

Impact and effects of social darwinism essay



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Causes and effects of Social Darwinism impact - SummaryIntroduction The Effects of Social Darwinism on the social trends of the 19th century.

“ As a world view, Darwinism cannot of course be refuted, since Faith is, always has been, and always will be, stronger than facts. “ - Francis P.

Yockey Social Darwinism is a theory that competition among all individuals, groups, nations or ideas drives social evolution in human societies. The term draws upon Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, where competition between individual organisms drives biological evolutionary change through the survival of the fittest. The term was popularized in 1944 by the American historian Richard Hofstadter, and has generally been used by critics rather than advocates of what the term is supposed to represent. This new social Darwinism approach to the social trends of the united states created many controversial issues arise and conflict with the existence of already stabilized beliefs.

It slowly influenced all aspects of life, and influenced the major social trends of the late 19th century more and more. This caused a great number of changes in the short time period in this century, and forever changed the past present and future of the American social trends. The Darwinism Theory not only affected the science world greatly, but it's modification into Social Darwinism also greatly changed the U. S. social trends of the 19th century in many significant views.

Chapter 1: The Social Darwinism Theory Social Darwinism is a belief, popular in the late Victorian era in England, America, and elsewhere, which states that the strongest or fittest should survive and flourish in society, while the

weak and unfit should be allowed to die. The theory was chiefly expounded by Herbert Spencer, whose ethical philosophies always held an elitist view and received a boost from the application of Darwinian ideas such as adaptation and natural selection. Many negative reactions to Darwinism come from the confusion of Darwinism as a scientific theory with Social Darwinism as an ethical theory. In reality, the two have very little in common, aside from their name and a few basic concepts, which Social Darwinists misapplied. Unfortunately, much of today's opposition to the application of Darwinian thinking to human behavior comes from a fear of Social Darwinism and its implications for many of today's moral codes. However, Social Darwinism in its basic forms are based on a logical fallacy, and do not really follow from Darwinian thinking in any way.

It can be more clearly defined through the cliché term of "survival of the fittest", where the idea that humans, like animals and plants, compete in a struggle for existence in a natural selection sort of way. Social Darwinists often argue that governments should not interfere with this natural happening of society by attempting to regulate the economy or cure social ills such as poverty, instead they often advocate a laissez-faire political and economic system that favors competition and self interest in social and business affairs. Many of these social Darwinists also propose arguments that justify imbalances of power between individuals, races, and nations, because they consider some people more fit to survive than others within the society. They believe that all people were made to fit their role in society, and that this cannot be really bothered with by outside sources. The term social Darwinist is applied loosely to anyone who interprets human

society primarily in terms of biology, struggle, competition, or natural law , a philosophy based on what are considered the permanent characteristics of human nature.

Social Darwinism characterizes a variety of past and present social policies and theories, from attempts to reduce the power of government to theories exploring the biological causes of human behavior. Many people believe that the concept of social Darwinism explains the philosophical rationalization behind racism, imperialism, and capitalism. The term has negative implications for most people because they consider it a rejection of compassion and social responsibility. The first advocate of the social Darwinism theory had a major impact on the American society as a whole, starting from economic bases, to the big business minds of the time. In the United States, Spencer gained considerable support among intellectuals and some businessmen, including steel manufacturer Andrew Carnegie, who served as Spencer's host during his visit to the United States in 1883.

The most prominent American social Darwinist of the 1880s was William Graham Sumner, who on several occasions told audiences that there was no alternative to the " survival of the fittest" theory. Critics of social Darwinism seized on these comments to argue that Sumner advocated a " dog-eat-dog" philosophy of human behavior that justified oppressive social policies. Some later historians have argued that Sumner's critics took his statements out of context and misrepresented his views. This picture depicts the idea behind social Darwinism.

IT is a powerful society in which keeps the wealthy, and powerful and kicks out the minority, poor folks who are no longer able to survive in such a materialistic world. Chapter 2: Major Social Trends of the 19th Century There were many aspects of the American life during the 19th century that have changed significantly from the times beforehand. Whether it be from economic policies, religious ideals, or political platforms, there were so many changes being made, that this time period was truly a time of revolutionizing the society into a complete new perspective. This late 19th century time era is often known mostly as the reconstruction, and industrial era of the United States.

