



DISCUSSION & STUDY GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

What Hath Darwin Wrought? (www.whathathdarwinwrought.com) is an 80-minute documentary exploring the controversial cultural implications of Darwin's theory of evolution from the nineteenth century to today. This guide contains discussion questions and other materials for those who want to use the documentary in small groups or adult education classes. The documentary is well-suited to a three session mini-course or as part of a larger course exploring Darwin's theory and its implications for society.

Hosted by **Todd Friel**, the program features Discovery Institute Senior Fellows **David Berlinski**, author of *The Devil's Delusion* and *The Deniable Darwin*; **John West**, author of *Darwin Day in America* and *Darwin's Conservatives: The Misguided Quest*; and historian Richard Weikart, author of *From Darwin to Hitler* and *Hitler's Ethic*. The documentary explores questions such as:

- What impact has Darwin's theory had on society and culture during the past century?
- Is "social Darwinism" a logical application of Darwin's theory, or an outrageous perversion of it?
- Is it fair to talk about the social consequences of Darwinian evolution, or is it a cheap shot?
- What is the impact of Darwinian theory on our view of ethics?
- What is the impact of Darwinian theory on current debates about the value and dignity of human life?

"The standard refrain today is that social Darwinism had nothing to do with either Charles Darwin or his biological theory," says Dr. John West, whose work is highlighted in the documentary. "But ideas have consequences, and it's clear that Darwin himself understood that fact. I think many viewers will be surprised when they learn just how closely Darwin's own views are connected to the rise of social Darwinism—and just how much of a continuing impact social Darwinism has on Darwin's followers today."

More information and resources relating to the topics of the documentary can be found at www.whathathdarwinwrought.com.

DVD MENU

CHAPTER 1: INTRO (04:32)

This segment introduces the topic of the documentary by describing recent debates over the impact of social Darwinism.

CHAPTER 2: NAZIS AND DARWIN (23:56)

This segment explores the historical impact of social Darwinism on Nazi Germany.

CHAPTER 3: AMERICAN EUGENICS (26:51)

This segment explores the historical impact of social Darwinism on the American eugenics movement.

CHAPTER 4: MODERN EUGENICS (16:11)

This segment explores the continuing impact of social Darwinism on current debates over the dignity and value of human life.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION (08:15)

This segment takes one more look at Darwin's own views and invites viewers to think again about how ideas have consequences.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION 1

What was the influence of Darwin's theory on Nazi Germany?

Play DVD from 0:00-30:15 (Chapters 1, 2 and start of Chapter 3.) After watching the DVD, discuss the following questions:

1. The documentary opens with the claim that “ideas have consequences.” Do you agree or disagree? Why? Can you name some ideas and their consequences?
2. (For those using these questions in a Sunday School class.) What does the Bible say about ideas having consequences? (See Proverbs 23:7, Matthew 12:34-37)
3. Why is it uncomfortable to talk about whether Darwin's theory influenced Nazi policies?
4. What role did biological evolution and survival of the fittest play in Hitler's ideology?
5. According to Richard Weikart, what are the six ways Darwinism devalued human life?
6. Was Hitler a Christian? Why or why not?
7. Were those who applied Darwinian theory in Germany simply twisting Darwin's ideas to their own ends just like some people in the past have twisted Christianity to promote religious persecution? Or were they following the logical implications of Darwin's theory?
8. It is often claimed that it is unfair to discuss the impact of Darwinian theory on Nazism. What is your view? How do Berlinski, Weikart, and West respond to this criticism?

SESSION 2

What was the influence of Darwin's theory on the American eugenics movement of the past?

Play DVD from 30:16-54:27 (most of Chapter 3). After watching the DVD, discuss the following questions:

1. What is eugenics?
2. How did eugenics impact American public policy and culture?
3. What thoughts or reactions did you have to the information presented in this segment of the documentary? Did you learn anything new or surprising? Were you upset by anything?
4. How is the view of the human person presented by eugenics consistent or inconsistent with your view of human beings? How is consistent or inconsistent with the Judeo-Christian view of human dignity?
5. Was eugenics a fringe movement? Who were some of the people who supported eugenics? (Were you surprised by some of the supporters of eugenics?)
6. Who were the following people, and what was their view of eugenics: Clarence Darrow, Margaret Sanger, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Theodore Roosevelt, George Bernard Shaw.
7. What cautionary lesson should we learn for today from the fact that eugenics was the consensus view of the scientific community for several decades?
8. Were Darwinism and eugenics logically related? Why or why not?

