

Their battles with the black death shaped their religious outlooks and personal life-and-death experiences. Luther's writings on the black death suggest that he understood the plague to be both a spiritual and a personal test of character. Although the source or purpose of the disease remained a mystery, committed Christians had several clear directives: preserve order, tend to the sick and avoid spreading the contagion. Amid the terror of a plague outbreak, Luther urged his followers to display courage, common sense, and compassion.

Darwinian Racism

Doug Overmyer

Doug Overmyer wrote this source analysis as a senior at Eastern Illinois for Historical Sources and Techniques (His 2500) under Professor Casey Machula during Spring 1996. He is currently a graduate student in the Master of Arts in History program.

In 1856, Charles Darwin revolutionized the biological sciences with his monumental *Origin of Species*, in which he described the evolution of species as a product of natural selection. He argued convincingly that various species engage in a vast struggle for existence in the battlefield of Nature. As species contested over scarce resources, Darwin insisted, the stronger species survived and the weaker perished. In essence, Nature selects certain varieties as *wisfit* to carry on, while allowing others to survive. These latter varieties would then adapt to their ever-changing surroundings and the competition would continue. By this process, animals *progress*, or evolve, from inferior to superior species.

Through his later work, specifically *The Descent of Man*, he applied his theory of Natural Selection to humans. Thenceforth, a struggle raged in public circles after his theory became widely known. Some accepted his new interpretation of old data, while others rejected it. In the latter quarter of the nineteenth century and the beginning decades of the twentieth, many politicians in industrialized nations came to accept Darwin's theory, and began formulating laws to apply this scientific theory to society in general. This extrapolation of scientific thought to social thought was nothing new: the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution applied Enlightenment thought of the eighteenth century (some of which derived from the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth) to the American public domain. However, applying Darwin's new scientific thought to social policy had drastic consequences. These *Social Darwinists*, overwhelmingly white Europeans, believed their own race was the superior of any race among humanity. Dimesh D'Souza has rightly argued that this line of thought culminated with the idea of "might makes

right" and to "oppose it was to stigmatize yourself a religious fanatic or an ignominus."²¹ He also notes that many writers today "make a strenuous effort to distance Darwin from racism, [citing] his record as an opponent of slavery, and blame the racism that subsequently took his name on the unscientific 'social Darwinism' which is generally branded as a distortion of the theory of evolution."²² This paper analyzes Darwin's own writings to show he endorsed both racism and social Darwinism.

Darwinism is inherently racist; and furthermore, Charles Darwin himself spawned the racist slant in this social movement which bears his name. Indeed, the works of Darwin are blatantly racist, both on the international and the domestic level. Charles Darwin, of course, did not invent racism. In fact, the idea of social Darwinism found its roots in certain Enlightenment ideals. Charles Darwin, especially in *The Descent of Man*, merely offered racists his scientific stamp of approval.³

Social Darwinists can use the works of Darwin himself to justify imperialism. Consider briefly his theory of natural selection and its application to humankind. Throughout *The Origin of Species*, Darwin suggests that humankind is not a part of Nature, that the rules which normally apply in parts of Nature untouched by humanity do not apply to humans and human development.⁴ However, in *The Descent of Man*, he applies his theory of natural selection to human society. The different races of man, he wrote, are "sub-species" in humanity.⁵ One of these sub-species, or races, will eventually prove to be supreme and will subjugate the others. In a Marxist-like cycle, he predicted that different races of man would clash and struggle for the scarce resources found in Nature to survive; after the struggle, the

¹Dinesh D'Souza, *The End of Racism* (New York, 1995), 132.

²*Ibid.*, 128.

³*Ibid.*, 131. For the purpose of this study, racism will be considered the opinion that one group of individuals which share similar physical characteristics, social norms, and society is supreme to another group of individuals with different criteria.

⁴His chapters separate natural selection from man-inspired artificial selection. If man were a part of nature, according to Darwin, then no distinction between these, artificial and natural, would be necessary.

⁵Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species and Descent of Man* (New York, 1971), 537.

defeated race would whither into extinction, while the superior race would advance into the next struggle.⁶ He wrote "when civilized nations [i.e. white Europeans] come into contact with barbaric (nations) the struggle is short"⁷ and after the "struggle," the defeated "barbaric" race "will surely decrease in number ...sooner or later (leading) to extinction; the end ...being promptly determined by the inroads (of) the conquering (race)."⁸ Extinction of the conquered, he wrote in *Origin of Species*, was essential for the progress of the superior animal in the struggle. To further illustrate, he wrote that "extinction follows chiefly from competition of ...race versus race."⁹ If a certain race could not adapt to the new conditions imposed on it by the conquering race, it would necessarily be exterminated, and Darwin concluded that "civilized races can certainly resist changes of all kinds far better than savages."¹⁰

