In Hitler's mounting identity crisis following his rejection at the Academy of Arts, Wagner was for Hitler the artistic giant he had dreamed of becoming but knew he could never emulate, the incarnation of the triumph of aesthetics and the supremacy of art. (Kershaw, 2009, pp. 20, 21)

The move from Linz to Vienna "marked a crucial transition" (p. 17). His political formation began by reading political newspapers, attending meetings and discussing with his fellows. He criticised the Habsburg Empire, the Social Democratic Party and the Reichsrat, which he visited frequently. "The tirades of hate directed at everything and everybody were those of an outsized ego desperately wanting acceptance and unable to come to terms with his personal insignificance, with failure and mediocrity" (p. 20). He was influenced, in particular, by Georg Ritter von Schönerer, an Upper Austrian Pan-German politician, racist and nationalist, the founder of the German Radical Party, and by Karl Lüger, the antisemitic Mayor of Vienna from 1897 to his death in 1910. It seems that Schönerer was a major influence in Adolf's austere lifestyle: celibacy, abstinence of alcohol, dietary habits. Music (especially Wagner) and architecture (notably the Vienna architect Gottfried Semper) were also subjects of his conversation with his comrades. He would have seen seventeen times a play titled *The King*, the story of a man who takes the side of the people against the elites, fails and commits suicide.

Once his savings vanished, Adolf struggled to survive in Vienna. After months of sleeping in the open or in successive lodges, he was welcomed in a hostel for homeless people (Men's Home), from 1910 to 1913. "The twenty-year-old would-be artistic genius had joined the tramps, winos, and down-and-outs in society's basement" (p. 30). His talent for drawing allowed him to sell postcards of touristic sights, helped by a certain Hanisch, alongside varied temporary jobs.

> For many people the name of Vienna signifies innocent jollity, a festive place for happy mortals. For me, alas, it is a living memory of the saddest period in my life. Even today the mention of that city arouses only gloomy thoughts in my mind. Five years of poverty […]. Five years in which, first as a casual labourer and then as a painter of little trifles, I had to earn my daily bread. And a meagre morsel indeed it was, not even sufficient to still the hunger which I constantly felt. (Hitler, 1939, p. 29)

1.4 1913-1914: Munich

On 24 May 1913, having received his share of his father's inheritance, after his twenty-fourth birthday, Adolf set off for Munich, accompanied by Rudolf Häusler, a young man four years his junior he had known for a little over three months from the Men's Home. He told his co-residents that he intended to enter the Art Academy, but he took no steps to do so. There was a rather compelling motive: escaping military service. Indeed, Adolf had failed to register for military service in 1909, and desertion could result in imprisonment in Austria. In February 1914, he was summoned to appear in Linz, but later allowed to appear in Salzburg instead. He was found to be too weak and declared unfit for military service.

Munich – towards which Hitler "always manifest a love-hate relationship" (Weber, 2017, Image 2) – would be the scenario of Hitler becoming a charismatic political leader.

> By the time of Hitler's arrival, it was famed for its beauty, its arts scene, and its liberalism, which coexisted with traditional Bavarian life, centering on Catholic tradition, beer hall culture, lederhosen, and oompah bands. Life in Schwabing, Munich's most Bohemian neighborhood, resembled that of Montmartre in Paris […]. (p. xxi)

He rented a small room in a poor district to the north of Munich, near Schwabing, the artistic and bohemian city quarter (Schleißheimerstraße, 34). It was the wonderful dawn of his destiny.

> One must know Munich if one would know Germany, and it is impossible to acquire a knowledge of German art without seeing Munich.
>
> All things considered, this pre-war sojourn was by far the happiest and most contented time of my life. […]
>
> A German city! I said to myself. How different to Vienna. It was with a feeling of disgust that my imagination reverted to that Babylon of races. […]
>
> But what attracted me most was the marvellous wedlock of native folk-energy with the fine artistic spirit of the city, that unique harmony from the Hofbräuhaus to the Odeon, from the October Festival to the Pinakothek, etc. The reason why my heart's strings are entwined around this city as around no other spot in this world is probably because Munich is and will remain inseparably connected with the development of my own career […]. (Hitler, 1939, p. 109)

Kershaw (2009) remarks: "He was in love with Munich, but […] as regards his own future, he had no more idea where he was going than he had done during his years in the Vienna Men's Home." (p. 50) However, a 'school' was about to open for him to consolidate the worldview that would command his life: World War I.

