

The Origins of Social Darwinism in Germany, 1859-1895

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In the seminal work, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944), Richard Hofstadter defined Social Darwinism as an ideology using a competitive view of nature and Darwin's concept of the struggle for existence as a basis for social theory. According to Hofstadter, in its early phase Social Darwinism served primarily as a justification for ideas of laissez faire, since it stressed individualist competition. Later in the nineteenth century, however, advocates of imperialism, racism, and eugenics began relying on Darwinian arguments. This second phase of Social Darwinism emphasized a collectivist struggle and arose in conjunction with progressivism.¹

Hofstadter's thesis was widely accepted by historians and many began applying his findings to Western Europe. Jacques Barzun, Carlton J. H. Hayes, Franklin L. Baumer, H. Stuart Hughes, and Arno Mayer, among others, portrayed Social Darwinism as an important, or even dominant, ideology in late nineteenth-century Europe.² Fritz Stern, George L. Mosse, Karl Dietrich Bracher, and others argued that Social Darwinism was significant in the formation of Nazi ideology.³ Daniel Gasman went even further by attempting to draw a direct line from the Social Darwinism of Ernst Haeckel and the

¹ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (rev. ed.; New York, 1955), 5-6, passim.

² Jacques Barzun, *Darwin, Marx, Wagner* (2nd ed.; Garden City, 1958), 92-100; Carlton J. H. Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900* (New York, 1941), 12, 340; Franklin L. Baumer, *Modern European Thought: Continuity and Change in Ideas, 1600-1950* (New York, 1977), 359-66; H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930* (rev. ed.; New York, 1977), 38-39; Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York, 1981), 281-85.

³ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (New York, 1965), 11, 343-44, 349; George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1964), 88, 91-92, 98-101; Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure and Effects of National Socialism*, tr. Jean Steinberg (New York, 1970), 13-15.

Monist League to Hitler.⁴ Most of these scholars, especially when discussing the German scene, emphasized the later collectivist mode of Social Darwinism rather than the laissez-faire mode. However, Hans-Günter Zmarzlik described the development of Social Darwinism in Germany in strict Hofstadterian terms, claiming there was a shift in Social Darwinist thinking in late nineteenth-century Germany from a stress on individual competition to collective competition.⁵ In another essay on Social Darwinism in Germany, Zmarzlik portrayed eugenics as a third phase of Social Darwinism.⁶

In the past decade and a half Hofstadter's thesis has been increasingly called into question. Robert Bannister launched a vigorous attack by arguing that the laissez-faire form of Social Darwinism was almost non-existent in Anglo-American thought. Rather, he saw it as a straw man created by social reformers critical of laissez faire to discredit their opponents. By no means did these social reformers reject Darwinism...many even used Darwinian arguments to defend eugenics, racism, and imperialism.⁷ Thus Bannister's reform Darwinists seem to be equivalent to Hofstadter's second-stage Social Darwinists.

With an impressive survey of Social Darwinism in both Anglo-American and Continental European thought, Donald Bellomy tried to shore up weaknesses he saw in Bannister's evidence, while largely agreeing with his thesis. Bellomy argued that Social Darwinism was negligible in Anglo-American thought but more prevalent on the Continent. Although he conceded that "Darwinism made a difference in European social theory before the 1890s," he played down its significance before 1890 and in another passage asserted that Social Darwinism appeared around the turn of the century.⁸ Linda Clark also substantiated Bannister's thesis by showing that reform Darwinism and opponents of Social Darwinism were more prominent in late nineteenth-century France than were Social Darwinists.⁹ Although Alfred Kelly concurred that a shift in Social Darwinist thought occurred in Germany around 1890, he lent further credence to Bannister's thesis by minimizing the contributions and impact of Social Darwinists in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He argued that Darwinian popularizers were untainted by

⁴ Daniel Gasman, *The Scientific Origins of National Socialism: Social Darwinism in Ernst Haeckel and the German Monist League* (London, 1971).

⁵ Hans-Günter Zmarzlik, "Social Darwinism in Germany, Seen as a Historical Problem," Hajo Holborn (ed.), *Republic to Reich: The Making of the Nazi Revolution* (New York, 1972), 441-44. Mayer, *Persistence*, 284, argues the same for Europe in general.

