



# The State of Health: Illness in Nazi Germany

*Geoffrey Campbell Cocks*

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## **The State of Health: Illness in Nazi Germany** Geoffrey Campbell Cocks

*The State of Health: Illness in Nazi Germany* explores and analyses the experience of illness in German society under National Socialism. As is well known, the Nazis mobilised medicine for purposes of 'racial' cultivation and extermination. What has been much less understood is that the experience of health and illness in the Third Reich also marked a crucial juncture in the history of the modern self and body in Germany and the West. The secular and material bourgeois self was a product of the industrial and commercial society Germany had become before Hitler. The peculiarly rapid pace of social change in Germany, combined with a series of military, political, and economic disasters after 1914, created an environment of heightened sensitivity and anxiety concerning the relationship between individual and community. This historical environment also aggravated concerns about health and illness of the morbid, mortal, and sexual body and mind in which the modern self was lodged. The racist policies of the Third Reich worsened popular anxiety over illness and health. And while Nazism exploited popular longings for 'national community,' the modern self of material pleasure, appetite, and desire too would be prop as well as problem for the Hitler regime.

Drawing from the rich historical literature on modern Germany and the Third Reich, as well as on previously unexamined primary sources from over forty archives, *The State of Health* documents vital continuities and discontinuities in the history of modern Germany and the West, up to and beyond the Nazi years. In exploring the social, medical, and discursive spaces of health and illness in the Third Reich, Geoffrey Cocks illuminates significant and fateful experiences in peace and war with medicine, doctors, and drugs; work; collaboration; constraint and agency; self and other; persecution, enslavement, and extermination; gender and sexuality; pain, injury, madness, and death; and historical memory and amnesia.

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