Darwin further believed these inferior races "of men resemble domesticated animals" and even compared the lowest savages to the highest ape.¹¹ He claimed that

the reduced size of the jaws from lessened use ...with increased size of the brain from greater intellectual activity ...and increased body stature ...have together produced a considerable effect on their [civilized men] general appearance when compared with savages.¹²

Furthermore, he cites evidence that the brain of the "Bushman race ...[is] considerably less complicated and more symmetrical than in the European brain."¹³ Since Darwin believed that "endurance and success on Earth ...could be attributed to the ability of races to adapt themselves to the threats and challenges

⁶As paraphrased by Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Russian Revolution* (Ann Arbor, 1931; reprinted Toronto, 1966), 21. Berdyaev goes into more detail linking the importance between Marxism and Darwinism in his work.

⁷Darwin, *Origin*, 543.

⁸*Ibid.*, 530.

⁹*Ibid.*, 542.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 549.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 414, 445.

¹²*Ibid.*, 555.

¹³*Ibid.*, 559.

of the natural environment,"¹⁴ and, according to Peter Bowler, citing more evidence that "whites have a larger cranium capacity than other races,"¹⁵ he felt confident in insisting that eventually, civilized people would exterminate the world of the inferior races of man. Here, Darwin clearly sounds the imperialistic trumpet blasted by every colony-hungry European and North American power.

Of course Charles Darwin did not pioneer this scientifically sanctioned racism alone. Thomas H. Huxley, an avid supporter of Darwinism, wrote that "no rational man cognizant of the facts, believes the average Negro is the equal, still less the superior of the average white man."¹⁶ In addition, Ernst Heinrich Philip August Haeckel, who became known as "Darwin's Bulldog on the continent" introduced a form of social Darwinism to Germany which eventually became a principle ideology in Germany's vision of racism, imperialism, and nationalism.¹⁷ Finally, Darwinists everywhere claimed according to some commentators, that "some races had fallen so far behind...they could never catch up with the triumphant whites,"¹⁸ and "as the resources of the world became scarce...the stronger animals would prevail and the weaker would die out,"¹⁹ therefore implying the justness of the extermination of those latter weaklings.

Darwin and his supporters easily took these general scientific "facts" and derived social policies not only to exterminate other races, but to further enhance their own. Indeed, social Darwinists were scientifically justified, for if the weak in their own race were allowed to survive, the race would deteriorate in quality and some other race would consequently pass it. For instance, J. B. Hayscraft wrote that

¹⁴D'Souza, *End of Racism*, 129.

¹⁵Peter J. Bowler, *Biology and Social Thought: 1850-1914* (Berkeley, 1993), 70.

¹⁶Thomas Huxley, "Emancipation -Black and White," chap. in *Science and Education* (New York, 1901), 64-7.

¹⁷Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism: Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League* (New York, 1921), xvi, xvii, cited in Russell Grigg, "Ernst Haeckel: Evangelist for evolution and apostle of deceit," *Creation: ex nihilo* 18 (March-May 1996): 33-6.

¹⁸Bowler, *Biology and Social Thought*, 69.

¹⁹D'Souza, *End of Racism*, 130.

racial change, improvement, or deterioration, is brought about... by what is termed selection, that is, by the death or non-productiveness of certain individuals of a race whereby others alone remain. If this remnant is organically superior, the next generation inheriting only from them will be themselves superior; [and] racial improvement is brought about.²⁰

Naturally, those of a race who are weak should die off quickly; hence keeping the next generation from inheriting the former's weaknesses.

To allow the biologically weak to survive in modern society poses a threat to that society. Indeed, Darwin despaired at mankind's own charity to the weak and downtrodden:

we civilized men do our utmost to check the process of elimination: we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, the sick, we institute poor [welfare] laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment...[all] highly injurious to the race of man.²¹

Unfortunately, Darwin wrote, that all of this aid "we feel impelled to give to the helpless is mainly an incidental result of the instinct of sympathy."²² In contrast, the social Darwinist believes, diseases such as "tuberculosis is the friend of the race, for it attacks no healthy man or woman, but only the feeble."²³ Because, the Darwinist cannot let the feeble survive if the race is to advance, he commends also leprosy, typhoid fever, measles, syphilis, hemophilia, diabetes, and cancer, for these kill off the weak, leaving only the strong to survive.²⁴ Today, the Darwinist would not help the HIV carrier, for "it is probable that, as a race, we shall thereby suffer, for the banishment of the disease will enable the feeble members of the community to live and

²⁰John Berry Hayscraft, *Darwinism and Race Progress* (London, 1895), 17.

²¹Darwin, *Origin*, 501.

²²*Ibid.*, 501-2.

²³Hayscraft, *Darwinism*, 57.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 58.

