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A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF DARWINISM'S ROLE IN THE VICTIMIZATION OF GENOCIDE VICTIMS AND THE POLITICS OF “EUGENICS”

Relevance of the Problem. Traditional biological Darwinism provides an acceptable explanation for the origin of species: complex “fit” species evolve, survive, and thrive, while less fit competitors stagnate, die, and become extinct. Biological evolution, at least in its pure form, is purely descriptive. Social Darwinism, by contrast, often has a very attributive component, as it concerns human behavior. What is the actual connection between biological evolution and social Darwinism? These question will undoubtedly occupy scholars for many years and may never be resolved. The **aim** of this article is to critically examine the historical misuse of Darwinian evolutionary theory in justifying harmful political ideologies and social policies, particularly in the contexts of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Soviet Union. To explore how concepts such as “survival of the fittest” were distorted to rationalize eugenics, racism, and totalitarianism, and to assess the lasting impact of these misapplications on both the public perception of evolution and the broader ethical discourse surrounding scientific theories. The research investigates how Darwinism was adapted to justify racism, genocide, eugenics, and other forms of social violence. **Objectives:** To define the concept of “social Darwinism” and distinguish it from biological Darwinism. To reveal the mechanisms of interpretation and transformation of Darwinian ideas within various ideological systems. To examine historical cases of the application of social Darwinism in the political practices of the 20th century. To assess the impact of these interpretations on public perception of evolutionary theory. To analyze the moral and ethical consequences of the ideological use of scientific concepts. **Research methods.** historical and logical approach, comparisons and analogies, structural-functional method and dialectical principles of objectivity of research a methodological basis that allows studying social Darwinism as a unique factor in the formation of ideological slogans at different levels and identifying its dependence on the specifics of the context – historical, social, ethnocultural. **Results.** The study found that despite the purely scientific nature of Darwin's theory of natural selection, its principles were repeatedly instrumentalized for ideological purposes. In Nazi Germany, evolutionary concepts were distorted to support racial theory, eugenics, and genocide. In Stalinist USSR, ideas of social selection were used to justify mass repression and cultural annihilation. In the U.S. and Western Europe, social Darwinist ideas underpinned forced sterilization programs. These findings demonstrate that social Darwinism functioned not as a scientific doctrine but as a rhetorical tool for legitimizing preexisting political agendas. **Conclusion.** Darwinism has consistently been tied to social and ideological agendas that have nothing to do with the “origin of species”. The tragedy of Darwinism's history is that it has always looked much wider than biology. And today, Christian opposition to evolution is based on the belief that Darwin's theory undermines traditional values and opens the door to all sorts of evil.

Key words: Social Darwinism, evolution, Nazism, eugenics program, genocide, Christianity

Introduction. Traditional biological Darwinism provides an acceptable explanation for the origin of species: complex “fit” species evolve, survive, and thrive, while less fit competitors stagnate, die, and become extinct. Biological evolution, at least in its pure form, is purely descriptive. Social Darwinism, by contrast, often has a very attributive component, as it concerns human behavior. Moral judgments about behavior are made on the basis of how it fits into the overall Darwinian scheme. Social Darwinism remains a controversial topic, with countless questions swirling around it. What exactly does the term Social Darwinism mean? What did Darwin think of it as an extension of his ideas? What is the actual connection between biological evolution and social Darwinism? Are the moral prescriptions of social Darwinism really supported by Darwin’s theory? To what extent has biological Darwinism been used for propaganda purposes to support ideas unrelated to evolution? Was there, for example, a real connection between evolution and Nazism, as some scholars have claimed? Or is it simply a propaganda ploy to give evolution a bad name?

Purpose and tasks. The aim of this article is to critically examine the historical misuse of Darwinian evolutionary theory in justifying harmful political ideologies and social policies, particularly in the contexts of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Soviet Union. The paper aims to explore how concepts such as “survival of the fittest” were distorted to rationalize eugenics, racism, and totalitarianism, and to assess the lasting impact of these misapplications on both the public perception of evolution and the broader ethical discourse surrounding scientific theories. The research investigates how Darwinism was adapted to justify racism, genocide, eugenics, and other forms of social violence.