1.5 1914-1933: World War I and the advent of the Nazi Party

1914

- 28 June: The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, and his wife, in Sarajevo, caused World War I, with the German declaration of war on Russia, on 1 August. On the following day, Hitler joined the huge patriotic demonstration in front of the Feldherrnhalle on Munich's Odeonsplatz, singing *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* (Germany, Germany above all else). This is the first verse of the *Lied der Deutschen* (Song of the Germans) or *Deutschlandlied* (Song of Germany), composed by Joseph Haydn.[9]

[9] https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Translation:Das_Deutschlandlied
It was officially declared the national anthem of the Weimar Republic, in 1922. The Nazi regime misused the first verse to emphasise Germany's superiority to all other nations. That's why the Allies prohibited its public singing after World War II. In 1952, the third part of the *Lied der Deutschen* was adopted as the national anthem.

- 3 August: Hitler enthusiastically volunteered, along with more than 250 thousand men, for service in the German army.

> For me these hours came as a deliverance from the distress that had weighed upon me during the days of my youth. I am not ashamed to acknowledge to-day that I was carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment and that I sank down upon my knees and thanked Heaven out of the fullness of my heart for the favour of having been permitted to live in such a time.
>
> …
>
> I had left Austria principally for political reasons. What therefore could be more rational than that I should put into practice the logical consequences of my political opinions, now that the war had begun. […]
>
> On August 3rd, 1914, I presented an urgent petition to His Majesty, King Ludwig III, requesting to be allowed to serve in a Bavarian regiment. […] I opened the document with trembling hands; and no words of mine could now describe the satisfaction I felt on reading that I was instructed to report to a Bavarian regiment. Within a few days I was wearing that uniform which I was not to put off again for nearly six years. (Hitler, 1939, pp. 135, 136)

Not being a German citizen, he "almost certainly entered the Bavarian army by error" (Kershaw, 2009, p. 53). Hitler's military unit was the Sixteenth Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment, called "List Regiment".

- 3 November 1914: Hitler was promoted to caporal. He "was a committed, rather than simply conscientious and dutiful, soldier, and did not lack physical courage" (p. 55). He was wounded twice and decorated with the Iron Cross (Second and First Class).

1917

- 6-7 November: Bolshevik (or October) Revolution, in Russia, led by Bolshevik Party leader Vladimir Lenin.

1918

- 11 November: The armistice was signed at Compiègne (France), Germany surrendered, and World War I came to an end.

- Weimar Republic

9 November: After the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the German Empire came to an end, and the Weimar Republic was proclaimed. The leader of the Social Democratic Party, Friedrich Ebert, was appointed Chancellor.

Weimar Republic is so called because it was in the city of Weimar that met from 6 February to 11 August the Constituent Assembly that adopted a new Constitution. The old name *Deutsches Reich* (German Empire) was officially retained, but *Deutsche Republik* (German Republic) became the most used since the mid-1920s. *Republik von Weimar* (Republic of Weimar) became mainstream during the 1930s after Hitler used it during a speech delivered at a Nazi Party rally in Munich on 24 February 1929.

The Weimar Republic lasted from 1919 to 1933, when Hitler was appointed Chancellor and the Nazi Regime began. The Weimar Constitution was never formally repealed by the Nazi regime but simply ignored and emptied.

- 7 November: The Bavarian King Ludwig III was overthrown by left-wing oppositionists led by the Social Democrat Kurt Eisner.

1919

- 21 February: Eisner is assassinated, and the Bavarian (or Munich) Soviet Republic (*Bayern* or *Münchner Räterepublik*) is established on 7 April. It lasted until 1 May, when it was overthrown by the German Army and the paramilitary *Freikorps* (Free Corps, military volunteer units that existed in Europe since the 18th).

