

# Documenting the obvious

***Darwinian Racism: How Darwin influenced Hitler, Nazism, and white nationalism***

Richard Weikart

Discovery Institute Press, Seattle, WA, 2022

Jerry Bergman

One of the most condemned parts of the film *Expelled: No intelligence allowed* was the interview with Professor Weikart on the influence of Darwinism on Hitler and Nazism. Typical was the charge that the movie *Expelled* attempted to ‘link evolution to the Holocaust’; an attempt that was called ‘insidious’. Science historian Susan Spath commented:

“The implication that Darwin led to Nazism and the Holocaust is an irresponsible misrepresentation of a terrible history. Hitler abused many things, including science, and *Expelled* is wrong to shift blame off his [Hitler’s] shoulders and onto evolution.”<sup>1</sup>

Scores of other examples exist. The Anti-Defamation League wrote, in a press release, “Darwin and evolutionary theory cannot explain Hitler’s genocidal madness. Using the Holocaust in order to tarnish those who promote the theory of evolution is outrageous ...”<sup>2</sup>

Almost all of the 63 Amazon reviews of my book documenting the connection between Darwin and Hitler were very favourable, but one reviewer opined:

“The author of the book is a noted creationist and anti-evolutionist. He is basically trying to slam Darwin and Evolution by tying it to ... the Nazis. ... Darwin never was a ‘social Darwinist’ and never even wrote or uttered the phrase ‘survival of the fittest’.”<sup>3</sup>

In fact, Weikart documents that Hitler used the phrase ‘survival of the fittest’ so often that, in one study of “... the ideology of Nazis, neo-Nazis, and white nationalists, we find that Darwinism—the view that species have evolved over eons of time through the process of natural selection—plays a fundamental role, shaping their views about race and society” (p. 11).

## Darwinian selection at the heart of Nazi theory

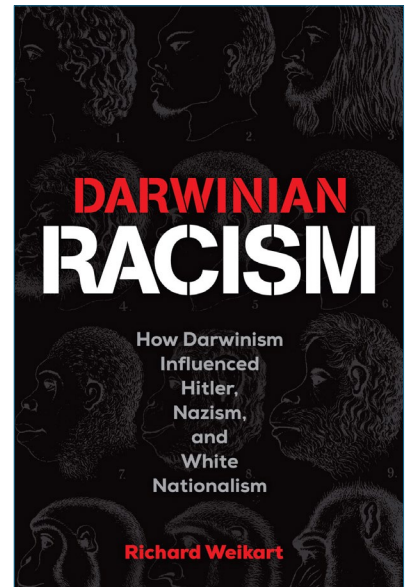
Darwinian natural selection was at the heart of the Nazi theory; namely, the Nazis

“... believed that the Nordic race had become superior because harsh climatic conditions in north-central Europe during the ice ages had sharpened the struggle for existence, causing the weak to perish and leaving only the most vigorous” (p. 15).

Weikart backs up this survival of the fittest claim with scores of quotes directly from Hitler’s speeches and writings. Furthermore, Weikart documents the influence of both Hitler’s evolutionary associates and the books Hitler owned and read that influenced him to accept Darwinism (pp. 36–40). Other books, such as Zitzer’s 778-page tome, go into more detail than Weikart’s book, but Weikart provides an excellent summary of the strong connection between Darwin and racism.<sup>4</sup>

## Weikart’s academic qualifications

Weikart completed his Ph.D. in modern European history at the University of Iowa for which he received the biennial History of Human Sciences Prize for the best dissertation in his field. Weikart’s revised dissertation,



*Socialist Darwinism: Evolution in German Socialist Thought*, was published in 1999. He then spent the rest of his academic career documenting the important influence of Darwinism in supporting both Nazism and the Holocaust, publishing several more books and articles to defend his thesis. To do his research, he mastered the German language and reviewed scores of German language textbooks, book chapters, and scholarly articles published both before and during WWII.

## Darwin was a racist

Racism was not an incidental part of Darwin’s evolutionary theory; rather, Darwin considered racial inequality crucial evidence for his theory. Darwin also often expressed extreme racist conclusions in his writings. One common example is “the civilized races ... are now everywhere extending their range, so as to take the place of the lower races [emphasis added]”, which Darwin believed would eventually lose out in the survival-of-the-fittest struggle.<sup>5</sup> Weikart located many other examples in Darwin’s writings, which the Nazis exploited to support their racist agenda.

One example is *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (*Racial Science of*

*the German People*), which stated that Darwin was “one of the most important men who ... explained that humans have evolved from more primitive human ancestors such as pithecanthropus and Neanderthals” (p. 38). Neanderthals were, for decades, pictured as primitive brutes that became extinct in the survival-of-the-fittest competition with modern humans. The implications of racism in human evolution were explicit in another German textbook, which “emphasized racial inequality and the dangers of racial mixing” (p. 39). The fact is, for “Hitler, the Darwinian struggle for existence between humans, especially the competition between the races, was *central* to his worldview and policies [emphasis added]” (p. 40). Furthermore, the “overriding long-term goal behind all Nazi policies was to promote evolutionary progress”, which enabled the Aryans, as the superior race, to “triumph in the struggle for existence against other races” (p. 79).