SESSION 3

What is the influence of Darwin's theory on the "new eugenics" today?

Play DVD from 0:54:28-01:20:00 (end of Chapter 3, and Chapters 4 and 5). After watching the DVD, discuss the following questions:

1. According to Richard Weikart, what is the modern face of eugenics? How is the new eugenics different from the old eugenics? Do you think this difference makes a difference? Why or why not?
2. Who are the following people and what contribution have they made to the new eugenics: E.O. Wilson; Peter Singer; James Watson; James Rachels; Alexander Sanger; Eric Pianka.
3. What is the modern terminology of eugenics according to Richard Weikart?
4. According to John West, how does Darwinian theory undergird the extreme animal rights movement today?
5. What were Darwin's views on race? What were his views about the impact of the weak and ill on human civilization?
6. Darwin qualifies his warning about letting the "weak members of civilised societies propagate their kind" with the comment that human beings cannot seek to eliminate the weak "even at the urging of hard reason, without deterioration in the noblest part of our nature." Is this a compelling objection to eugenics within a Darwinian framework according to John West? Why or why not? What do you think? To provoke additional discussion, you might read to your group the following comment from John West:

True, Darwin does go on to indicate that we can't follow the dictates of "hard reason" in such cases without undermining our "sympathy... the noblest part of our nature." But such misgivings represented a lame objection at best. **If Darwin truly believed that society's efforts to help the impoverished and sickly "must be highly injurious to the race of man" (note the word "must"), then the price of preserving compassion in his view appeared to be the destruction of the human race.** Framed in that manner, how many people could be expected to reject the teachings of

“hard reason” and sacrifice the human race? **This point takes on added significance when one recognizes that for Darwin, sympathy was only “moral” because in the past it promoted physical survival.** That’s why it was preserved by natural selection. But if sympathy undercuts survival rather than promoting it, sympathy will lose its status as a moral dictate. (John West, “Was Darwin a Social Darwinist,” emphasis added, <http://www.discovery.org/a/9651>)

7. Those who point out the cultural implications of Darwinian theory are sometimes accused of smearing Darwin or modern supporters of Darwin’s theory as “Nazis.” What is John West’s response to that objection? What do you think?

8. According to the statement by Ravi Zacharias at the end, why are ideas important and why do we need to think through their consequences? Do you agree or disagree? Why? What have you learned from this documentary about the consequences of ideas? Has this study challenged, changed or developed your thinking in any way?

FURTHER STUDY

Additional resources to help you explore the issues raised by this documentary can be found at <http://www.whathathdarwinwrought.com/further-study.php>.

You may also find the following books of interest:

- David Berlinski, [*The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions*](#) and [*The Deniable Darwin*](#). *The Devil's Delusion* provides an incisive critique of the ideas of “new atheists” such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris; *The Deniable Darwin* provides a sophisticated critique of the scientific claims of modern Darwinian theory.
- Richard Weikart, [*From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany*](#), and [*Hitler's Ethic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress*](#). Both of these books by historian Richard Weikart document in detail the impact of Darwinian theory on the rise of the ideology of National Socialism in Germany.
- John G. West, [*Darwin Day in America: How Our Politics and Culture have been Dehumanized in the Name of Science*](#) and [*Darwin's Conservatives: The Misguided Quest*](#). *Darwin Day in America* supplies a comprehensive look at the impact of Darwinism and scientific materialism on American public policy, culture, and education during the past century. *Darwin's Conservatives* responds to conservative thinkers such as Larry Arnhart who argue that Darwinian theory supports conservatism and traditional morality.

BIOGRAPHIES OF EXPERTS

INTERVIEWED IN DOCUMENTARY

DAVID BERLINSKI is a Senior Fellow of Discovery Institute's [Center for Science and Culture](#). Residing in Paris, he is the author of numerous books, including [The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions](#) and [The Deniable Darwin](#). He received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Princeton University and was later a postdoctoral fellow in mathematics and molecular biology at Columbia University. He has authored works on systems analysis, differential topology, theoretical biology, analytic philosophy, and the philosophy of mathematics, as well as three novels. He has also taught philosophy, mathematics and English at Stanford, Rutgers, the City University of New York and the Université de Paris.