- 23 March: Benito Mussolini forms the National Fascist Party in Italy.

- 28 April: The League of Nations is founded.

- 28 June: The Peace Treaty of Versailles (France) is signed.

> For Hitler, the war was a godsend. Since his failure in the Art Academy in 1907, he had vegetated, resigned to the fact that he would not become a great artist, now cherishing a pipedream that he would somehow become a notable architect – though with no plans for or realistic hope of fulfilling this ambition. Seven years after that failure, the 'nobody of Vienna', now in Munich, remained a drop-out and nonentity, futilely

> angry at a world which had rejected him. He was still without any career prospects, without qualifications or any expectation of gaining them, without any capacity for forging close and lasting friendships, and without real hope of coming to terms with himself – or with a society he despised for his own failure. […] The war and its aftermath made Hitler. After Vienna, it was the second formative period in decisively shaping his personality.
>
> …
>
> The end of the war meant that, like most other soldiers, [Hitler] faced demobilization. The army had been his home for four years. But now once more his future was uncertain. (Kershaw, 2009, pp. 51, 52, 64)

- In Weber's (2017) opinion, there was nothing anti-revolutionary in Hitler's behaviour "during the two weeks that he spent in Bavaria's capital on his return from the war. […] The future dictator of the Third Reich was not an apolitical person but an opportunist for whom the urge to escape loneliness trumped everything else." Therefore, his "decision to reject demobilization no doubt resulted, at least in part, from a realization that he had no family or friends to whom to return. It is not inconceivable that material concerns also played a role in his decision to stay in the army" (pp. 13, 10).

  He was incorporated in a "propaganda command" sent to a demobilisation camp (Lechfeld). Thereafter, he entered the army's Intelligence Division.

  > It was as an informant that Hitler was sent, on Friday, 12 September 1919, to report on a meeting of the German Workers' Party in Munich's Sterneckerbräu. […] The party chairman, Anton Drexler, was so impressed by Hitler's intervention that at the end of the meeting he pushed a copy of his own pamphlet, *My Political Awakening*, into his hand, inviting him to return in a few days if he were interested in joining the new movement. (Kershaw, 2009, p. 75)

  In this regard, Hitler (1939) wrote:

  > During that day my thoughts returned several times to what I had read; but I finally decided to give the matter no further attention. A week or so later, however, I received a postcard which informed me, to my astonishment, that I had been admitted into the German Labour Party. I was asked to answer this communication and to attend a meeting of the Party Committee on Wednesday next.

> … Hitherto I had not any idea of entering a party already in existence but wanted to found one of my own. Such an invitation as I now had received I looked upon as entirely out of the question for me.
>
> …
>
> When I returned to my room in the barracks that evening, I had formed a definite opinion on this association and I was facing the most difficult problem of my life. Should I join this party or refuse?
>
> …
>
> The longer I reflected on the problem, the more my opinion developed that just such a small movement would best serve as an instrument to prepare the way for the national resurgence […].
>
> After two days of careful brooding and reflection, I became convinced that I must take the contemplated step. (pp. 176, 178, 179)

Hitler joined the German Workers' Party in September 1919.

1920

- 24 February: The Nazi Party, at its first large gathering in Munich, in the Hofbräuhaus, proclaimed its Program in 25 points.[10]

> It had been announced that the meeting would begin at 7.30. A quarter-of-an hour before the opening time I walked through the chief hall of the Hofbräuhaus on the Platz in Munich and my heart was nearly bursting with joy. The great hall – for at that time it seemed very big to me – was filled to overflowing. Nearly 2,000 people were present. […]
>
> When I finally came to explain the twenty-five points and laid them, point after point, before the masses gathered there and asked them to pass their own judgment on each point, one point after another was accepted with increasing enthusiasm. When the last point was reached, I had before me a hall full of people united by a new conviction, a new faith and a new will.
>
> …

[10] https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/1708-ps.asp
In German: http://www.documentarchiv.de/wr/1920/nsdap-programm.html

> A fire was enkindled from whose glowing heat the sword would be fashioned which would restore freedom to the German Siegfried and bring back life to the German nation. (pp. 288, 289)

- The Party acquires the weekly newspaper *Völkisher Beobachter* (that would be published daily from 1923).