...contribute to the progeny of the future."²⁵ Furthermore, the social Darwinist praises the "popular and widespread feeling against the marriage of those with a distinct family history of insanity,"²⁶ which in his period included those with mental retardation, depression, and those with physical disabilities such as a hearing impairment. These inferior people are not to be allowed to reproduce, lest those defective characteristics be preserved in the race regardless of the "incidental result of the instinct of sympathy," which is "highly injurious to the race of man."²⁷ However, biological defects alone do not constitute what may result in the decline of a race.

Indeed, proper morality in a society is also selected by nature to survive with superior race as Darwin poses this example:

a savage will risk his own life to save that of a member of the same community, but will be wholly indifferent about a stranger ...[while] many a civilized man, or even boy, who never before risked his life for another, but full of courage and sympathy, has disregarded the instinct of self-preservation, and plunged at once into a torrent to save a drowning man, though a stranger.²⁸

Hence, those societies with supreme morals will subjugate those societies with poor morals. Furthermore, immoral traits in a superior society will be eliminated: "a timid man ...[whose] instinct of self-preservation might be so strong," may be unable to bring himself to "run any such risk [which may impair his life], perhaps not even for his own child." Thus, the race fortunately loses his weak characteristics if the child dies.²⁹

According to Darwinist thinking, a race should strive to multiply from those which are fitter (i.e. physically, mentally, and morally stronger) and exterminate the unfit, or at least limit their abilities to propagate. Among "the intellectually superior and

²⁵*Ibid.*, 51.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷This issue is still one of controversy today. Do those with mental retardation forfeit the right to have children simply because they have a congenital defect? The Darwinist would say, "Yes!"

²⁸Darwin, *Origin*, 481-2.

²⁹*Ibid.* 482.

...the inferior, there can be little doubt that the former would succeed best in all occupations, and rear a greater number of children."³⁰ Furthermore, the intellectually superior person, who is more successful, achieves wealth, and "bequeaths it to his children, so that the children of the rich have an advantage over the poor in the race for success."³¹ However, occasionally great wealth "tends to convert men into useless drones, but their number is never large; and some degree of elimination here occurs, for we daily see rich men, who happen to be fools or profligate, squandering away their wealth."³² Therefore, the wealthy, having the useful morals and skills to succeed, are overall much more suited to contribute to the continued existence of the race: since the poor are therefore the weaker and not suited to contribute to that race's progeny, they are immoral and hence unfit. This line of reasoning is the basis for much of social Darwinist thought.

The poor, nonetheless, attempt to overwhelm society with offspring to that society's detriment. Darwin complains that the

poor and reckless ...almost invariably marry early, whilst the careful and frugal, who are generally otherwise virtuous, marry late in life, so that they may be able to support themselves and their children in comfort. Those who marry early ...produce many more children.... Thus the reckless, degraded, and often vicious members of society tend to increase at a quicker rate than the provident and generally virtuous members.³³

Darwin, ever the objective English scientist, cites evidence that the

careless, squalid, unambitious Irishman multiplies like rabbits: the frugal, foreseeing, self-respecting, ambitious Scot, stern in his morality, spiritual in his faith, sagacious and disciplined in his intelligence, passes his best years

³⁰*Ibid.*, 503.

³¹*Ibid.*, 502.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

in struggle and in celibacy, marries late, and leaves few behind him.³⁴

Indeed, says Darwin passionately, "In the eternal 'struggle for existence,' it would be the inferior and less favored race that had prevailed—and prevailed by virtue not of its good qualities but of its faults."³⁵ Luckily, Darwin concludes, there are "some checks to this downward tendency" of poor children overwhelming society.³⁶

Indeed, Nature is not so blind as to let immorality stain its superior races, and circumstances ensure the survival and advancement of these cultures. While, Darwin notes, "the poorest classes crowd into towns," the consequent "death-rate is higher in towns than in rural districts."³⁷ Furthermore, even if some of the rich live in towns, "no doubt more than twice the number of births would be requisite to keep up the number of the very poor inhabitants in the towns," or in other words, more poor, unhealthy children die than rich children.³⁸ Nature imposes yet another check on the growth of the poor and immoral (in the eyes of all governing Natural Selection) by the high mortality rate of those who are poor and wasteful: immoral people will not take the time to achieve success; only immoral people marry young, and hence remain poor. Darwin insists that women who marry under twenty have twice the chance of dying in any given year as "the same number of the unmarried. The mortality, also, of husbands under twenty is 'excessively high.'"³⁹ However, if a man, rich or poor, never marries, then he is certainly a waste to Nature since his qualities do not have a chance to be passed on. Darwinist thought claims he is immoral and Nature will eliminate him. Also, insists Darwin, men weak of heart and spirit have little chance of finding a mate.⁴⁰ Nature insures they will remain unmarried to eliminate his destructive characteristics. He is

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., 505.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 506. Darwin is quoting a sociologist here.