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As «Andrew Carnegie» book wrote in 1989, “although the law may sometimes be hard on the individual, it is best for the race, for it ensures the survival of the fittest in each department”. Carnegie’s key phrase, “survival of the fittest”, which is almost universally attributed to Darwin, actually comes from the influential British philosopher Herbert Spencer. [1] Spencer believed that everything from the cosmos to society to Carnegie’s free market was constantly evolving. Spencer’s ideas were in circulation before Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, and he is credited with popularizing social Darwinism, although there is some doubt as to how “Darwinian” his ideas really were. [2,3].

Methods. The article uses a historical and comparative analytical method, tracing how Darwinian thought was interpreted, adapted, and manipulated across different contexts. Drawing on thinkers like Malthus and Spencer, and ideologues like Hitler and Stalin, the article outlines the ideological transformations that led to policies like eugenics, genocide, and forced sterilization. By examining both Western (Nazi Germany, the U.S.) and Soviet (Stalinist USSR) applications of evolutionary rhetoric, the text shows how evolution was used as a flexible ideological tool rather than a strict biological explanation. A scientifically established means of “progress”, why limit it to the origin of species?

Results. The study found that despite the purely scientific nature of Darwin’s theory of natural selection, its principles were repeatedly instrumentalized for ideological purposes. In Nazi Germany, evolutionary concepts were distorted to support racial theory, eugenics, and genocide. In Stalinist USSR, ideas of social selection were used to justify mass repression and cultural annihilation. In the U.S. and Western Europe, social Darwinist ideas underpinned forced sterilization programs. These findings demonstrate that social Darwinism functioned not as a scientific doctrine but as a rhetorical tool for legitimizing preexisting political agendas. Capitalists, nationalists, and racists, of course, have promoted self-interested agendas and appeal to whatever logical reasoning seems most useful. Few of them are interested in any progress other than their own. And none of them were, inspired by Darwin, as they

have been around for centuries. [4]Two millennia before Darwin, for example, Plato advocated selective breeding of humans as a way to increase the fitness of the race. His fellow Greek, Thrasymachus, preached that “might makes right”, justifying the strong trampling on the weak as a way to achieve the most powerful political structures. The ancient Jews, during their campaign against Amalekites, in their fierce anti-Semitism, found it expedient to kill the men, women, children, infants, sheep, camels, donkeys, and cattle of the Amalekites to prevent the contamination of their superior religion. You cannot allow Jewish cows to mate with pagan bulls.[5] Eugenics took a sinister turn in Europe, especially Germany, and eventually fell into disuse to the point of becoming a concept that politically savvy people fled from. In 1924, for example, the U.S. Congress passed laws restricting immigration from countries and ethnic groups deemed inferior

The ideological inspiration for eugenic ideas was, in particular, the works of Malthus.

“The power of population”, he wrote, “so surpasses the power of the earth to produce a subsistence for man, that premature death must in some form or other visit the human race”.