Following the end of the civil war era, the states, had a lot of making up to do for the mistakes they made during the war. Destroyed and hurt, the nation had to figure out new ways into reforming society to fix all the damages of the war. Reconstruction took place for most of the decade following the Civil War. During this era, the “ Reconstruction Amendments” were passed to expand civil rights for black Americans.

Those amendments included the Thirteenth Amendment, which outlawed slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment that guaranteed citizenship for all people born or naturalized within U. S. territory, and the Fifteenth Amendment that granted the vote for all men regardless of race. While the Civil Rights Act of 1875 forbade discrimination in the service of public facilities, the Black Codes denied blacks certain privileges readily available to whites . In response to Reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan emerged around the late 1860s as a white-supremacist organization opposed to black civil rights.

Increasing violence by white racists like the Klan influenced an 1883 Supreme Court decision nullifying the Civil Rights Act of 1875 ; the Court interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment as regulating only states' decisions regarding civil rights. The Reconstruction era was followed by the Gilded Age which included influential figures such as John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie. Many new inventions led to increased productivity but also produced a fall in wages which in turn caused riots in many parts of America. The Gilded Age eventually gave way to (and somewhat overlapped with) the Progressive Era in the early 1900s and was led by Teddy Roosevelt. U.

S. Federal government policy, since the James Monroe Administration, had been to move the indigenous population beyond the reach of the white frontier into a series of Indian reservations. Tribes were generally forced onto small reservations as Caucasian farmers and ranchers took over their lands. In 1876, the last major Sioux war erupted when the Black Hills Gold Rush penetrated their territory. The United States began its rise to international power in this period with substantial population and industrial growth domestically and numerous military ventures abroad, including the Spanish-American War, which began when the United States blamed the sinking of the USS Maine on Spain without tangible evidence. An unprecedented wave of immigration to the United States served both to provide the labor for American industry and to create diverse communities in previously undeveloped areas.

Abusive industrial practices led to the often violent rise of the labor movement in the United States. Nineteenth-century immigration greatly expanded religious pluralism in North America. Between 1815 and 1914, <https://assignbuster.com/impact-and-effects-of-social-darwinism-essay/>

some 30 million people immigrated to the United States. The greatest numbers came from Germany, Italy, Ireland, and Austria-Hungary.

Some were devout Christians and others had no firm faith commitments. Catholic and Protestant Americans therefore sought to recruit newcomers and minister to their needs through preaching, humanitarianism, and education. Roman Catholics from central and eastern Europe wanted parishes and priests of their own languages and nationalities. The newcomers brought ethnic saints and festivals; their views of religious authority often clashed with Catholics who had become more “Americanized.” Parochial schools, hospitals, and ethnic parishes were built in many immigrant Catholic communities. The main sources of the immigration during the late 19th century can be seen in this chart, where it clearly demonstrates the large numbers of immigrations due to different reasons , whether it be a famine or religious persecution.

Chapter 3: How Does Darwinism Compare with Social Trends The social Darwinism approach to the world seems almost exactly pinpointed as the social trends of the 19th century developed. Social Darwinism was used to justify numerous exploits which we classify as of dubious moral value today. Colonialism was seen as natural and inevitable, and given justification through Social Darwinian ethics – people saw natives as being weaker and more unfit to survive, and therefore felt justified in seizing land and resources. Social Darwinism applied to military action as well; the argument went that the strongest military would win, and would therefore be the most fit.

Casualties on the losing side, of course, were written off as the natural result of their unfit status. Finally, it gave the ethical nod to brutal colonial governments who used oppressive tactics against their subjects. Social Darwinism applied to a social context too, of course. It provided a justification for the more exploitative forms of capitalism in which workers were paid sometimes pennies a day for long hours of backbreaking labor.

Social Darwinism also justified big business' refusal to acknowledge labor unions and similar organizations, and implied that the rich need not donate money to the poor or less fortunate, since such people were less fit anyway. Not all Social Darwinists were quite so extreme, and Social Darwinism was not the only justification of colonialism, imperialism, and other intrusive exploits (the "white man's burden" was another, almost completely opposite, justification). In fact, the early Social Darwinists, who regarded the theory as a logical extension of laissez-faire capitalism, would have been appalled at the use of the concept to promote state-run eugenics programs. Though its moral basis is now generally opposed, Social Darwinism did have some favorable effects. Belief in Social Darwinism tended to discourage wanton handouts to the poor, favoring instead providing resources for the fittest of all walks of life to use, or choosing specific, genuinely deserving people as recipients of help and support. Some major capitalists, such as Andrew Carnegie, combined philanthropy with Social Darwinism ; he used his vast fortune to set up hundreds of libraries and other public institutions, including a university, for the benefit of those who would choose to avail themselves of such resources.

