
Darwinism Versus Social Darwinism: Comparative Essay

What is the difference between Darwinism and social Darwinism and there are two concepts that definitely are important in the study of European history and in the story of human history so let's take a look at the two and see what the difference is all right so let's tackle Darwinism first who was Charles Darwin well Charles Darwin grew up in Britain and he was sort of a theology student but as a young man he really enjoyed studying geology and biology he was one of these curious amateur science types well in 1831 he sort of got the chance to make his hobby into his life's work because he got the Commission to go on the HMS Beagle on a British expedition and the British expedition was going to go and study plants and animals and eventually made its way to the Galapagos Islands Islands which have been really pretty much untouched by human involvement and he was able to study plants and animals and compare them with plants and animals on the mainland this got him thinking he started to pull away from the idea which was prevalent at the time and it was still fairly prevalent today of a divinely inspired life form and he started to develop his theory of natural selection and when he got back to Britain he would write a very influential book which would go ahead and explain that theory so

In 1859 Charles Darwin published on the Origin of Species and in this he put forth this idea of organic evolution in other words there are going to be natural changes in plant and animal life as time evolves and it kind of goes all Thomas Malthus on us here there is a growing population of animals and they're competing for a finite set of resources like food and so therefore there's a competition and when there's a competition not everything can survive so his theory kind of goes like this some animals will develop special adaptations which allow them to more easily more efficiently or more aggressively get the food that they need in order to survive that won't leave enough food for the animals who don't develop this kind of adaptation who will then die off and the animals who have the adaptation in their genes will then pass those genes on to the next generation who will then continue to have that same adaptation that is actual evolution and over a long period of time this could create different species of animals who look act and have different abilities from the species of animals from which they developed now the implication he said of this is that there was a natural selection process whereby the fittest would survive so that's where we get the phrase survival of the fittest and it it's it's a theory that people began to embrace but at this point he was really only talking about plants and animals

It wasn't until 1871 that he published the descent of man and this is what really kind of got him into a lot of trouble with a lot of people and makes his name controversial even to up until today because this is where he said that all creatures including man come from some ancient common ancestor in other words he attacks the idea that had been a major part of Christian beliefs since well the very beginning that man was somehow special in the universe that man had a special place given to him by God that man was the center of creation and now portrayed man is just another animal who had evolved from other animals and there were a lot of reasons why people didn't want to accept this you know whether it be personal belief whether it be arrogance whether it be simply Christian faith

You know there were a lot of reasons and well it was a direct attack on Christianity gradually science came to believe the ideas that Darwin had but some people were going to take it in

different directions so now we come to social Darwinism a guy named Herbert Spencer decided to apply Darwin's ideas of survival of the fittest to human societies and he came up with this theory those societies which were more fit survive would advance farther than societies that did not and for more advanced societies to takeover or attack or whatever societies that were less fit to survive in his eyes was okay because that was the natural way of things this was used by the way for a very long time as sort of the moral justification for the age of imperialism in which European countries went out and colonized those areas of Africa which they had not previously colonized and well parts of Asia as well and they used this justification of social Darwinism to say that the people who lived there were less developed less evolved than the people from Europe

Now of course Herbert Spencer's ultimate sort of justification for all of this is that in this competition for survival there would ultimately be conflict and the winners of the conflict would in their winning prove themselves to be superior to the people that they that they beat and Europe had amazing success in colonizing and beating these other areas it seemed to all kind of make sense to a lot of people now as a theory this is one thing but put but in practice the idea of natural selection in human societies started to turn into something else and that's because the societies that were increasingly being conquered by white Europeans were populated by darker skinned non Europeans and if we generalize and that's what they were doing at the time there there was a natural proclivity to believe that people who had darker skin were less evolved than people who had lighter skin because that's what they were seeing around the world because that's what they needed to justify what they were doing because they were searching for answers probably all of those are true so what's the legacy of these two ideas well let's start with Darwinism

Okay the idea of evolution natural selection and the survival of the fittest is something which is a generally accepted scientific principle today that that there is evolution that if we look at things like fruit flies that you know have really short lifespans and you can watch like generations go by in a couple hours makes it really convenient you can see it happening and I can't give you the complete scientific description of all of this for that you're gonna have to search for someone who's you know knows more stuff about science but for here what it means is that as people begin to believe more in the ideas of evolution they tend to move away from a traditional and literal interpretation of the Bible thus weakening the power of the church and religion in everyday life and the legacy of Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism well that's something that's really a bit scarier a lot scarier because it's sort of the basis for a racial ideology that still kind of haunts Western societies if not the entire world today by implying that people who are non-european are less evolved than Europeans it allowed Europeans to do lots of things to those people that they might not otherwise have done but it is important to understand that these two ideologies radically changed the lives of people and the history of the entire world so that's the basic difference between Darwinism and social Darwinism one is a scientific theory which is still accepted by scientists today and one is a discredited generally considered racist ideology that caused a lot of death and suffering.