⁶ Hans-Günter Zmarzlik, "Social Darwinism in Germany...An Example of the Sociopolitical Abuse of Scientific Knowledge," Günter Altner (ed.), *The Human Creature* (Garden City, 1974), 355, 368.

⁷ Robert C. Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought* (Philadelphia, 1979), 8-9, 164-66, 180-81, 226-28.

⁸ Donald C. Bellomy, "'Social Darwinism' Revisited," *Perspectives in American History*, n.s., 1 (1984), 2, 5-6, 38, 100.

⁹ Linda L. Clark, *Social Darwinism in France* (University, Ala., 1984), ix, 3, 7.

such ideology, and he even attempted to rehabilitate Ernst Haeckel from the opprobrium of disseminating Social Darwinism.¹⁰

Although Hofstadter's thesis cannot be applied to the German scene without revision, the revisionist attempts of Bannister, Bellomy, and Kelly fare even worse. From the earliest expressions of Social Darwinism in the 1860s until the turn of the century, numerous German scholars used the Darwinian theory to defend individualist economic competition and *laissez faire*, others emphasized a collectivist struggle for existence between societies, while *most upheld both simultaneously*. A synthesis of individualism and collectivism had great appeal to German liberals in the 1860s and 1870s, since the long-standing twin ideals of German liberalism were individual liberty and German national unity. While the idea of individualist struggle may have faded after 1890 as classical liberalism declined in Germany, it would be incorrect to speak of a shift from stress on individualist to collectivist struggle, since collective competition received emphasis from the start. Both forms of Social Darwinism coexisted, often in the same mind.

Although originating in Britain, the Darwinian theory had its greatest initial impact in Germany and permeated the German intellectual community relatively quickly.¹¹ Darwin wrote to Wilhelm Preyer in 1868, "The support which I receive from Germany is my chief ground for hoping that our views will ultimately prevail."¹² Reflecting back on the 1860s, the Darwinian popularizer Ernst Krause characterized that decade as a time when the struggle for existence was "the highest principle of explanation."¹³ Not only biologists and sociologists but also many philosophers, political economists, ethnologists, geographers, and theologians began to view society through the lenses of Darwinism. While the influence of Social Darwinism grew as the century passed, it would be a mistake to locate its origin in the 1880s or 1890s, as Bellomy and Kurt Bayertz do.¹⁴ Not that Social Darwinism dominated the intellectual life of late nineteenth-century Germany, but it was a vibrant and influential movement with roots solidly planted in the 1860s.

The anachronistic portrayal of nineteenth-century Social Darwinism as conservative or even reactionary vitiates the analyses of Bannister, Kelly, and many others.¹⁵ This is especially true in Germany, where most conservatives

¹⁰ Alfred Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin: The Popularization of Darwinism in Germany, 1860-1914* (Chapel Hill, 1981), 8, 102-14, 120.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 20-23, *passim*.

¹² *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, ed. Francis Darwin (New York, 1919), II, 270.

¹³ Ernst Krause, *Charles Darwin und sein Verhältnis zu Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1885), 165-66.

¹⁴ Kurt Bayertz, "Darwinismus als Ideologie: Die Theorie Darwins und ihr Verhältnis zum Sozialdarwinismus," Kurt Bayertz, et al. (eds.), *Darwin und die Evolutionstheorie* (Cologne, 1982), 109-10. This problem undermines Bayertz's explanations for the origin of Social Darwinism. Bellomy was ambiguous on this point (see above).

