

# Darwinism has remade Western society—for the worse

***The Darwin Effect: Its Influence on Nazism, Eugenics, Racism, Communism, Capitalism, and Sexism***

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This work covers the effects of the Darwinian revolution on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century thinking. It is striking how pervasive and harmful this effect has been. Because this work is so rich in diverse topics, I focus on only some of them and concentrate on developments in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Darwin was not simply a product of his time and culture. To the contrary, he effectively steered his culture. His ideas were aggressively promoted and they transformed societies. Moreover, the interactions of Darwinism with so many different strands of human thought were, and are, much too pervasive to be dismissed as ‘misunderstandings’ or ‘misinterpretations’ of Darwinism.

Bergman also makes it obvious that so-called scientific Darwinism and Social Darwinism cannot be dichotomized. The latter flows seamlessly and effortlessly from the former. In fact, ‘Social Darwinism’ was freely practised, not just by extremists but by mainstream biologists. Nor was it some kind of passing 19<sup>th</sup> century fad. Bergman comments: “The racist views of early Darwinists were widely supported, not just by a few renegade

scientists, but by most of the leading biologists until at least the 1950’s” (p. 61).

Finally, the matters raised are not solely of historical interest. There are, for instance, modern forms of racism, sexism, eugenics, etc., that exist even today and I discuss some of them.

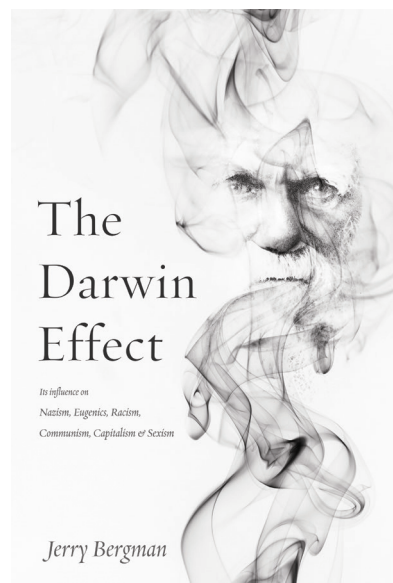
Of course, the author is not claiming that Darwinism was the sole source of ideas such as racism. However, racism became prominent, as never before, because Darwinism gave racism the imprimatur and prestige of scientific support and because racism followed logically from the ‘survival of the fittest’ dictum of evolutionism.

Author Bergman has a sense of humour. He compares those who say that Darwin was a nice, ethical man (not to be held responsible for the implications of his theories) with the fictional Dr Frankenstein, who stated that he was not responsible for the killing spree done by the monster he had created. Touché!

## Racism fuelled, not merely reflected, by Darwinism

Evolutionary ideas, of course, did not begin with Darwin. The late 18<sup>th</sup> century enlightenment, for example, had a proto-evolutionary, anti-Christian strand (as exemplified by Voltaire) that rejected monogenism (all humans descended from Adam and Eve) in favour of polygenism (multiple origins of human races). This was an anti-Christian weapon (p. 64). As for Darwinism, his ideas were widely accepted long before the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859.

It is not correct to say that Darwinism merely ‘joined’ the racism that



had already existed. Leading Harvard evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould pointed out “biological arguments for racism may have been common before 1859, but they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of evolutionary theory” (p. 135). Nor was this limited to abstract, academic theories. Darwinism created an explosion of practical racism that had not existed before. Bergman writes: “It was primarily between 1870 and 1900 that educated Americans moved toward a wide acceptance of varying forms of eugenic-based racism” (p. 56).

The long-term racist impact of Darwinism on public policy cannot be overstated. Bergman comments:

“Major Leonard Darwin, Charles’s son, was president of the British Eugenics Society from 1911 to 1928. The impact of the eugenics movement on American law was especially profound. In the 1920s, Congress passed numerous laws intended to restrict the influx of ‘inferior races’, including those from southern and eastern Europe, as well as China. Eugenic beliefs were also reflected in everything from school textbooks to social policy. American Blacks especially faced the brunt of these laws. . . . Interracial marriages

were forbidden by law in most states, and discouraged by social pressure in all states” (p. 55).

### Darwinian racism in action

The Darwinism-based racism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had many different manifestations. White explorers saw non-white natives as self-evidently inferior in an evolutionary sense (figure 1). Western imperialism seemed to follow naturally from the struggle for existence, and the dominance of more evolved races over less evolved races seemed to be self-evidently justified by nature. That blacks should serve as slaves of whites seemed common sense. Pygmies were brought in to Western countries, and displaced in circuses and freak shows, as examples of ‘missing links’ or evolutionary atavisms. They helped convince the general public to believe in evolution.

The American Civil War largely centered on racism and slavery. Afterwards, the KKK (Ku Klux Klan), a major American white racist organization, obtained intellectual support from Darwinism. Bergman shows how the KKK used the Darwinian theme of black ‘savages’. Some KKK literature even rejected the biblical doctrine of creation in favour of a pre-Adamite theory which posited that blacks had originated from an earlier stock of half-beast ancestors. The British-Israelism creed taught that whites were the true ‘chosen people’, not Jews, and that this status excluded non-whites.

Such thinking exists today. David Duke, a former KKK member, raised Methodist, abandoned the monogenism of the Genesis account and embraced evolution. He was bowing to science and began using many of the same rationalizations as theistic evolutionists. This was because the differences between races were, to him, much too prominent to be ignored or downplayed. Ironically, David Duke

bought into the now-discredited notion of 98% similarity, between chimps and humans, to argue that seemingly trivial differences in the human DNA of different races can result in profound and immutable differences between the human races.