RICHARD WEIKART is a Professor of History at California State University, Stanislaus, and a Senior Fellow of the Center for Science and Culture at Discovery Institute. He is an expert on the historical impact of Darwinian thought in Germany. He completed his Ph.D. in modern European history at the University of Iowa, receiving the biennial prize of the Forum for History of Human Sciences for the best dissertation in that field. His books include [Socialist Darwinism: Evolution in German Socialist Thought from Marx to Bernstein](#); [From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany](#); and [Hitler's Ethic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress](#). In 2008, he was featured in the documentary film [Expelled](#) with Ben Stein.

JOHN G. WEST is Associate Director of the Center for Science and Culture at Discovery Institute. Formerly the Chair of the Department of Political Science and Geography at Seattle Pacific University, Dr. West is an expert on the impact of Darwinian thought on American culture and society. His books include [Darwin Day in America: How Our Politics and Culture have been Dehumanized in the Name of Science](#), [Darwin's Conservatives: The Misguided Quest](#), and (as a co-author) [Traipsing into Evolution: Intelligent Design and the Kitzmiller vs. Dover Decision](#). Dr. West holds a Ph.D. in Government from Claremont Graduate University. He has appeared on CNN, Fox News, and C-SPAN, and he has been interviewed by *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and many other publications.

SOURCES OF QUOTES CITED IN DOCUMENTARY

Following are the major quotations cited in the documentary along with the sources of the quotes. Each quotation is preceded by a time code indicating at what point it appears in the documentary.

DVD CHAPTER 2: NAZIS AND DARWIN

(0:14:52) “A stronger race will supplant the weaker, since the drive for life in its final form will decimate every ridiculous fetter of the so-called ‘humaneness’ of individuals, in order to make place for the true ‘humaneness of nature,’ which destroys the weak to make place for the strong.”

—Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Chapter IV.

(0:15:38) “If reproduction as such is limited and the number of births decreased, then the natural struggle for existence, which only allows the strongest and healthiest to survive, will be replaced by the obvious desire to save at any cost even the weakest and sickest; thereby a progeny is produced, which must become ever more miserable.”

—Adolf Hiter, *Mein Kampf*, Chapter IV.

(0:16:03) “In this world, the laws of natural selection apply. Nature has given the stronger and healthier the right to live. Woe betides anyone who is weak and cannot stand his ground! He cannot expect pity from anyone.”

—Hitler Speech, clip from German documentary “Hitler’s Children,” part 4 (War), starting at 12:32, available at <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5298238941550391341#>.

(0:16:20) “We are all beings of nature, which—inasmuch as we can see it—only know one harsh law, the law that gives the right of life to the stronger and takes the life of the weaker. We humans cannot exempt ourselves from this law. ... On this earth we observe

the unswerving struggle of living organisms with each other. One animal lives, in that it kills the other.”

—Adolf Hitler, speech to army officers, 1942, quoted in Richard Weikart, *Hitler's Ethic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 4.

(0:17:08) “Our racial idea is only the ‘expression of a worldview’ that recognizes in the higher evolution of humans a divine command.”

—from “Why Are We Fighting?” (1944), Nazi propaganda pamphlet Hitler personally approved, quoted in Richard Weikart, *Hitler's Ethic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 138.

(0:17:41) “The preservation and propagation, the evolution and elevating of life occurs through the struggle for existence, which every plant, every animal, every species and every genus is subjected. Even humans and the human races are subject to this struggle; it decides their value and their right to exist.”

—*Rassenpolitik* (Berlin, n.d.), SS pamphlet approved by both Hitler and Himmler.

(0:18:34) “At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races.”

—Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (1871 edition, J. Murray, London), Part I, Chapter VI, p. 201.

(0:20:27) “Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely the production of the higher animals, directly follows.”

—Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (1859 edition, J. Murray, London), p. 490.

(0:22:54) Adam Sedgwick was Charles Darwin’s mentor at Cambridge. On November 24, 1859, he informed Darwin that passages in Darwin’s book “greatly shocked” his “moral taste.” Sedgwick warned Darwin that his theory of evolution attempted to break the link between the moral and physical parts of nature. He wrote, “Were it possible (which thank God it is not) to break it, humanity in my mind, would suffer a damage that might brutalize it—& sink the human race into a lower grade of degradation than any into which it has fallen since its written records tell us of its history.”

—Adam Sedgwick to Charles Darwin, Nov. 24, 1859, available at <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-2548>.