¹⁵ Bannister, *Social Darwinism*, *passim* (e.g., 5-11); Kelly, *Descent*, ch. 6, esp. 104.

rejected Darwinism on the basis of orthodox Protestant or Catholic convictions. The conservative parties and the Catholic Center party were the least likely places to find adherents of Darwinism and, beyond this, their ethical and social views made them unlikely recruits to Social Darwinism.¹⁶

Initially, Darwin's theory received support primarily from those of liberal or socialist political persuasions. Although socialists made various attempts to justify their political and social views using the Darwinian theory, most of them adamantly opposed laissez faire, nationalism, imperialism, racial competition, and militarism. The socialist Ludwig Woltmann may have been the first German to use the term Social Darwinist, when he assailed them in his book *Die Darwinsche Theorie und der Sozialismus* (1899).¹⁷ Most German Social Darwinists, then, were drawn from the ranks of the liberals, who were strongly represented in the German academic community at that time.¹⁸

Even before Darwinism appeared, German liberals appealed to science and nature to buttress their political and economic views. Knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) was more unified at that time and no strict demarcations existed between scientific and social thought. Enlightened rationalism underpinned liberal thought, and natural science seemed the epitome of rationality.¹⁹ The organic conception of society, receiving impetus from the Romantic movement, flourished among conservatives and liberals alike in the first half of the nineteenth century.²⁰ The spectacular advances in biology in the nineteenth century gave impetus to greater reliance on biological analogies in late

Other examples are Bellomy, "Social Darwinism," 1; Mayer, *Persistence*, 282; Georg Lukacs, *The Destruction of Reason*, tr. Peter Palmer (Atlantic Highlands, 1981), 685.

¹⁶ Kelly, *Descent*, 22-23.

¹⁷ Ludwig Woltmann, *Die Darwinsche Theorie und der Sozialismus* (Düsseldorf, 1899), 321n., 328-29, etc. Woltmann more often used the term "Darwinistische Sozialtheoretiker." Zmarzlik wrongly claims that the term first appears in German in 1906 ("Social Darwinism," in *Republic to Reich*, 470). Konrad Guenther also used the term in an obscure passage in *Der Darwinismus und die Probleme des Lebens* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1905), 411.

¹⁸ Paul Weindling makes the connection between German liberalism and Social Darwinism in *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge, 1989), 26-27; and "Ernst Haeckel, Darwinismus and the Secularization of Nature," in James R. Moore (ed.), *History, Humanity and Evolution: Essays for John C. Greene* (Cambridge, 1989), 312, 322. Woodruff D. Smith, *Politics and the Sciences of Culture in Germany, 1840-1920* (Oxford, 1991), 91, confirms this. Greta Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought: The Interaction between Biological and Social Theory* (Sussex, 1980), 35 and Clark, *Social Darwinism in France*, 45-47, 176-77, show the connection between liberalism and Social Darwinism in England and France respectively.

¹⁹ James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1978), 16.

²⁰ E. Gothein, "Gesellschaft und Gesellschaftswissenschaft," *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften* (2nd ed.; Jena, 1900), IV, 206; Gunter Mann, "Medizinisch-biologische Ideen und Modelle in der Gesellschaftslehre des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Medizinhistorisches Journal*, 4 (1969), 5.

nineteenth-century thought. Gunter Mann argues that biology exercised intellectual hegemony in the late nineteenth century, manifesting itself in biological social theories.²¹ Darwinism encouraged this trend by minimizing the differences between humans and animals.

Progress was another fundamental tenet connecting liberal ideology with Darwinism. Despite Darwin's reluctance to consider biological evolution progressive, he was unable to avoid the rhetoric of progress in his own explanations.²² Haeckel expressed the sentiment of most early Social Darwinists when he asserted in an 1863 speech to the Association of German Scientists and Physicians:

For it is the same principles, the struggle for existence and natural selection, working in civil society, which drive the peoples irresistibly onwards, step by step, to higher cultural stages.... This progress is a natural law which no human force can permanently suppress....²³

Most Social Darwinists in late nineteenth-century Germany considered competition a force for progress, not a means to prop up the status quo. The socialist Anton Pannekoek was correct in asserting that Darwinism served as a weapon for the bourgeoisie in their struggle *against* the status quo, i.e., the landed aristocracy and the established church.²⁴

Only as German liberalism passed its prime in the 1870s and faded in vitality in the 1880s and 1890s did Social Darwinism become in any way a prop for the status quo. It became the province primarily of right-wing liberals supporting the Bismarckian regime. Haeckel is a prime example of this shift within liberalism, since he was politically radical in the early 1860s but became an admirer of Bismarck as a member of the National Liberal Party after 1866.²⁵ In addition to the twin achievements of military victory and German unification in the period 1864-71, Bismarck endeared himself to many anticlerical Darwinists in the 1870s through his campaign against the Catholic Church in the *Kulturkampf*.