“Fortunately, death had many conscripts – extermination, seasons of disease, epidemics, ... defeats and plagues”, but if these front-line soldiers proved unable to keep overpopulation at bay, “the gigantic inevitable stalks of famine will stalk in the rear, and with one mighty blow will equalize the population with the food of the world.” [6] Such laws had a glossy scientific veneer, and racist politicians took comfort in the sophistication and wisdom of policies based on the best science of the day. More sober moments in Germany led to a national program of extermination of groups considered inferior. Hitler and his Third Reich considered Jews, Gypsies, Poles, and homosexuals inferior. [7]Stung by the humiliation of their defeat in World War I, the Germans wanted nothing more than to reclaim their past glory. If eliminating defective elements within their borders could achieve that, then they were on board. And all the better for the project, since there was a scientific basis for it. The connection between Darwinism and movements like Nazism is not causal, argues Karl W. Giberson, author of *Saving Darwin: How to Be a Christian and Believe in Evolution*. [8] And while this example emphasizes the victimization of Jews, almost identical arguments have been applied to blacks, Native Americans, and almost any group outside of Caucasian Europeans. Similar, deeply political messages emerged in places like *Mein Kampf*, where Hitler eloquently spoke of the triumph of the strong, calling it the “iron law of necessity”, justified as “the right of the fittest to win”. [9] Note the value judgment under the word “fittest”. “He who will not fight in this world of eternal struggle”, Hitler wrote, in language eerily reminiscent of Darwin’s explanation of natural selection, “does not deserve to live. It is a tragic chapter in German history that scholars are still struggling to understand. But one thing is abundantly clear: The Holocaust would have happened with or without Charles Darwin. However, there can be no doubt that the Nazi campaign against the Jews was fueled by rhetoric and rationalization with the arguments of social Darwinism. Karl Marx, the “father of communism”, was an ardent supporter of Darwin, and combined his social and economic ideas with the principles of evolutionism. He wrote that Darwin’s book contained “the natural-historical basis of our views”. His disciple Lenin, having seized power, staged a bloody terror, and Lenin, in turn, raised Stalin on identical views. One of the most terrible mass murderers in the history of mankind studied at the Tiflis Theological Seminary. At the age of nineteen, he (Stalin) was expelled from the seminary for revolutionary activities. Having transferred the provisions of the theory of evolution to the social dimension, he decided that genocide was the most effective tool for achieving his communist goals. Just as Hitler considered Jews, Poles, and Gypsies inferior, Stalin stigmatized inferiority complex of “rebellious” Ukrainians: As long as Ukraine retains its national unity, as long as its people continue to think of themselves as Ukrainians and strive for independence, it poses a serious threat to the very essence of Sovietism. The communist leaders attached the greatest importance to the Russification of this independently thinking member of their “union of republics” and decided to remake it, adapting it to their model of a single Russian nation. For the Ukrainian is not and never was a Russian. His culture, his temperament, his language, his religion – they are different. Despite his dependence on Moscow, he refused to collectivize, preferring deportation and even death. Therefore, it was especially important to bring the Ukrainian to the Procrustean model of the ideal

Soviet person. As is known, the author of the term “genocide” was the Polish lawyer of Jewish origin Raphael Lemkin, who studied and lived in Ukrainian Lviv. He had been thinking about the need to give a legal definition to mass extermination of the population even before the start of World War II. He argued: The first blow is aimed at the intelligentsia – the brain of the nation – in order to paralyze the rest of the organism. In 1920, 1926, and again in 1930–33, teachers, writers, artists, thinkers, and political figures were killed, imprisoned, or deported. [10] According to the Ukrainian Quarterly magazine for the fall of 1948, in 1931 alone, 51,713 intellectuals were exiled to Siberia. The same fate befell at least 114 prominent poets, writers, and artists – the nation’s most prominent cultural leaders. According to rough estimates, at least 75% of Ukrainian intellectuals and professionals in Western Ukraine, Transcarpathia, and Bukovina were brutally exterminated by the Russians (*ibid.*, summer 1949).

Along with this blow to the intelligentsia, there was an attack on the Churches, priests, and higher clergy – the “soul” of Ukraine. Between 1926 and 1932, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, its metropolitan (Lypkivskyi), and 10,000 priests were liquidated. [11]

During 1932 and 1933, 5 million Ukrainians died of starvation. This cruelty was condemned as inhuman by the 73rd Congress on May 28, 1934.

It is worth noting that while Europe and the United States were concerned with physiological and mental indicators, eliminating those members of society who were below the bar they had set, the Soviet government was exterminating the Ukrainian elite, the intellectual and spiritual flower of the nation. Inspired by a single source – the theory of evolution ideologically adapted to dictatorial needs, the ideologists of communism and fascism deformed it each in their own way in order to achieve their bloody goals. The connection between biological and social Darwinism is complex and disturbing and, perhaps, even suspicious, but it cannot be denied that it has always existed, even before the theory of evolution became known as “Darwinism”.