Pointedly, Darwin-inspired racism is not just of historical interest. Nor is it limited to white people. Although Communism is supposed to be anti-racist, with racism being a tool of the capitalists to pit working-class peoples against each other, this did not prevent Chinese Communists from emphasizing racism with reference to the superiority of their own peoples. They did so within, of course, the context of Chinese culture.

Bergman does not mention that some modern African-Americans have turned Darwinian racism on its head. They have adopted Afrocentric thinking. This posits that blacks really had invented everything—including the Egyptian pyramids—and that the whites had merely copied and stolen their inventions. Some African-Americans also developed Darwinian racist constructs that have

posited that whites are ‘ice people’. Accordingly, the white race evolved during the ice age, and thereby exhibits negative characteristics such as lack of compassion, selfish individualism with acquisitive spirit, an absence of community, etc. In contrast, blacks are a more evolved ‘sun people’, having developed a strong sense of caring and community as a result of their evolutionary experiences.

### Sexism

Darwinism added impetus to the notion that human females were inferior to males. This seemed self-evident. Males experience strong natural selection for the ‘fittest’. This is manifested by men doing dangerous tasks, engaging in warfare, directly competing with each other for females, etc. This, of course, ignored the fact that most traits are not sex-linked, and so the same trait can be inherited by either the son or daughter of a union.

The foregoing is not only of historical interest. Sociobiology is a modern sub-discipline that has revived Darwinian-based biological



Photo: iStock/Elenarts

**Figure 1.** One of many different forms of ‘ape man’ that seemed to follow from Darwinian concepts and which had obvious racist implications.

determinism as an explanation for many forms of human behaviour, notably that related to sex. In addition, some forms of modern feminism have argued, based on Darwinism, that it is actually the female that is the superior sex and that males have evolved to fulfil females' needs.

Some evolutionists today speak of Darwinism governing sexual behaviour in a manner that puts men and women into conflict according to their evolutionary needs. Thus, men tend to be promiscuous because their investment in their offspring is minimal and they are naturally selected to have as many offspring as possible. Females, on the other hand, are strongly invested in their young and so are naturally selected to find males who will take care of them and their offspring. In some cases, evolution has been used to justify rape as an evolutionarily legitimate strategy for creating more offspring and passing on one's genes to future generations.

### **Predatory capitalism**

Bergman examines the effect of Darwinism in shaping the attitudes of the likes of American capitalist baron Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919). Carnegie embraced evolution and was an ardent disciple of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), who coined the term 'survival of the fittest'. Thus he specifically related his conduct to the elimination of the less fit in favour of the more fit. He saw himself as an evolutionary success story, born in abject poverty to become one of the richest men in history. Fortunately, in later life, he broke with Spencerianism to become a leading philanthropist, giving away 90% of his wealth.

Although predatory capitalism, and Communism, at first seem to be opposites, they are not. Both see Christianity and its teachings as weak and outdated. Both are materialistic views of existence. Both are merely two sides

of the same coin—the Darwinian struggle for existence as manifested by the class struggle.

### **From religious belief to Darwinism to atheistic Communism**

The author delves into Communism. One striking feature of Bergman's work is the fact that most of the pioneering Communist leaders had been devout believers who got swept away by Darwinism and only then adopted Communism as a substitute religion. Bergman quotes James Pusey, who commented: "Marxism converted intellectuals—but [only] intellectuals who were already converted to Darwinism" (p. 278). The rest is history.

Let us elaborate on this. Karl Marx, of Jewish ethnicity, had been baptized a Lutheran and had written of his love for Christ. At university, however, he fell for atheism and materialism, and only then became a Communist. Friedrich Engels, raised in a pietistic religious family, also fell in love with Darwinism, calling it "absolutely splendid".

The same trend developed among emerging Russian revolutionaries. Alexander Herzen wrote of Darwinism in glowing terms. Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin), raised by devout Bible-believing parents, became, in his words, fascinated with the ideas of Charles Darwin. Lev Davidovich Bronstein (Leon Trotsky) was converted from Orthodox Judaism to Communism through Darwinism. Joseph Dzhugashvili (Joseph Stalin) studied to be a priest before getting swept away by Darwinism and becoming a Communist.

The foregoing path, from religion to Darwinism to Communism, was also trod by revolutionaries outside of the Soviet Union. Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong), raised by a religiously devout (Buddhist) mother, became enamoured with Darwinism and then became a

revolutionary. In fact, he came to see Darwinism as the foundation of Chinese scientific socialism, and strove to promote world Communism not only by revolution but also by war.

### **The murderous nature of Communism**

Communism inflicted unspeakable suffering on humans. Mao Zedong's policies led to the murder of millions of Chinese, up to 30 million (or more). Mass murderer Pol Pot, the architect of the Cambodian genocide, had been inspired by both Mao Zedong and Charles Darwin. So was Vietnamese Communist leader Ho Chi Minh.

The total death toll from Communism assumes staggering proportions, as tabulated by Bergman (pp. 347–348). It amounts to at least several tens of millions of victims.

### **Conclusions**

The reader may be astonished by the many manifestations of Darwinism in public policy. Clearly, this was a long-term intellectually established process.

Some evolutionists speak of Darwin and religion as being in separate magisteria. Compromising evangelicals, and many other Christians, never tire of saying that religion and evolution are completely compatible. Such a position reveals a complete misunderstanding of Darwinism and its fundamentally atheistic character, and is decisively contradicted by the historical developments discussed in this book.

Though not written this way, this work is a stinging rebuke to those who say that Darwinism is purely a scientific matter that can be placed in a watertight compartment apart from religion, politics, etc. Ideas do have consequences!