Since Social Darwinism was hitched to liberalism, it opposed the vestiges of the feudal economic system and, for the most part, embraced *laissez-faire*

²¹ Mann, "Medizinisch-biologische Ideen," 16-17; Ludwig Gumplowicz, *Sociologie und Politik* (Leipzig, 1892), 96.

²² In *The Origin of Species* (London, 1968), Darwin speaks of "advancement," 263, "higher animals," 459, etc.

²³ Cited by Kurt Bayertz, "Darwinism and Scientific Freedom: Political Aspects of the Reception of Darwinism in Germany, 1863-1878," *Scientia*, 118 (1983), 298, and partially by Fritz Bolle, "Darwinismus und Zeitgeist," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, 14 (1962), 146-47.

²⁴ Anton Pannekoek, *Marxismus und Darwinismus* (Leipzig, 1909), 15-18.

²⁵ Gasman, *Scientific Origins*, xvii; Heinrich Haeckel, "Persönliche Erinnerungen an Ernst Haeckel," H. Schmidt (ed.), *Was wir Ernst Haeckel verdanken* (Leipzig, 1914), 386.

economics.²⁶ In the 1860s and 1870s laissez faire was considered a progressive doctrine, not reactionary, as many modern scholars writing on Social Darwinism imply. Social Darwinists considered economic competition beneficial to society and a stimulus for progress.

To understand how Darwinian theory could be used to support individualist competition and laissez faire, we must examine Darwin's two main books, since Social Darwinists in Germany consistently invoked Darwin as their authority. Some scholars have suggested that Social Darwinism owed more to Herbert Spencer than to Darwin, but in Germany this was not at all the case. Spencer's influence in Germany was meager, and his name appeared infrequently in Social Darwinists' writings.²⁷

Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) was translated into German within a year of its original publication and profoundly influenced German thought. Because Darwin's social views were not explicit in *Origin*, it is unfair to label Darwin a Social Darwinist based on this book. However, *Origin* contained some elements that encouraged the growth of Social Darwinism. First, Darwin forthrightly applied the social theory of the classical political economist Thomas Robert Malthus to the biological world.²⁸ Social Darwinists took Darwin's exposition of Malthus as a legitimation of Malthus's ideas on human population pressure and applied the Darwinian struggle for existence to humans as one species of animals among many. Further, Darwin claimed that the struggle for existence is most intense among individuals within the same species, because they are competing for the same niche.²⁹ This, too, could be extrapolated to humans, promoting the concept of individualist competition so prominent in laissez-faire Social Darwinist thought. Finally, Darwin glorified struggle, even violent battle, in the natural world:

It may be difficult, but we ought to admire the savage instinctive hatred of the queen-bee, which urges her instantly to destroy the young queens her daughters as soon as born, or to perish herself in the combat; for undoubtedly this is for the good of the community; and maternal love or maternal hatred, though the latter fortunately is most rare, is all the same to the inexorable principle of natural selection.³⁰

²⁶ Weindling, *Health*, 26-27. On economic liberalism in Germany, see Sheehan, *German Liberalism*, 30, 84-91, 174; Theodore Hamerow, *The Social Foundations of German Unification, 1858-1871*, I, *Ideas and Institutions* (Princeton, 1969), 152-77; and Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition* (Boston, 1957), 288, 407-8.

²⁷ Zmarzlik, "Social Darwinism," *Republic to Reich*, 454; Bellomy, "'Social Darwinism,'" 41.

²⁸ Darwin, *Origin*, 117.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 126. On Darwin's stress on individualistic competition, see Michael Ruse, *The Darwinian Paradigm: Essays on Its History, Philosophy, and Religious Implications* (London, 1989), 41, 47-49.

³⁰ Darwin, *Origin*, 230.

