

Social Darwinism

The theory that persons, groups, and races are subject to the same laws of natural selection as Charles Darwin had perceived in plants and animals in nature. According to the theory, which was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the weak were diminished and their cultures delimited, while the strong grew in power and in cultural influence over the weak. Social Darwinists held that the life of humans in society was a struggle for existence ruled by “survival of the fittest,” a phrase proposed by the British philosopher and scientist Herbert Spencer.

The social Darwinists—notably Spencer and Walter Bagehot in England and William Graham Sumner in the United States—believed that the process of natural selection acting on variations in the population would result in the survival of the best competitors and in continuing improvement in the population. Societies, like individuals, were viewed as organisms that evolve in this manner.

The theory was used to support laissez-faire capitalism and political conservatism. Class stratification was justified based on “natural” inequalities among individuals, for the control of property was said to be a correlate of superior and inherent moral attributes such as industriousness, temperance, and frugality. Attempts to reform society through state intervention or other means would, therefore, interfere with natural processes; unrestricted competition and defense of the status quo were in accord with biological selection. The poor were the “unfit” and should not be aided; in the struggle for existence, wealth was a sign of success. At the societal level, social Darwinism was used as a philosophical rationalization for imperialist, colonialist, and racist policies, sustaining belief in Anglo-Saxon or Aryan cultural and biological superiority. Social Darwinism declined during the 20th century as an expanded knowledge of biological, social, and cultural phenomena undermined, rather than supported, its basic tenets.

Nationalism

It can be defined as extreme love of country and willingness to sacrifice for it, the doctrine that your national culture and interests are superior to any other and therefore all other cultures are below you, the doctrine that nations should act independently (rather than collectively) to attain their goals and the aspiration for national independence felt by people under foreign domination. The history of Nationalism can be found in Europe during the 17th and 18th Centuries and continues through today. Understand that

the nation-state was born in Europe with the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), peaked with the French revolution (1789), and suffered serious blows with the First World War (1918) in which millions died for little but Nationalism.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who first developed his theory of civic nationalism, devised the concept of the General Will to explain how people allowed their governments to assume total control. Rousseau put down his theory in various writings, particularly *On the Social Contract*. Ethnic nationalism is the form of nationalism in which the state derives political legitimacy from telling its citizens that they are superior to others based on their ethnicity. This was developed by Johann Gottfried von Herder, who introduced the concept of the Volk. It can most memorably be remembered in the history of WWI and WWII. Religious nationalism is the form of nationalism in which the state derives political legitimacy because of shared religion. Zionism is an example, though many, if not most, forms of ethnic nationalism are in some ways religious nationalism as well. For example, Irish nationalism is associated with Catholicism; Indian nationalism is associated with Hinduism. In general, religious nationalism is viewed as a form of ethnic nationalism. Fascism is usually marked by ethnic nationalism, the most extreme example being National Socialism in Nazi Germany.

Economic Theories:

Capitalism: an economic practice that became institutionalized in Europe between the 16th and 19th centuries, especially involving the formation and trade in ownership of corporations for buying and selling goods, especially capital goods (including land and labor), in a relatively free from government control. There is much debate of how to define capitalism. Some proponents of capitalism (like Milton Friedman) tend to emphasize the role of efficient free markets, which, they claim, promote individual freedom, and democracy. For others, it hinges on the elaboration of an economic system in which goods and services are traded in markets, and capital goods, belong to non-state entities, onto a global scale. Capitalism is also distinguished from other market economies with private ownership by the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a few.

Socialism: is an economic policy that allows for total state or collective ownership of the means of production, as opposed to private ownership. In other words, the government owns and interferes with your business for the good of the nation. One of the most well-known socialist groups in modern history was the National Socialist German Worker's Party which is often known by the acronym of NAZI's. In socialism "The means of production" means: farm to floor, the resources, the factories, the distribution, the infrastructural backbone (roads, rails, air, and everything involved), the stores, etc. are all controlled by the government.

Communism: is an economic policy often defined as the ultimate extreme form of socialism. Communism is a type of government and philosophy. Its goal is to form a society where everything is shared equally. All people are treated equally and there is zero private ownership – you give all your goods and rights to the government for the good of the nation. In a communist government, the government owns and controls most everything including property, means of production, education, transportation, and agriculture. It occurs when socialism is left unchecked and combines with nationalism. Karl Marx is considered the Father of Communism. Marx was a German philosopher and economist who wrote about his ideas in a book called the Communist Manifesto in 1848. His communist theories have also become known as Marxism. They include the following 10 items: no private property, a single central bank instead of private banks, high income tax that would rise significantly as you made more, all property rights would be confiscated and you have no inheritance rights the government gets everything when you die, the government would own and control all communication and transportation, the government would own and control all education, the government would own and control factories and agriculture - farming and regional planning would be run by the government, the government would tightly control labor. The best example of this economic system in modern history is the rule of the Soviet Union in the 20th century.

Resources:

<http://www.britannica.com/topic/social-Darwinism>
<http://dictionary.kids.net.au/word/nationalism>
<http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/na/Nationalism>
<http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/ca/Capitalism>
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