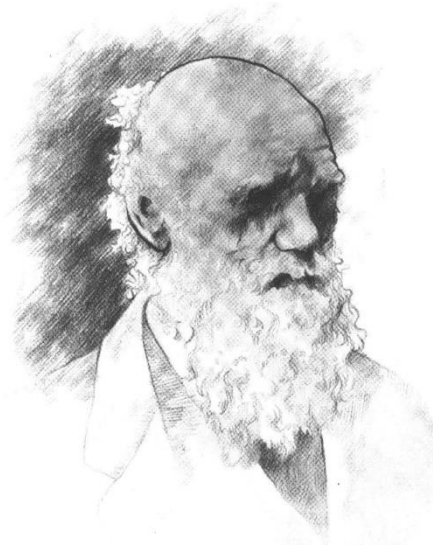


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Social Darwinism

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How, then, does Darwin rule from his grave?

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The answer has to do with the questions everyone at some time or another asks: *What makes the world continue? Where did I come from? Why are things as they are?* These are important, perennial questions. Not to ask them is to give evidence of having a mind narrower than the one needed to survive in the world of men and nations. But what is particularly significant in our day is the way these questions have been answered by the intellectually elite.

As is so often the case with an intellectual construct, Darwinism has moved out from its original platform to operate in a wider world. The ideas of evolution have left the confines of biology, botany, and paleontology and are now thought to apply to the social structure at large. This application of Darwinism to social structures is called Social Darwinism and is foundational for our culture. It represents the way Darwin rules our society from the grave.

What are the assumptions that make up this Social Darwinism? The first assumption is the idea that the social structure is engineered and controlled by impersonal forces rather than by God. Until the emergence of Social Darwinism, it was generally held in the West that the process of history constantly revealed that the Judeo-Christian God was behind it. The founders of America rested in the confidence that “there is a just God who presides above the destinies of nations.” That statement revealed the mind-set of Western culture present at the time. It was a largely undisputed first principle in the light of which other realities were examined.

Darwin changed all of this. His idea of natural selection is meaningless gibberish unless he is in fact referring to an impersonal force, a power that propels history and establishes its direction. Although Darwin had Christian associations as a young man, as his life progressed he became less and less willing to ascribe the control and direction of history to God. Rather, he came to think of the progress of history as being determined by the

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impersonal engine of natural selection. God was exchanged for a force, and history dropped into a depersonalized mode.

The Social Darwinists of our time have continued along this line. Our society, once rightly called a Christian civilization, has become secular to a greater degree than the solons of Western civilization would have thought possible. Education, government, business, the media, and, in many cases, religion, have moved through progressive stages of secularization from Christianity to atheism. As a result, God is not merely ignored but rather is resented, opposed, and vilified at every opportunity. With unimaginable arrogance, our society has declared Jesus Christ to be *persona non grata* in the culture. Concomitantly, the Bible has lost its final authority, the Christian religion has been pluralized, the family is fast disappearing, and morals are at a low ebb. Those who insist that the force that moves history is not God are now on the speaker's platform and before the television cameras. What will they do when the platform collapses and the lights go out?

The second assumption of Social Darwinism is that society is moving upward from a mean past to an improving future. The evolutionist insists that life began in the primordial slime as its lowly provenance. The engine of culture worked from there, producing in our time the best world that has ever been. This "improvement" will continue until perfect culture comes into being.

Social Darwinism is Utopian. It looks at what it thinks is a straight upward line of progress from the past until this moment. It then extends that dotted line into the future, implying and directly asserting that that utopia will be produced by the maturing evolutionary process. Although the promise of a perfect tomorrow is a perennial theme of politics, education, commerce, and religion, because of Social Darwinism, our present society has heard more promises along this line than most.

The assertion is even made that evolution has given us the intelligence and technical skill to control our own evolution. So man now becomes some kind of a god. But those who promise inevitable improvement in the social structure are hard put to produce any evidence of that improvement. In fact, by every relevant standard of measurement, we are living not in an improving society but, rather, are living in a deteriorating one.

That is particularly evident when we consider the ultimate standard by which improvement or degeneration of a culture is to be measured, the moral standard. Whatever may be the degree of technical progress or military prowess, those advances are meaningless apart from moral improvement. Technical improvement apart from moral improvement is thus a sure harbinger of fatal consequences. When advancing technology and declining morality occur concurrently, as they do in our time, they

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become a time bomb capable of blowing history into a thousand pieces. Yet the utopians of our society are so committed to Social Darwinism that they refuse to consider any evidence but the superficial tokens of improvement. This attitude, if continued, will be fatal.

The third assumption of Social Darwinism is that man, a human, is nothing more than a higher sort of animal. This claim is set forth succinctly in the title of a book that popularized the concept, Desmond Morris's *The Naked Ape* (1980). Man is seen as little more than an intelligent orangutan. Those who protest the classification are chided by the social elite for being inconsiderate to their hairy cousins.

Yet it strikes us that the one who holds that the human and the orangutan are related has not spent much time in a zoo. In purely biological terms, the evolutionary connection between man and the animals is unproved by any evidence, although it is continually proclaimed by the social scientists who have become the gurus of our culture. Moreover, Social Darwinism is not able to explain the moral structure of the human being, specifically the fact that man has an acute sense of the difference between *is* and *ought*, a difference that cannot possibly come from chemistry. Science can tell us what has happened, but it is unable to tell us what should have happened or what should not have happened.

The fourth assumption of Social Darwinism is the idea that soul, spirit, and eternal life are but chemical actions of the brain. This kind of chemical determinism refuses to admit the existence of "mind" but holds that all things, even those things considered "thoughts," come from brain matter. Here the evolutionist reveals that he must also be a behaviorist. He must hold that the difference between Shakespeare and some village pornographer is created by accidental connections of cells within the human cortex.

At this point the evolutionary concept breaks down completely. If all things, including human thought and spirituality, are determined by electrochemistry in the human cranium, we have a mechanistic universe. In such a universe, existence is the same as nonexistence, up is not different from down, logic is nonsense, and rationality evaporates before our eyes. Nothing remains but nihilism, where all things never were, never are, nor ever will be. If the mind is not an entity separate and distinct from the physical body, the light of understanding goes out and all becomes incomprehensible.

And who can doubt that incomprehensibility has become the condition of our present age? This world, professing itself to be wise, has become foolish, as the apostle Paul puts it in the book of Romans. It has "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like corruptible man, and birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (1:23). God

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gives up such to “uncleanness,” “vile affections,” and a “reprobate mind” (Romans 1:24–28). A world that drops into reprobation has moved beyond hope and beyond life.

As we look about us at the deterioration of our culture, we cannot help but wonder why that deterioration has occurred. A significant part of the answer is that our present age has willingly succumbed to the anti-intellectualism of Social Darwinism. The world that Darwin rules from his grave is not a world of ivory palaces and mounting perfection. No, indeed, it is a world that sees the lowering sun of the afternoon of life without ever remembering that afternoon is succeeded by evening, and evening by night.

Darwin's son described early memories he had of his father: “I remember him many years ago at a christening; a memory which has remained with me, because to us children it seemed an extraordinary and abnormal occurrence. I remember his look most distinctly at his brother Erasmus' funeral, as he stood in the scattering of snow, wrapped in a long black funeral coat, with a grave look of sad revery.”¹

¹ Breese, D. (1990). *Seven men who rule the world from the grave* (pp. 47–51). Moody Publishers.