Conclusions. The study concludes that social Darwinism is not an extension of biological evolutionary theory but rather an ideological interpretation that provides pseudo-scientific justification for political doctrines. Evolutionary theory, as a scientific explanation of biological processes, contains no moral imperatives and cannot be directly applied to social structures. However, historical examples reveal the profound moral and political vulnerability of scientific theories when misapplied beyond their intended scope. The misuse of evolutionary rhetoric has significantly distorted public perception of Darwinism and contributed to the spread of anti-scientific sentiment.

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ФІЛОСОФСЬКИЙ АНАЛІЗ РОЛІ ДАРВІНІЗМУ У ВІКТИМІЗАЦІЇ ЖЕРТВ ГЕНОЦИДУ ТА ПОЛІТИЦІ «ЄВГЕНІКИ»

Актуальність проблеми. Традиційний біологічний дарвінізм пропонує прийнятне пояснення походження видів: складні «придатні» еволюціонують, виживають і процвітають, тоді як менш пристосовані конкуренти стагнуть, гинуть і вимирають. Біологічна еволюція, принаймні в чистому вигляді, є суто описовою. Соціальний дарвінізм, навпаки, часто має дуже атрибутивний компонент, спрямований на порушення людської поведінки. Який фактичний зв'язок між біологічною еволюцією та соціальним дарвінізмом? Ці питання, безсумнівно, будуть зайняті протягом багатьох років і ніколи не можуть бути вирішені. **Мета** цієї статті – критично дослідити історичне неправильне використання дарвінівської еволюційної теорії для виправдання шкідливих політичних ідеологій та соціальної політики, зокрема в контексті нацистської Німеччини та сталінського Радянського Союзу, дослідити, як такі концепції, як «виживання найпристосованіших», були спотворені для раціоналізації євгеніки, расизму та тоталітаризму, а також оцінити тривалий вплив цих неправильних застосувань як на суспільне сприйняття еволюції, так і на ширший етичний дискурс навколо

наукових теорій. З'ясувати, як дарвінізм був адаптований для виправдання расизму, геноциду, евгеніки та інших форм соціального насильства. **Цілі.** Дати визначення поняттю «соціальний дарвінізм» та вирізнити його від біологічного дарвінізму. Розкрити механізми інтерпретації та трансформації дарвінівських ідей у різних ідеологічних системах. Розглянути історичні випадки застосування соціального дарвінізму в політичній практиці 20-го століття. Оцінити вплив цих інтерпретацій на суспільне сприйняття еволюційної теорії. Проаналізувати морально-етичні наслідки ідеологічного використання наукових концепцій. **Методи дослідження:** історико-логічний підхід, порівняння та аналогії, структурно-функціональний метод та діалектичні принципи об'єктивності дослідження, методологічна основа, що дозволяє розвивати соціальний дарвінізм як унікальний фактор формування ідеологічних гасел на різних рівнях та виявляти його залежність від конкретного контексту – історичного, соціального, етнокультурного. **Результати.** Результати дослідження засвідчили, що, попри суто науковий характер дарвінівської теорії природного добору, її положення неодноразово інструменталізувалися в ідеологічних цілях. У нацистській Німеччині еволюційні ідеї були перекручені для обґрунтування расової теорії, евгеніки та політики геноциду. У сталінському СРСР концепції соціального добору були використані для виправдання масових репресій і культурного знищення. У США і Західній Європі ідеї соціального дарвінізму лягли в основу практики примусової стерилізації. Це доводить, що соціальний дарвінізм був не науковим напрямом, а риторичним засобом легітимізації вже існуючих політичних програм.

Ключові слова: соціальний дарвінізм, еволюція, нацизм, , програма евгеніки, геноцид, християнство.