Darwin waited twelve years after publishing *Origin* before divulging his views on human evolution in *The Descent of Man* (1871), which was quickly translated into German. Scholars are sharply divided over whether Darwin was a Social Darwinist or not, largely because of the ambiguity of his position in this book.³¹ In *Descent* Darwin attributed both the physical and mental evolution of the human species to the agency of natural selection caused by the struggle for existence. However, he also wanted to uphold some form of ethics and to oppose selfish competition. The following passage illustrates the tension between these two poles:

Natural selection follows from the struggle for existence; and this from a rapid rate of increase. *It is impossible not bitterly to regret, but whether wisely is another question,* the rate at which man tends to increase; for this leads in barbarous tribes to infanticide and many other evils, and in civilised nations to abject poverty, celibacy, and to the late marriages of the prudent. But as man suffers from the same physical evils with the lower animals, he has no right to expect an immunity from the evils consequent on the struggle for existence.³²

This depiction of the inevitability of the struggle for existence in human society and its concomitant evils could easily be taken as an apology for economic inequality and brutal competition. This is especially so, since Darwin supported private property and the accumulation of wealth.³³ However, Darwin also defended morality as beneficial. He considered the struggle for existence merely a description of, not a prescription for, society.

The most forceful and famous proponent of Darwinism in late nineteenth-century Germany was Ernst Haeckel, a professor of biology at the University of Jena, who was converted to evolutionary theory by reading Darwin's *Origin*. His *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (1868, translated as *The History of Creation*) appeared before Darwin's *Descent* and was the most influential book on Darwinian theory published in Germany in the late nineteenth century. It went through seven editions in its first eleven years and twelve editions before World War I. Unlike Darwin in *Origin*, Haeckel did not hesitate to discuss human evolution because he considered the animal ancestry of humanity the most important aspect of evolutionary theory.³⁴

³¹ John C. Greene, "Darwin as a Social Evolutionist," in *Science, Ideology and World View: Essays in the History of Evolutionary Ideas* (Berkeley, 1981), 95-127, and Robert Young, "Darwinism Is Social," in David Kohn (ed.), *The Darwinian Heritage* (Princeton, 1985), 609-38, are examples of two scholars forcefully arguing that Darwin was a Social Darwinist. Howard E. Gruber, *Darwin on Man: A Psychological Study of Scientific Creativity* (2nd ed.; Chicago, 1981), 70, 240-41; and James Allen Rogers, "Darwinism and Social Darwinism," *JHI*, 33 (1972), 280, among others, dispute this.

³² Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (London, 1871), I, 180. Emphasis added.

³³ *Ibid.*, I, 169.

³⁴ Ernst Haeckel, *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1868), 5, 93.

Haeckel also did not balk at applying the Darwinian struggle for existence to humans. He agreed with Malthus that population pressure necessarily produces competition among people for scarce resources:³⁵

... everywhere you find an unsparing, highly embittered *bellum omnium contra omnes* [*Kampf Aller gegen Alle*]. Nowhere in nature, wherever you may look, does that idyllic peace exist, about which the poets sing...rather everywhere there is struggle and striving to destroy one's neighbor and competitor. Passion and selfishness, conscious or unconscious, is everywhere the motive force of life.... Man in this respect is no exception to the rest of the animal world.³⁶

According to Haeckel, this struggle is a progressive force in human history, since it contributes to the development of new and higher forms.³⁷

For Haeckel economic competition illustrated the universal and inevitable rivalry in human society. He favored free competition among workers because this would foster improvement. One beneficial consequence of economic competition is the division of labor, which "constantly furthers mankind, and urges every individual branch of human activity into new discoveries and improvements."³⁸ It is only a small leap from Haeckel's competitive economic individualism to an apology of *laissez faire* in toto.