To achieve this Darwinian goal, in 1933 “Hitler introduced a sweeping eugenic program, which resulted in the compulsory sterilization of 350,000 to 400,000 mentally and physically disabled Germans”, leading to the Holocaust, which murdered over 12 million Jews and Slavs (p. 79). The degree of high-level academic cooperation with the Nazi program was illustrated by seminars given by the Nazi Interior Ministry, which oriented 120 psychologists to the Nazi eugenic programs (p. 88). This conference stressed,

“Nature is engaged in a biological struggle for existence! ... Every species and race is purified and improved again and again through a process of selection ... As a result of biological selection the inferior individual perishes ... Darwin called this elimination ... natural selection” (p. 88).

Numerous similar seminars given by prominent academics teaching at leading German universities also attracted large audiences.

Weikart’s conclusions about the major influence of Darwin on racism, Nazism, and the Holocaust are not unique among scholars. Among those Weikart lists are Jücker Elberhard’s *Hitler’s Worldview: A blueprint for power*,<sup>6</sup> which details how racism, influenced by social Darwinism, was at the heart of Hitler’s worldview. Furthermore, Darwinism was at the heart of both Nazism and the Holocaust.

Darwin’s militant racism was acknowledged by Dr Agustín Fuentes, a primatologist and biological anthropologist at Princeton University, in an article published in *Science*.<sup>7</sup> Fuentes wrote that Darwin’s racist “assertions were dismally, and dangerously wrong” and his *Descent of Man* is a book “not to venerate” as is common among many evolutionists today. Fuentes writes that, “‘Descent’ is often problematic, prejudiced, and injurious. Darwin thought he was relying on data, objectivity, and scientific thinking in describing human evolutionary outcomes. But for much of the book, he was not. ‘Descent’, ... offers a racist and sexist view of humanity.”<sup>7</sup>

Fuentes concludes that Darwin “... asserted evolutionary differences between races. He went beyond simple racial rankings, offering justification of empire and colonialism, and genocide, through ‘survival of the fittest’ ... Darwin’s racist and sexist beliefs, echoing the views of scientific colleagues and his society, were powerful mediators of his perception of reality.”<sup>7</sup>

### Documenting the connection between Darwinism and the Holocaust

Weikart’s book is one of the most well-documented tomes that rely on original German language sources to document the direct connection between Darwinism and the Holocaust. The author, one of the most qualified historians alive on this topic, relied on Reich educational publications,

Nazi propaganda, textbooks used in German schools, and the writings of prominent German biologists and anthropologists that propagated the racism that led to the Holocaust. Examples include Professor Fritz Lenz (Eugenics, University of Munich), Nordic eugenicist Hans Günther, and Darwin disciple Ernst Haeckel.

### Scientists’ racism exploited by white supremacists

The fact is, “Racists, sexists, and white supremacists, some of them academics, use concepts and statements ‘validated’ by their presence in ‘Descent’ as support for erroneous beliefs, and the public accepts much of it uncritically.”<sup>7</sup> An example is the Ku Klux Klan often using quotes and claims from older, pre-1940, scientific literature to justify its Negro inferiority claims (figure 1).

In both the first and final chapters, Weikart documents how both white nationalists and neo-Nazis still rely heavily on Darwinism to buttress their racist ideology. He documents the fact that *a major support for their beliefs is Darwinism*—a conclusion determined by reviewing the writings of the most prominent racists today. One of the best-known examples is the 1999 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold murder of 13 students, wounding 24, on Hitler’s birthdate (20 April), wearing shirts proclaiming Darwin’s ‘Natural Selection’ phrase. Attempts to justify the slaughter by claiming both boys were maladjusted do not negate the obvious influence of Darwinism in the actions of both boys. As Weikart correctly observes, Darwinism was an important part, if not a central element, of Nazism, neo-Nazism, and white nationalism (p. 11).

The former KKK leader, David Duke, once headed the largest white supremacist organization in the world. His influence can be gauged by the fact that he was elected to serve in the State of Louisiana Congress. Duke was reared as a young-earth creationist who, in college, not only rejected

creation and accepted evolution, but also accepted racism. In his 778-page autobiography, Duke documented in detail the long history of racism in evolutionary literature. Duke's interest in evolution's support of the inferior-race belief was originally stirred by Professor Carleton Coon of Harvard. Coon was then a leading physical anthropologist and the president of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. Duke devoured all of Coon's books, including the *Origin of the Races*, and became convinced that evolutionary science proved some races were superior to others.<sup>8,9</sup> Darwin's writings were an especially important influence on racism because his ideas had a profound influence on the entire academic and scientific world. In fact, "‘*The Descent of Man*’ is one of the most influential books in the history of human evolutionary science."<sup>7</sup>

Darwin's callousness toward those he regarded as less-evolved races was reflected in the words that he wrote to T.H. Huxley on 9 July 1857, namely "a scientific man ought to have no wishes, no affections—a mere heart of stone."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the Holocaust is one of the best examples of an event carried out with a heart of stone.

