

Human classification of similarities and differences



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Both Karl Marx and Charles Darwin used classification to enhance their ideas; human classification in particular. Marx classifies humans in a society as either part of the bourgeois or the proletariat while on the other hand, Darwin classifies humans based on their gender. Most notably about classification is that both authors use it differently. Marx uses classification to show the differences in class between the people, but Darwin ultimately uses the differences as a side note to a larger similarity between humans and other organisms. Therefore, both authors use classification as a means of comparison to support their theories.

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx starts off with a bold statement claiming that “[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” (Marx 62) We see here that Marx is starting to bring up the fact that throughout written history there have been clashes between the oppressed and the oppressor. One example of this would be in feudalism where there are complex hierarchies with lords, vassals, guild masters, and serfs. Marx’s theory of history states that capitalism followed after feudalism, but in capitalism the class divisions are simplified to just the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. With these two classifications, Marx makes sure to note that even though the modern bourgeoisie came out of the fall of feudalism, class antagonisms are still there in place. The only things that changed were “new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle to replace the old ones” (Marx 63). We see here that even with shifts of governments, the same struggle between the classes is still there. Marx points out the differences between both the bourgeoisie and the proletariats. Ever since the proletariats were created, they were oppressed by the bourgeoisie (Marx

74). Here in a bourgeois society, the society thrives on the exploitation of the working proletarians. The proletariats are the ones that work in factories and farms while the bourgeoisie are the people in charge who own the means of production. It is evident through a number of ways as with each “ step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance in that class.” (Marx 65) Here in a bourgeois society, the society thrives on the exploitation of the working proletarians. The bourgeoisie are only concerned about themselves and money which Marx thinks is a problem of the modern bourgeois society. With every advance that the proletarians make to support the society, the bourgeoisie instead continue to develop. Therefore through the relationships of both classes, we can see that the classification of the oppressed and the oppressor fits here which is seen through Marx’s way of contrasting the bourgeoisie and the proletariats based on their power in relation to each other. Ultimately, this classification aids his argument for communism as it recognizes this difference and promotes the interests of the proletariats.

While Marx supported his argument with a distinct difference, Darwin demonstrates his claim of a common ancestor through evolution by first contrasting males and females and then comparing humans as a whole to other organisms. Darwin takes a traditional view on gender when he starts off with women. Women differ in “ mental disposition, chiefly in her greater tenderness and less selfishness.... owing to her maternal instincts”(Darwin 234). Women are perceived as more docile especially when she has given birth. She would apply these qualities towards the infant as it is in her nature to act kind and to tend to her young. Compared to women, men are more

competitive which often leads to selfishness(Darwin 234). I found it interesting how Darwin said that it was man's natural birthright to be like this which is similar to the woman's nature of being affectionate with their maternal instincts. In the beginning of the section on page 234, we can transition from talking about the differences between the human genders to the similarities we have with other organisms. Darwin thinks that sexual selection played an important part in the nature of man and women. He thought this was at least probable due to his analysis of the secondary sexual characters found in lower animals(Darwin 234). While it is obvious Darwin knows that there are male and female animals, these animals have secondary sexual characters which make it probable to believe that sexual selection in humans could be related making humans and animals not so distant after all.

Speaking of animals, Darwin discusses in chapter 2 how man was developed from a lower form. Darwin wants people to admit that there was " descent from a common progenitor, together with their subsequent adaptation to diversified conditions" (Darwin 193). Since different organisms have similar features but with different usage just like the hand of a man, the wing of a bat, and the foot of a horse, it might suggest that we both humans and animals are similar. This especially is the case with the fact that the embryos of a man, dog, seal, and bat look the same and can hardly be distinguished. Even with various groups set between the organisms like humans, small mammals, and aquatic, they still have similarities which support his argument of a joint ancestor. Humans potentially share more than a common ancestor with other animals. Mental qualities are transmitted from humans

to dogs, horses, and other domestic animals so of which are “ general intelligence, courage, bad and good temper”(Darwin 195). This proves that animals and humans and not only similar through their structures and makeup but also with intelligence and mental capacities.

Darwin uses categorization as a way to display the differences of one species, but to ultimately compare that species with others just like it.

Darwin uses this method to break down the traditional thought about the creation of humans. Humans were all made by the same source so they should be similar but in fact there is a difference between a male and a female. Darwin shows the relative closeness of animals to humans to push for his idea of creation through evolution with everyone coming from a common progenitor. In conclusion, Marx and Darwin both use the method of classification to support and advance their underlying topics. Marx used classification to make people realize the injustice brought out to the proletarians by the bourgeoisie in order to promote his new system of communism in the interest of the proletariat. Darwin used classification as a way to draw the distinction of the similarity between animals and humans to encourage his controversial idea of evolution.

Sources cited:

Darwin, Charles. “ The Descent of Man.” Darwin, edited by Philip Appleman, Norton, 2001, pp. 175-254.

Marx, Karl. “ The Communist Manifesto” Marx, Signet Classics, 1998.