

Darwinism



Explain how Social Darwinism had an impact in the Age of Imperialism. Social Darwinism is an instance of abuse of Darwinism. The Theory of Evolution through Natural Selection – a seminal work of 19th century British explorer Charles Darwin – is the basis for the later construction called Social Darwinism. But the latter deviates from the original theory in that it co-opts selective aspects of the theory in explaining human differences. In other words, Social Darwinism extrapolates some and deliberately neglects other features of the theory of evolution in explaining social disparities such as class, racial, cultural and political differences. When European imperialism of the bygone age is revisited, one can see leading intellectuals of the time indulging in Social Darwinist interpretations of the empire. They explained that the European/Caucasian races are a better breed of humans compared to the colored populations, and thereby possessed the right to civilize the latter by means of imperialist enterprise. In what is a self-fulfilling circular argument, they pointed to the success of European powers to conquer and rule other parts of the world as a proof for the Social Darwinist theory. The White/Caucasian people, by virtue of being the 'fittest' among the races, were best adapted to spread their seeds. And the imperialist project gave avenue for this genetic dispersal. Needless to say, Darwin would have been deeply disconcerted upon hearing such imaginative constructions of this path-breaking work. And as the most telling rebuke to such vainglory, the eugenics project of the Third Reich, which projected the ultimate victory of the Aryan race over all others, would serve to disprove Social Darwinist underpinnings of Imperialism through its colossal failure. Work Cited:

Spielvogel, Jackson, Western Civilization, Volume II. Published in 2009 by The Pennsylvania State University, ISBN-10: 0495502855.