⁴⁰Ibid. Darwin also deals at length with this topic under the heading Sexual Selection, *ibid.*, starting on 567-94, and 867-894.

doomed to die a young death. Indeed, Darwin quotes a sociologist that, "[b]achelorhood is more destructive to life than the most unwholesome trades."⁴¹ Consequently since, "marriage in itself is the main cause of prolonged life.... We may, therefore, infer that sound and good men who out of prudence remain for a time unmarried, do not suffer a high rate of mortality."⁴² To conclude, Nature favors those who wait for a time to acquire success before marrying, and then blesses these ever so wise people with long life. Meanwhile, Nature eliminates the weak and imprudent who marry early, while poor, and breed like rodents, to the detriment of society.

Therefore, Darwin concludes that any action outside of nature to protect the poor, such as welfare laws, is "wrongly directed."⁴³ Most of the rich are so by virtue of being the most moral in a society, and any laws restricting them also seems misdirected.

Social Darwinists, however, assume that perhaps Nature may not be effective enough in its efforts in eliminating the poor and weak from a race; and consequently, many of these scientists and philosophers, armed with *The Origin of Species and Descent of Man*, began developing dangerous social theories to help it. To further enhance the superior race, social Darwinists decided to do away with all inferiors: those weaklings of their own race and all other inferior races. According to Sir Francis Galton who coined the term, the science of eugenics, which deals with exterminating the unwanted mental or physical qualities in a race to "protect" future generations and had its roots in racism.⁴⁴ The Breeder's Association, a Darwinist group founded at the turn of the century, wanted to sterilize the lower tenth (determined by their own definition) of the American people from generation to generation in order to have done away with the unfit by 1980. Indeed, "Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, coined the slogan, "More children from the fit, less from the unfit."⁴⁵ She further described African-Americans and East-European immigrants to the United States as "a menace to civilization" and

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 506.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*, 501.

⁴⁴D'Sauza, *End of Racism*, 257.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 118.

Patrick Pearse and the Triumph of Failure

Matthew E. Thrun

Matthew Thrun completed his B.A. in History in Spring 1997 and will be working on his J.D. at Loyola University School of Law. This essay was written for an Advanced Composition class for English Professor Richard Sylvia during Spring 1996.

Only Cuchulainn, the Hound of Ulster, remained, fatally wounded, his side and stomach gaping with wounds. He bound himself with his sword-belt to a pillar-stone, *Carrig-an-Compan*, so that he might die standing, facing his enemies. And so he did, with drawn sword in hand, a raven perched on his shoulder, the rays of the setting sun bright on his bronze helmet, a terror even in death to his enemies.¹

Patrick Pearse's idealistic ways were set when he founded St. Enda's College in 1908 and emblazoned a quote of Cuchulainn's upon a wall so that all his students would see it. "I care not though I were to live but one day and one night, if only my fame and my deeds live after me." This was Patrick Pearse speaking through Cuchulainn; he too saw himself as fighting an unbeatable foe and he also knew that one day he would be killed in this fight. It was with this mind set and with this Irish hero in his thoughts that Pearse set out on that fateful Monday in 1916 to lead the Easter Rising, an Irish revolt against British occupation. Pearse dreamed of being a hero to his country and wanted his deeds to live on after him.

Patrick (Padraic) Pearse was born on November 10, 1879, on Great Brunswick Street, now Pearse Street, in Dublin. His father was James Pearse, a English sculptor. Politically, James was a proponent of Home Rule, a proposed through which Ireland would remain a part of the British Empire but with self-government. His fathers one literary work was a pamphlet entitled *England's duty to Ireland as it appears to an*

"human weeds."⁴⁶ She believed the best way to kill weeds is to kill their roots, while admitting that Planned Parenthood does "not want word to get out that we want to exterminate the Negro population."⁴⁷ Clearly, according to the social Darwinist, "the struggle of race with race (culminates in) the survival of the physically and mentally fitter race."⁴⁸

Clearly Darwin was a racist, as *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* show, and believed in the superiority of his race over those he called "savages." His works are full of references belittling "inferior" races and inferior people in his own race, and he approved of their subjugation and extinction. These references and beliefs were more than enough for his followers to feed upon, and the parasitic disease of social Darwinism spread like the cancer they strove to protect. In the name of progress, people were conquered and subjugated, and schemes were spewed forth to preserve and advance their own "superior" race. Clearly, the theory of evolution needs to be reexamined. Irrefutably, scientifically endorsed racism is founded upon Charles Darwin.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., 275.

¹Desmond Williams, *The Irish Struggle 1912-1926* (London, 1967), 1.