DVD CHAPTER 3: AMERICAN EUGENICS

(0:30:39) “Nature eliminates the unfit and preserves the fit... It is man, not Nature, who has caused all the trouble. He has put his whole soul to saving the unfit...”

—Harvard biologist Edward M. East, *Heredity and Human Affairs* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1927), p. 311.

(0:39:32) “a good many defectives survive in modern society and are capable of reproduction who would have perished in more primitive society before reaching maturity... thus natural selection, the great law of evolution and progress, is set at naught.”

—Princeton biologist Edwin Conklin, Edwin Conklin, “Value of Negative Eugenics,” *Journal of Heredity*, vol VI, no. 12 (December 1915), pp. 539-540.

(0:45:44) “Birth control... is nothing more or less than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit, of preventing the birth of defectives or of those who will become defectives.”

—Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race* (1920), Chapter XVIII, “The Goal,” available at <http://www.bartleby.com/1013/18.html>.

(0:47:02) “The most merciful thing that the large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it.”

—Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race* (1920), Chapter V, “The Wickedness of Creating Large Families,” available at <http://www.bartleby.com/1013/5.html>.

(0:49:25) “our eyes should be opened to the terrific cost to the community of this dead weight of human waste.”

—Margaret Sanger, in Michael W. Perry, editor, *The Pivot of Civilization in Historical Perspective* by Margaret Sanger (Seattle: Inkling Books, 2001), p. 215.

(0:50:50) “the American public is taxed, heavily taxed, to maintain an increasing race of morons, which threatens the very foundations of our civilization.”

—Margaret Sanger, “The Function of Sterilization,” *Birth Control Review* (October 1926), p. 299.

(0:51:15) “You must all know half a dozen people at least who are no use in this world, who are more trouble than they are worth. Just put them there and say, ‘Sir, or Madam, now will you be kind enough to justify your existence? If you can’t justify your existence, if you’re not pulling your weight in the social boat, if you’re not producing as much as you consume or perhaps a little more, then clearly, we cannot use the

organizations of our society for the purpose of keeping you alive, because your life does not benefit us and it can't be of very much use to yourself.”

—George Bernard Shaw, clip from documentary “The Soviet Story,” available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WBRjU9P5eo&feature=related>.

(0:51:59) “I appeal to the chemists to discover a humane gas that will kill instantly and painlessly. Deadly by all means, but humane, not cruel.”

—George Bernard Shaw, *The Listener*, Feb. 7, 1934.

DVD CHAPTER 4: MODERN EUGENICS

(1:00:14) “Natural selection’s death rate of the jungle helped to purify the primitive race by destroying the weak and permitting only the strong to live and reproduce. Eugenicists hope to arrive at the same result by the selective birth rate.”

—Lena K. Sadler, “Is the Abnormal to Become Normal?” in *A Decade of Progress in Eugenics, Scientific Papers of the Third International Congress of Eugenics* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Co., 1934), p. 198.

(1:01:53) “the life of a newborn baby is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee.”

—Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 122-123.

(1:03:04) “All we are doing is catching up with Darwin. He showed in the nineteenth century that we are simply animals. Humans had imagined we were a separate part of creation, that there was some magical line between us and them. Darwin’s theory undermined the foundations of that entire western way of thinking about the place of our species in the universe.”

—Peter Singer, quoted in Johann Hari, “Peter Singer—An Interview,” *The Independent*, Jan. 7, 2004, available online at <http://www.johannhari.com/archive/article.php?id=410>.

(1:04:35) “We cannot repeal the laws of natural selection. Nature does not let every life form survive. Humanity uniquely, and to its benefit, can exercise some dominion over this process....”

—“A Conversation with Alexander Sanger,” <http://www.alexandersanger.com/interviews.html>.

(1:05:20) “We must become proud that we have taken control of our reproduction. This has been a major factor in advancing human evolution and survival.”

—Alexander Sanger, *Beyond Choice: Reproductive Freedom and the 21st Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p. 302.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

(1:11:17) Darwin argued that the break in evolutionary history between apes and humans came “between the negro or Australian and the gorilla,” thus he thought that blacks are the closest human beings to apes.

—Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (1871 edition, J. Murray, London), Part I, Chapter VI, p. 201.

(1:14:240 “With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health. We civilised men, on the other hand, do our 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 civilised 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.”

—Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (1871 edition, J. Murray, London), Part I, Chapter V, p. 168.