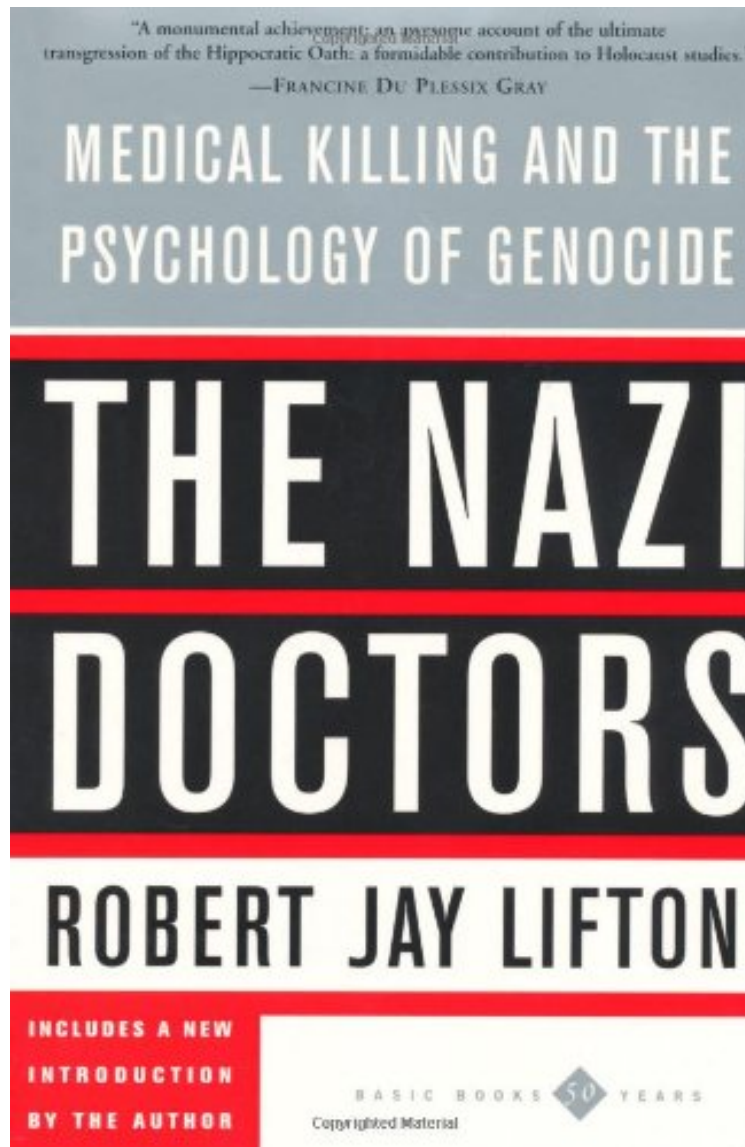


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The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide

Robert Jay Lifton

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Winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize

From Publishers WeeklyNazi doctors did more than conduct bizarre experiments on concentration-camp inmates; they supervised the entire process of medical mass murder, from selecting those who were to be exterminated to disposing of corpses. Lifton (*The Broken Connection; The Life of the Self*) shows that this medically supervised killing was done in the name of "healing," as part of a racist program to cleanse the Aryan body politic. After the German eugenics campaign of the 1920s for forced sterilization of the "unfit," it was but one step to "euthanasia," which in the Nazi context meant systematic murder of Jews. Building on interviews with former Nazi physicians and their prisoners, Lifton presents a disturbing portrait of careerists who killed to overcome feelings of powerlessness. He includes a chapter on Josef Mengele and one on Eduard Wirths, the "kind," "decent" doctor (as some inmates described him) who set up the Auschwitz death machinery. Lifton also psychoanalyzes the German people, scarred by the devastation of World War I and mystically seeking regeneration. This profound study ranks with the most insightful books on the Holocaust. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library JournalThis extraordinary work analyzes the terrible, seemingly contradictory phenomenon of doctors becoming agents of mass murder. With chilling power, it limns the Nazi transmutation of values that allowed medical killing to be seen as a therapeutic healing of the body politic. Based on arresting historical scholarship and personal interviews with Nazi and prisoner doctors, the book traces the inexorable logic leading from early Nazi sterilization and euthanasia of its own citizens to mass extermination of European Jews and other "racial undesirables." Ultimately the book asks how doctors rationalized being "killer-healers." Lifton's responsea multifaceted evaluation of genocide, of the seductive power of Nazi ideology, and of the psychological process of "doubling" is both profound and thought-provoking. A remarkable achievement; it is essential reading. Benny Kraut, Judaic Studies Dept., Univ. of CincinnatiCopyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A powerful reminder not only of what happened, but of the monumental evil done by particular human beings who were trained to heal and cure."?Robert Coles, Boston Globe"This is not only one of the most important works on medical ethics yet written. It also breaks through the frontiers of historiography to provide a convincing psychological interpretation of the Third Reich and the crimes of National Socialism. No one will be able in my view to write perceptively about those times in the future without referring to this interpretation."?Neal Ascherson, New York of Books"A must read.... The book as a whole stands without competition in the English language."?Raul Hilberg, author of *Destruction of the European Jews*"This profound study ranks with the most insightful books on the Holocaust."?Publishers Weekly