A colleague of Haeckel's, Wilhelm Preyer, professor of physiology at the University of Jena, was also forthright in applying Darwinism to society. In two published lectures (1869 and 1882) he emphasized the individualistic nature of the human struggle for existence, without which progress would be stymied. Industry must compete with industry and worker with worker.³⁹ He justified economic inequality and the permanence of poverty in words reminiscent of Malthus: "But man's greatest enemy is another man.... The conditions of life are such that at all times one portion of mankind were, are, and will be poor and sick, another portion rich and healthy."⁴⁰ However, Preyer, like many other Social Darwinists, did not believe the human struggle for existence is cruel or pitiless. On the contrary he argued that the morally upright and loving person would emerge on top. Further, he considered assistance for the poor and sick essential.⁴¹

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 125-27.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 227-29.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 128-29, 226, 218-19; Haeckel, *Über Arbeitsteilung in Natur- und Menschenleben* (Berlin, 1869), 3-7, *passim*.

³⁹ Wilhelm Preyer, *Der Kampf um das Dasein* (Bonn, 1869), 32-37; *Die Concurrenz in der Natur* (Breslau, 1882), 27-28.

⁴⁰ Preyer, *Concurrenz*, 13.

⁴¹ Preyer, *Kampf*, 38; *Concurrenz*, 29. Kelly's use of Preyer as an example to prove that Darwinian popularizers were not Social Darwinists because of Preyer's insistence on love and justice in the struggle for existence is misguided (see Kelly, *Descent*, 110).

Haeckel and Preyer were by no means the only biologists appealing to Darwinism as evidence for the beneficence of economic competition. Gustav Jaeger defended private property and laissez faire, but his Social Darwinism was even milder than Preyer's.⁴² In a published lecture in 1871 Alexander Ecker, professor of anatomy at the University of Freiburg, argued that the Darwinian struggle for existence demonstrates the necessity of individualist economic competition for human progress.⁴³ Over twenty years later another biologist at Freiburg, Heinrich August Ziegler, would marshal similar arguments to discredit socialism. Ziegler forcefully advocated competitive struggle within society and cited an 1892 statement of Haeckel's for added authority: "The raging struggle of interests in human society is only a weak copy of the unceasing and brutal struggle for existence, which reigns in the entire living world."⁴⁴

The stress on individualist competition among Darwinian biologists could lead in some interesting directions, as Wilhelm Roux demonstrated in *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* (1881, *The Struggle of Parts in the Organism*). According to Roux's theory, just as individual organisms compete in the struggle for existence, so organs and cells within each organism compete for nourishment. Roux considered this internal struggle an evolutionary mechanism supplementing Darwin's external struggle for existence. The analogy of society as an organism was already popular among social theorists when Roux wrote, and it is likely that this influenced the formation of his theory. Further, it was common among cell biologists to speak of an organism as a "cell state."⁴⁵ While cell state rhetoric usually stressed cooperation within an organism, Roux emphasized the struggle within organisms as analogous to the struggle within society. While not a prominent theme of his book, he did clearly state that internal struggle in society produces good institutions, just as good organs are formed through the struggle of the parts in organisms.⁴⁶ Preyer also used Roux's idea of the struggle of parts to buttress his case for individualist competition in society.⁴⁷

The connection between economic liberalism and Social Darwinism was conspicuous among non-biologists, too. The liberal political theorist Julius Fröbel was one of the earliest to bring Darwinism into political and social discourse in volume two of *Theorie der Politik* (1864). Though Fröbel later

⁴² Gustav Jaeger, *Die Darwin'sche Theorie und ihre Stellung zu Moral und Religion* (Stuttgart, 1869), 105, 109-10, 119.

⁴³ Woltmann, *Darwinsche Theorie*, 332n.

⁴⁴ Cited in Heinrich Ernst Ziegler, *Die Naturwissenschaft und die Socialdemokratische Theorie* (Stuttgart, 1893), 152-53. Woltmann, an opponent of Haeckel, also cited this passage in *Darwinsche Theorie*, 314.

⁴⁵ Paul Weindling, "Theories of the Cell State," Charles Webster (ed.), *Biology, Medicine and Society, 1840-1940* (Cambridge, 1981), 99-155.

⁴⁶ Wilhelm Roux, *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* (Leipzig, 1881), 110.