### Summary

Weikart used his impeccable qualifications to document, in detail, the fact that Darwin had a major influence in producing the lethal racism that developed after the biblical foundation of the equality of the 'races' was undermined by Darwinism. Now that the leading scientific journal, *Science*, has acknowledged Darwin's major contribution to the racism problem,

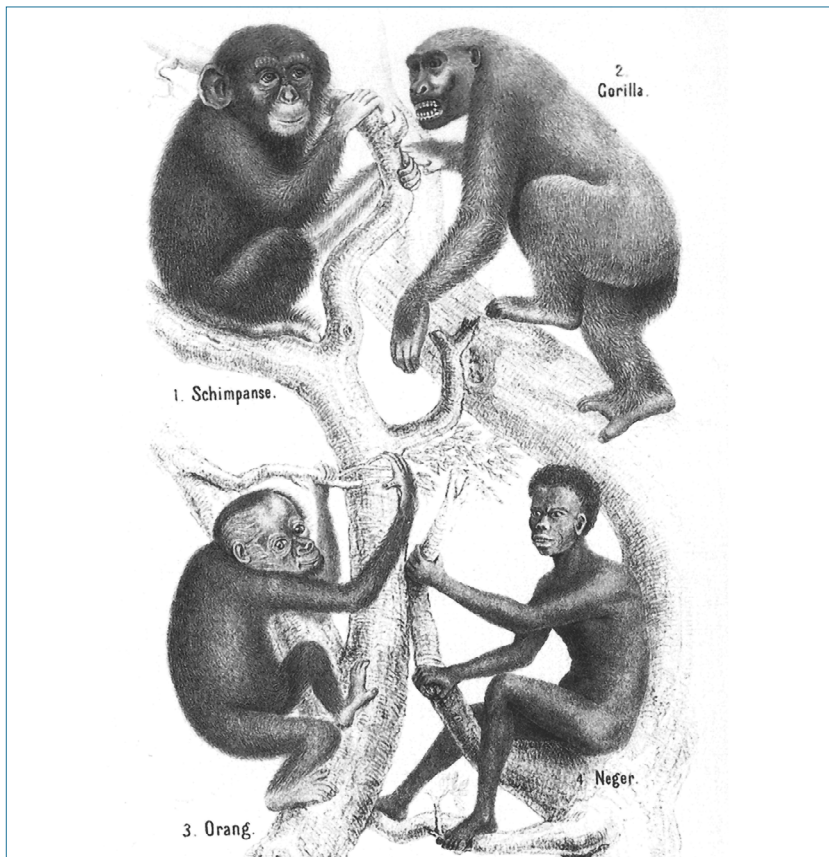
other journals may be more open to document this fact. Nonetheless, the name-calling from uninformed persons still speaks to a denial of this now well-documented reality. One review of Weikart's new book on Amazon stated that it

"... is a hit job on Darwin for the Discovery Institute; his religious employer. Dedicating [*sic*] to making Darwin the bad guy; thus making it easier to separate the uninformed from their tax \$'s so as to fund religious educations for America's children. ... Darwin's ideas ended this horrible chapter rather than starting it!"<sup>11</sup>

This 'review' is an excellent example of irresponsible name-calling, a fact which is obvious to anyone who has read the book, or is somewhat informed about the subject.

### References

1. *Expelled flunks the test*, [ncse.ngo/expelled-flunks-test-0](http://ncse.ngo/expelled-flunks-test-0), 2008.
2. Anti-evolution film misappropriates the Holocaust (press release), Anti-Defamation League, New York, 29 April 2008.
3. Bergman, J., *Hitler and the Nazi Darwinian Worldview*, Joshua Press, 2012.
4. Zitzer, L., *Darwin's Racism*, I Universe, New York, 2016.
5. Darwin, C., *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, John Murray, London, p. 169, 1871.
6. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 19, 90–91, 138, May 1981.
7. Fuentes, A., *The Descent of Man*, 150 years on, *Science* 372(6544):769, 1 May 2021 | [doi.org/10.1126/science.abc4606](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abc4606).
8. Duke, D., *My Awakening: A path to racial understanding*, Free Speech Press, Covington, LA, p. 86, 1998.
9. Bergman, J., Darwinism's influence on modern racists and white supremacist groups: the case of David Duke, *J. Creation* 19(3):103–107, 2005; [creation.com/david-duke](http://creation.com/david-duke).
10. *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, vol. 6, 1856–1857, Cambridge University Press, New York, p. 427, 1990.
11. Richard, A., Mendelian genetics confused by an advocate of Intelligent Design, [amazon.com/gp/customer-reviews/R2F5PCKZSTWLZE/ref=cm\\_cr\\_getr\\_d\\_rvw\\_title?ie=UTF8&ASIN=1637120095](https://amazon.com/gp/customer-reviews/R2F5PCKZSTWLZE/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_rvw_title?ie=UTF8&ASIN=1637120095), 2022.



**Figure 1.** A frontispiece used in several of Ernst Haeckel's books, e.g. *The Evolution of Man*, German edition, 1874. Note the negro is placed in the tree with three apes, the orang, gorilla, and the chimpanzee.