- The Party flag is chosen.

> After innumerable trials I decided upon a final form – a flag of red material with a white disc bearing in its centre a black swastika. […]
>
> The new flag appeared in public in the midsummer of 1920. […]
>
> … We National Socialists regarded our flag as being the embodiment of our party programme. The red expressed the social thought underlying the movement. White the national thought. And the swastika signified the mission allotted to us – the struggle for the victory of Aryan mankind and at the same time the triumph of the ideal of creative work which is in itself and always will be anti-Semitic. (pp. 383, 384)
>
> The symbol of the swastika is of an ancient origin. It has appeared in Oriental civilizations since the fifth century, in Byzantine culture, and among North and South American Indian tribes. Today it is prevalent among Hindus and Buddhists. In 1910, the German nationalist Guido von List proposed the swastika as a universal symbol of antisemitic movements, and, in 1920, the Nazi party adopted it as its emblem. In 1935, the design of a black swastika against a red background was devised and declared the flag of Nazi Germany. (Gutterman & Shalev, 2008, p. 43)

1921

- In the context of an internal crisis, Hitler resigns from the Party and, on 14 July, refuses to return without assuming its leadership with absolute powers. "A day later the party committee expressed its readiness in recognition of his 'immense knowledge', his services for the movement, and his 'unusual talent as a speaker' to give him 'dictatorial powers'" (Kershaw, 2009, p. 103).

- The Party denomination was changed to become *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP: National-Socialist German Workers' Party).

'Nazi' – abbreviation for the German term *Nationalsozialism* – was a term already in use before, with a colloquial meaning: it was applied to backwards persons like a typical Bavarian peasant. Hence why it was used by German exiles, but generally avoided by Nazis themselves.

- Creation of the SA (*Sturmabteilung*: Storm Detachment).

  The SA was the Nazi Party's original paramilitary wing, in the 1920s, whose primary purpose was providing protection for Nazi rallies and assemblies. Its members were also called *Braunhemden* (Brownshirts) because of the colour of their uniform's shirts (with brown ties).

1922

- Joseph Stalin is appointed as General Secretary to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.

1923

- Beer Hall Putsch

  8 November: Hitler and about 2,000 Party members, with the support of General Ludendorff, march to the Bürgerbräukeller, where important Bavarian political leaders were meeting. Several of Hitler's fellows are shot dead the next day at the Feldherrnhalle, and he is captured.

- 9 November: The Nazi Party is banned.

1924

- Hitler is tried and sentenced to five years imprisonment. On 1 April, he enters the Landsberg prison, where he lived comfortably, but is pardoned and released on 20 December, by order of the Bavarian Supreme Court.

1925

- During his imprisonment, Hitler writes the first volume of *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), perhaps dictated to Rudolph Hess, that was published on 18 July, dedicated to his fellows died during the Beer Hall Putsch. It is mainly autobiographical, ending with the Party Programme. Before, he had published an autobiographical sketch under Koerber's name.

- The ban of the Nazi Party is lifted, and the Party is refounded on 26 February.

- Creation of the SS (*Schutzstaffel*: Protection Squadron)

  Originally a branch of the SA, the SS was a small guard unit made up of volunteers, duly selected, to provide security for the meetings in Munich. In 1925, it was reformed by Heinrich Himmler and became the most powerful paramilitary organisation in Nazi Germany and the foremost terrifying agency of security within Germany and German-occupied Europe.

1926

- 11 December: Publication of *Mein Kampf* second volume, dedicated to Dietrich Eckart, the Party ideologue, died in 1923. It was in part written during the summer of 1925 near Berchtesgaden. It is rather ideological and programmatic, concluding with foreign policy.

- Germany enters the League of Nations.

1928

- Geli Raubal, the daughter of Hitler's half-sister (Angela Raubal), moves to 'Uncle Alf's' apartment in Munich.

- Hitler writes a 'Second Book' that was left unpublished during his lifetime. It was dictated during a summer stay in Berchtesgaden.