He opposed direct and indiscriminate handouts to the poor because he felt that this favored the undeserving and the deserving person equally. Social Darwinism's philosophical problems are rather daunting, and fatal to it as a basic theory, though some have applied similar ideas. First, it makes the faulty assumption that what is natural is equivalent to what is morally correct. In other words, it falls prey to the belief that just because something takes place in nature, it must be a moral paradigm for humans to follow. This problem in Social Darwinist thinking stems from the fact that the theory falls into the "naturalistic fallacy", which consists of trying to derive an ought statement from an is statement.

For example, the fact that you stubbed your toe this morning does not logically imply that you ought to have stubbed your toe! The same argument applies to the Social Darwinists' attempt to extend natural processes into human social structures. This is a common problem in philosophy, and it is commonly stated that it is absolutely impossible to derive ought from is (though this is still sometimes disputed) ; at the very least, it is impossible to do it so simply and directly as the Social Darwinists did. Chapter 4: The Changes Approaching the 19th Century The time period that was defined previously was suddenly ended by the entrance of United States into the World War I, in 1917. The end of WWI brought economic prosperity into the states, as it also slowly grew in military world power.

The aftershock of Russia's October Revolution resulted in real fears of communism in the United States, leading to a three-year Red Scare. The United States Senate did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles imposed by its Allies on the defeated Central Powers ; instead, the United States chose to <https://assignbuster.com/impact-and-effects-of-social-darwinism-essay/>

pursue unilateralism, if not isolationism. In 1920, the manufacture, sale, import and export of alcohol was prohibited by the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Prohibition encouraged illegal breweries and dealers to make substantial amounts of money selling alcohol illegally. The Prohibition ended in 1933, a failure.

During most of the 1920s, the United States enjoyed a period of unbalanced prosperity: farm prices and wages fell, while industrial profits grew. The boom was fueled by a rise in debt and an inflated stock market. The Hawley-Smoot Tariff, the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the Dust Bowl, and the ensuing Great Depression led to government efforts to restart the economy and help its victims with Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

The recovery was rapid in all areas except unemployment, which remained fairly high until 1940. This short time period after the 19th century redefined the boundaries of how much the social trends were effected , it was changed forever and although the trends may come back, it doesn't seem likely to return to the past, or even in the time of when social Darwinism was in full effect. Chapter 5: The Social Trends of Today Today's social trends are a lot more unpredictable and random, it isn't something that we can follow, but we are able to predict what might happen. Unlike the past, most of the discrimination of people, races, gender is disappearing more and more as it is apparent in our 2008 presidential nominees. It almost works as a play back of the 1960 election also, when Nixon won over the two strong democratic candidates fighting for the nominee spot. Also the War in Iraq, shows a similar relationship to the past wars, and how our economy and people are thinking about it.

People have many doubts and are scared that it might turn once again into a war like the past, making the same mistakes. So it sounds like, it is true that history repeats itself. Conclusion The social Darwinism approach to things were a completely revolutionizing view for the world at first, but slowly adjusted and made its way into society as a given fact. The survival of the fittest motto stuck with all the people of the time period, and helped shape clearly what people were looking for and what their prospects were towards the future.

Both economically and in general, people strived to live in a better conditioned life, and benefited off of each other to become better and survive. The effects of social Darwinism was the spark for so many new inventions and social reforms to come that they slowly evolved into other forms of change. So many things have happened, including new immigration laws, new acts to help minority suffrage, prohibition, business plans, all this grew from the seed of Darwinism. Seeing all these great changes from a single theory of evolution, I was amazed to see how much could change and adapt in a matter of several decades. It makes me actually more excited about the future, and what the future has in store for us.

This demonstrates the lack of human kindness for others, it shows the large discrimination people have towards each other, and at the same time creates a sense of hostility against the people. Bibliography Darwin, Charles (1859), *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1st ed.), London: John Murray, ; <http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?temID=F373&text=1>; Darwin, Charles (1882), *The Descent of Man, and Selection in* <https://assignbuster.com/impact-and-effects-of-social-darwinism-essay/>

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