⁴⁷ Preyer, *Concurrenz*, 26.

called his position “political Darwinism,” and it seems apparent that for him Darwinism was not a main ingredient, but rather icing on the cake to bolster the theory of inegalitarianism he already embraced.⁴⁸ As with Preyer and Jaeger, Fröbel’s economic individualism was tinged with moral concern. Because of this, he was not committed fully to laissez faire but considered some state regulation beneficial.⁴⁹ Fröbel’s position illustrates well James J. Sheehan’s contention that many liberals in the 1850s and 1860s hedged on laissez faire.⁵⁰

However, stricter forms of laissez faire were often defended on Darwinian grounds. The economist Hugo Thiel was an early Social Darwinist who influenced Preyer’s thinking and, unless Darwin was just being tactful, gave Darwin some food for thought.⁵¹ In 1868 he appealed to the struggle for existence as the basis for his socio-economic views in the pamphlet, *Ueber einige Formen der Landwirtschaftlichen Genossenschaften*, and reiterated his position in 1887. Instead of mitigating competition, society should, according to Thiel, promote and intensify competition. This could be done by fostering greater social mobility and providing education and greater opportunities for all. Thus the government should sweep away economic restrictions impeding competition and hindering progress. However, the state should by no means promote economic equality, which the struggle for existence proves to be chimerical.⁵²

The connection between economic liberalism and Social Darwinism is further illustrated by the young Max Weber, who in 1895 was appointed professor of economics at the University of Freiburg. Weber’s inaugural address at Freiburg was thoroughly imbued with terminology and concepts drawn from evolutionary biology, such as the struggle for existence, selection (*Auslese*), and adaptation (*Anpassung*). As Wolfgang Mommsen has pointed out, Weber supported economic competition and free trade because he saw these as a part of human struggle.⁵³ After 1895 Weber moved away from

⁴⁸ Julius Fröbel, *Theorie der Politik als Ergebnis einer erneuerten Prüfung demokratischer Lehrmeinungen*, vol. II: *Die Tatsachen der Natur, der Geschichte und der gegenwärtigen Weltlage als Bedingungen und Beweggründe der Politik* (Vienna, 1864), chs. 1-8 passim; A. Bulmerincq, review of *Gesichtspunkte und Aufgaben der Politik*, by Julius Fröbel, in *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im deutschen Reich*, 3 (1879), 509, 520.

⁴⁹ Rainer Koch, *Demokratie und Staat bei Julius Fröbel 1805-1893: Liberales Denken zwischen Naturrecht und Sozialdarwinismus* (Wiesbaden, 1978), 263; Bulmerincq, review of Fröbel, 514.

⁵⁰ Sheehan, *German Liberalism*, 85-88.

⁵¹ Preyer, *Kampf*, 46, n. 26; *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, II, 293-94.

⁵² Hugo Thiel, “Wirtschaftliche Selbstverantwortlichkeit und Versicherungszwang,” *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im deutschen Reich*, 11 (1887), 482-85.

⁵³ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber und die deutsche Politik* (2nd ed.; Tübingen, 1974), 43.

biological language, and his later works cannot be characterized as Social Darwinism, but his position in the mid-1890s clearly was.⁵⁴

Between the 1860s and the 1890s many other Social Darwinists defended individualist economic competition. This often took the form of laissez faire or at least approximated laissez faire, though sometimes it is hard to ascertain exactly how much state regulation a particular Social Darwinist would allow. Not even Otto Ammon, one of the most thorough-going Social Darwinists in defending economic competition, nor Paul von Lilienfeld, a systematic Social Darwinist and laissez-faire advocate, denied the propriety of laws ensuring honesty in business competition.⁵⁵

It is especially difficult to characterize the economic ideas of one of the most influential Social Darwinists in late nineteenth-century Germany, Albert E. F. Schäffle. The prominent economist Gustav Schmoller referred to Schäffle as “not only one of the most fruitful, but also one of the most outstanding socio-political writers of Germany.”⁵⁶ However, Schmoller also noted Schäffle’s tendency to contradict himself in his magnum opus, *Bau und Leben des socialen Körpers* (1875-78, *Structure and Life of the Social Body*), which is most glaring in his presentation of political economy. At times Schäffle seemed close to laissez faire by extolling economic competition as ideal. Elsewhere his views approached socialism by favoring extensive state intervention.⁵⁷

