

# The Holocaust—Darwinists tried and found guilty

A review of  
*Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race*  
by Dieter Kuntz (Ed.)  
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One of the most controversial sections of the recent film *Expelled*, starring Ben Stein, was the part that covered the contribution of Darwinism to the Nazi Holocaust. Ironically, as this book shows, this part of the film was one of the best-documented events in the entire movie. *Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race* examines the critical role that German evolutionary biologists, scientists, physicians, public health officials, and academics played in supporting and implementing the Nazis' program of racial eugenics, which culminated in the Holocaust. The book is based on an exhibition of the same name that ran from 22 April 2004 to 16 October 2005 at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC (figure 1). Since then, the exhibit has been travelling to museums throughout the world and, as of this writing, is in the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, LA.

The central thesis of this coffee-table-sized book is that the scientific establishment was crucial in planning and carrying out the Holocaust. This compilation includes well-written essays by many internationally recognized authorities on Nazism. It is beautifully reproduced and lavishly illustrated with many never-before-published photographs that provide a compelling visual documentation of the Darwinian eugenic origins of the Holocaust.

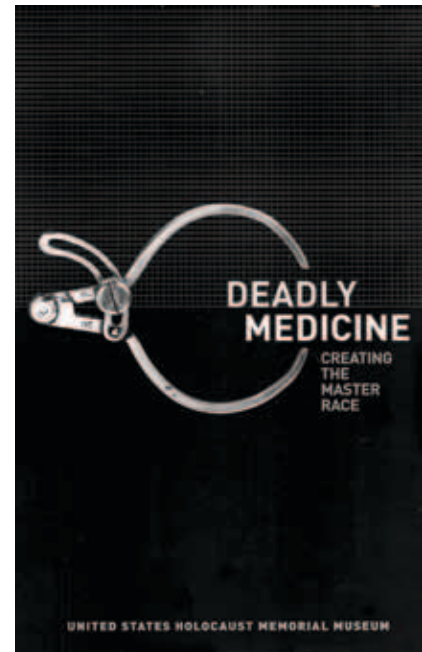
## Darwinian basis of the Holocaust

From 1933 to 1945, the Nazi regime attempted to realize its goal of a biologically healthy and ethnically homogeneous population through eugenics programs. These programs were designed to cleanse German society of those persons whom the eugenic scientists perceived as a threat to the German people's biological health.

The myth that Darwinian eugenics was not central to the Holocaust serves to protect the deeply held, but erroneous, conviction that Darwinism did not have a deleterious influence on Nazi Germany. In fact, although

“German eugenics developed independently of its British counterpart . . . both were heavily influenced by Charles Darwin's principles of evolution. In Germany, the zoologist Ernst Haeckel popularized social Darwinism—the extension of Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest (natural selection) to competition in human society. Haeckel's writings substantiated the fears of a falling birthrate among the ‘better’ (or ‘productive’) elements of society and pointed ominously to an increasing hereditary ‘degeneration’—the transmission of physically and mentally unhealthy traits—of the human species. The work of German biologist August Weisman lent additional scientific support to the conclusion that natural selection no longer operated effectively in contemporary society, because modern medicine and social welfare enabled the unfit to survive and reproduce their own ‘genetically defective’ kind” (p. 17).

Haeckel's and Weisman's ideas clearly echo those of Darwin in his 1871 book *The Descent of Man*<sup>1</sup> on the



evolution of mankind, in which Darwin made the implications of evolution to eugenics crystal clear. Darwin noted that civilization does its

“... utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak members of civilized societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, leads to the degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed”<sup>2</sup>

The Nazi solution in harmony with Darwin's advice was to sterilize, then murder, those persons the eugenics

'experts' judged as evolutionarily less fit. The fact is, "Darwin's work sparked great interest in biological determinism and the application of the principle of natural selection to human society" (p. 44). Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton, the man who coined the word 'eugenics' and a founder of the eugenics movement, was "inspired by Darwin's assertion that various animals increased in number in a state of nature" (p. 44). The eugenics movement was carried on by four of Darwin's sons and one granddaughter.<sup>3</sup>

Another myth about eugenics in the Third Reich is the belief that only marginal physicians in extreme situations participated in crimes against humanity, and that German mainstream medicine was not corrupted by the surrounding maelstrom. But *Deadly Medicine* contains scholarly, comprehensive chapters by Robert Lifton, Robert N. Proctor, Michael H. Kater, and Henry Friedlander, among others, that do much to show the falsity of these myths.

Yet another claim used to distance establishment science from its eugenic past debunked in the book is the claim that the eugenic movement was not science but instead pseudoscience. Professor Müller-Hill answered this charge as follows:

"Can science save face by claiming that what was practiced in Nazi Germany was not real science, that it was only pseudoscience? . . . I prefer, simply, to define science as what the majority of scientists working in the field call science at the time it is being done. Referees decide what can be published and what is to be funded—therefore, what is published in scientific journals and funded by grant agencies must be considered science. Under this definition, scientists—specifically, German human or medical geneticists . . . were, during the 1930s and 1940s, deeply involved in the crimes of the Nazi government" (p. 185).

Nazi propaganda, medical documents, scientific instruments, transport lists, and photographs of sites, perpetrators, and victims are all included in this volume. Most vivid, and most important, are the photos of the victims and documentary material including artwork, personal letters, and artefacts that render the horrors the victims suffered in the name of Darwinian eugenics very real. The essays consistently highlight themes essential to understanding the relationship between Nazi eugenic political philosophy and medical science.

