

Historical investigation:



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HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION: CHARLES DARWIN Charles Darwin, one of the greatest intellectual master minds of the 19th century, was best known for his distinguished theories of evolution by the means of natural selection. His works, are one of the most respected and accurate understandings of the process of life and is the basis of modern evolution. Throughout this historical investigation, the main intentions presented are the environment in which Darwin produced the theory of evolution in and the production of this theory itself. Darwin, was born on the 12th of February 1809, he is the fifth out of the six children to Robert Darwin and Susannah Wedgwood. Charles Darwin came from a wealthy aristocratic family from a small town called Shrewsbury, his father was a well known physician and financier and son to the infamous poet and open-minded physician Erasmus Darwin. His mother, Susannah, was the daughter to pottery industrialist Josiah Wedgwood but sadly died when Darwin was eight. Charles was taken care of by his elder sisters and many hired maidservants throughout his childhood, he attended the local Anglican Shrewsbury School between 1818-1825 where science was shunned and considered dehumanizing; Darwin being interested in science was ridiculed by his classmates and nicknamed gas. He was quite a solitary child, who much preferred to spend his times on adventurous walks in which he collected many objects rather than associating with other children. His father sent him to study medicine in 1825 with his brother Erasmus Darwin at the University of Edinburgh. Robert Grant a lecturer and radical evolutionist was Darwin's mentor, he taught him the science of marine invertebrates. Darwin, who wanted to further examine the topic, took interest in a course of zoology but found it ultimately dull. The tasks of the field of medicine that were placed upon him could not be handled as he

could not stand the sight of blood or the primitive method of surgery, he enjoyed medicine just not the anatomy side to it. Through his displeasure at Edinburgh, his father admitted him into Christ College, Cambridge in 1828, he was taught as an Anglican gentleman and “ became a passionate amateur naturalist”. (Wyhe) In the year 1831, a rare opportunity arose for the amateur naturalist, one that would help to establish the theory that would put Darwin in the history books forever. Darwin was made an offer to board the H. M. S Beagle, a ship that would travel the world for five years mainly in the South American region. Upon his journey, Darwin equipped himself with weapons and many books especially Charles Lyell’s new book, ‘ Principles of Geology’ which dramatically influenced Darwin into a new understanding of nature and that tiny changes over time could create a large transformation. Charles developed these ideas more throughout his journey by collecting specimens and studying the geology of South America, his notes produced his early research into the theory of evolution. In London, it was a time when creationism and religion were at its peak and controlled many opinions of the general population. Any remark or statement that defied the church was quickly shutdown and criticised tremendously. Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution caused great controversy when it was published in 1859. It was a subject that went against the creation belief of a designer (God); it sparked many discussions and changed many people’s viewpoint of religion. Darwin’s theory not only had a beneficial influence into the realm of science but also a very negative effect upon society. Many different views of evolution were created well up to the early 20th century, each expanding on this theory of natural selection. Social Darwinism was born out of the concept of the “ survival of the fittest” in social groups when conflict

between groups leads to social progress and defeat of the inferior ones. Another ideology, was eugenics, that stated " humans could speed the process along by simply removing inferior specimens from the equation altogether and encouraging only its strongest members to breed". (Lamb)

This idea gained support in the early 20th century, resulting in compulsory sterilization programs in the United States and Germany. Charles Darwin, was one of the greatest minds in the 19th century, and in his theory of evolution by the means of natural selection, caused a great shift from religious views to one of scientific knowledge. " There is not a single field of scientific and academic study which has not been greatly modified by the concept of evolution. It provided a new approach to astronomy, geology, philosophy, ethics, religion, and the history of social institutions". (Bewkes et al. 1940, 549) This theory is the basis of all modern biology. Evolution, has impacted far beyond the 20th century, it has been a foundation for many ground breaking discoveries in the scientific field. It has also created many philosophies, such as Darwinian, Social Darwinism and eugenism which has impacted greatly on the world by the people that believe in their principles. One believer that has modified the world was Hitler who believed that the German race was superior to the Jewish and even dedicated his book to Darwin. Charles Darwin was a man who questioned the origin of life, and through his questioning and vigorous research developed a theory, that transformed the world's outlook of their origin and belief in a higher power. He contributed his whole life to his theory even up to his death in April 1882. Darwin lived in a society that was greatly ruled by religion, creationism was at its peak in English society. Science was rejected significantly as it mainly went against the views of religion. However, he was still greatly interested in

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science, and through the influence of his father, he studied greatly in this field. The knowledge of many scientists, who were his colleagues and friends such as Charles Lyell, influenced his knowledge of the world and geology and other aspects of science. Evolution is the foundation of modern evolution and modern biology and has affected the world in large or even in minor details.

Not many believed in his theory, and were greatly insulted by his information that was presented, especially many Christian and religious individuals.

Charles Darwin, produced "the most influential theory of modern times" (Stokes), that changed not only London's beliefs in the 19th century but the world. His theory is still greatly accepted in modern scientific communities and not one other theory has been produced to challenge this. Darwin was certain himself what could falsify his own theory "if it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down". Bibliography J. Desmond, A. (n. d.).

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