These chapters documented the fact that race was at the core of Nazi social thought. Their goal was to produce, by the application of evolutionary principles, a racially pure, cohesive society that would reverse what the Nazi scientists saw as racial degeneration. Heredity was assigned a central role in improving German society, taking the *biology as destiny* philosophy to its logical extreme. The belief in the innate *inequality*

of individuals and, by extension, of racial groups, became dogma. So Nazi 'scientists' assessed their victims on the basis of their physical, cultural, and genetic traits. These 'scientists' focused on their value (or lack thereof) to the collective German society as interpreted by the Nazi movement.

A logical extension of the assignment of unequal values to individuals was their unequal rights and lack of worth as humans. The Nazis strongly opposed the Christian teaching that we are all created "in the image of God". The Nazi political philosophy that derived its origin from evolution turned to biology, both for an explanation of social ills and for solutions to their goal of population improvement through the application of eugenic principles.

A major conclusion of the book is that the Nazi horrors were a result of "a long chain of experts, all physicians by training, who promoted a biological or scientific racism that helped make the Holocaust possible" (p. 122). A major



**Figure 1.** The 14<sup>th</sup> street entrance of the museum which has an annual budget of close to 80 million dollars and a staff of around 400. The purpose of the museum is to educate the public about the cause of the Holocaust and insure that it never occurs again.

Photo: Albert Herring

role for scientists was to search for the means of achieving racial diagnosis:

“Much scientific research in racial science, human genetics, and serology during the Third Reich dealt with discovering diagnostic techniques to determine a person’s race. The search focused on ... numerous physical and racial characteristics, from the shape of nostrils to the structure of the iris of the eye” (pp. 122–123).

Biologists and Anthropologists

“... led in research in racial genetics ... . As scientists were particularly keen to find blood markers for Jews and Gypsies, serological tests were conducted on these groups in concentration camps ... . The third area of research, racial genetics, studied such morphological characteristics as the skeleton, muscular system, and shape of the head and face, including skin, hair, eye color. The inheritance of every bodily detail was investigated—eyelids, eyebrows, ears, nostril shape, hair color, spinal column, and so on” (pp. 122–123).

The leading German biological scientists believed that sterilization and involuntary euthanasia should be applied on a wholesale basis. They argued that it was the central mechanism required to reverse genetic degeneration caused by ignoring evolution and counter-selection. They believed this was happening in Germany. And of course, a major culprit was supposedly Aryan Germans marrying Jews and then having large families. Essential to this applied eugenics program were the physicians and other biological experts with the requisite training and authority to influence, formulate, and implement Nazi policy. The Nazis used extensive propaganda to convince the public that eugenic programs were necessary to their nation’s health, many examples of which are reproduced in the book (for example on pp. 62–69).

A major problem was determining who was a Jew or a gypsy. Some argued that a person with three Jewish grandparents was officially Jewish. Other experts concluded that persons with only one such grandparent were Jewish. When the scientists appealed to Hitler to decide, he deferred, telling them that was for the scientists to figure out. Finally a compromise was reached.

### **The Final Solution to the Jewish and lives-not-worth-living problem**

What resulted in the end was a medicalization of mass murder, facilitated by technological innovations first made in German health care institutions and directed at what scientists regarded as the serious genetic threat posed by the so-called unproductive and unfit members of German society. The Holocaust demonstrated the willingness of these professionals, especially the scientists and medical doctors, to participate in the Final Solution to the Jewish problem, which was extermination in the death camps of all Jews in Europe. As Müller-Hill writes in one of the chapters on the scientists’ contributions to the Holocaust:

“The involvement of science, or, specifically, genetics, in the abhorrent crimes of Nazi Germany is one of the most disturbing events for scientists, and the public alike, to contemplate. Science is about knowledge and truth. So, we must ask ourselves, how could German scientists support anti-Semitism and the racial measures of the Nazis?” (p. 185).

*Deadly Medicine* amply documents the facts that disprove many common myths about medicine, science, evolution, and academia. The book details how the road to the Holocaust started with killing grossly deformed children in 1939. This slippery slope progressed to murdering fully healthy putative ‘inferior’ races,

including not only Jews but also Negroes, Slavics and Gypsies (Roma and Sinti), all with the solid backing of leading German scientists. Aside from Charles Darwin, other important scientists that were important in the development of Nazi Germany’s eugenics program included Darwin’s cousin Francis Galton. Galton was honoured in Nazi Germany not only for his writings, but also for the tools he developed to measure racial traits, such as skull size (pp. 42–43). Early on, German eugenicists also worked closely with scientists from America and also European countries (pp. 55–59).

The book concludes that it all began with Charles Darwin and ended in 1945 with the victory of the Allies, but with over 55 million dead, directly and indirectly from the war (pp. 200–204). Only 23 German physicians, scientists and administrators were prosecuted for war crimes in the trial. Why no more? Because the Allies thought that prosecuting all of those involved in this tragic decade of history would have deprived Germany of its leading medical and health science practitioners.

### **References**

1. Darwin, C., *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, John Murray, London, 1871.
2. Darwin, ref. 1, p. 168.
3. Bergman, J., Darwin is the universal acid that affects everything: A review of *The Political Gene: How Darwin’s Ideas Changed Politics* by Dennis Sewell, *J. Creation* 25(1):19–21, 2011.