Schäffle’s ambivalence over laissez faire and the proper role of the state in regulating competition stemmed from his view of the struggle for existence as both a struggle between individuals and a struggle between societies, nations, and races. He thought that individual competition should only be limited when it is necessary to further the collective struggle. For Schäffle, however, the collective struggle (*Collectivkampf*) took precedence over individual conflict. Thus laws mitigating economic rivalry were justified if they strengthened the social organism to face external threats.⁵⁸ One expression of the collective struggle for existence is war, which Schäffle characterized as “an elevating and stimulating force.”⁵⁹ Schäffle was heavily influenced by Darwin, Haeckel, and

⁵⁴ H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, introduction to *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1946), 35; Mommsen, *Max Weber*, 43.

⁵⁵ Paul von Lilienfeld, *Gedanken über die Socialwissenschaft der Zukunft* (Mitau, 1873-79), II, 271, IV, 190, 238.

⁵⁶ Gustav Schmoller, review of *Die Aussichtslosigkeit der Sozialdemokratie*, by Albert Schäffle, in *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im deutschen Reich*, 9 (1885), 1304.

⁵⁷ Gustav Schmoller, *Zur Literaturgeschichte der Staats- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Leipzig, 1888), 215-16, 231; Albert Schäffle, *Bau und Leben des socialen Körpers*, (Tübingen, 1881), II, 409-10, 433.

⁵⁸ Albert Schäffle, “Darwinismus und Socialwissenschaft,” in *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen, 1885), I, 5-8, 26.

⁵⁹ Schäffle, *Bau*, II, 353, 350-61.

other biologists who had previously expounded on the idea of collective struggle as an integral facet of the human struggle for existence, while simultaneously upholding the individualist form of the struggle for existence.

The collectivist form of Social Darwinism justified not only militarism and nationalism, but also imperialism and racial competition. In his advocacy of humanity's collectivist struggle as well as individual competition, Haeckel was the quintessential German Social Darwinist. In *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* he distinguished between ten races of humanity, with the Caucasian race the most highly developed.⁶⁰ He condoned the extermination of "primitive" races which were losing the struggle for existence. "Even if these races [American Indians and Australian aborigines] were to propagate more abundantly than the white Europeans," he argued, "yet they would sooner or later succumb to the latter in the struggle for existence."⁶¹ Later Haeckel demonstrated his fervent support for nationalism and imperialism by helping found the Pan-German League and by joining the German Naval League and the German Colonial Society.⁶²

Although Darwin emphasized individualist struggle among organisms in *Origin*, he had to shift his emphasis in *Descent* to explain human social development. He claimed that as humans evolved, they developed moral sentiments or, in Darwin's more scientific-sounding terminology, social instincts. These instincts were advantageous in the struggle for existence, according to Darwin. Tribes and nations united to fight each other and the ones showing the greatest selflessness and devotion to their society survived and passed on their moral character to their offspring. Wars between nations are a modern manifestation of the struggle for existence. However, while providing this description of social struggle, Darwin evinced ethical sentiment by expressing the hope that social instincts would progress to the point that barriers between men of all nations would be banished. Darwin also promoted racism in *Descent* by designating some races as inferior physically, mentally, and morally, but he did not advocate racial competition.⁶³ Thus Darwin did use the concept of the struggle for existence to explain militarism, imperialism, and racial competition, but he did not use his theory to encourage such activity.⁶⁴

The paleontologist Friedrich Rolle was an early Social Darwinist in Germany who, unlike Darwin, encouraged collectivist competition. In a book of 1866 he explained that Malthusian population pressure naturally precipitates wars and violent conflicts between peoples and races. According to Rolle,

⁶⁰ Haeckel, *Natürliche*, 514-20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁶² Gasman, *Scientific Origins*, 128, 143, n. 13.

⁶³ Darwin, *Descent*, I, 80-85, 100, 35, 97.

⁶⁴ Gloria McConaughy, "Darwin and Social Darwinism," *Osiris*, 9 (1950), 412.

the physically and mentally superior races suppress and exterminate the lower races, bringing progress and benefit to the whole of mankind. He brushed aside any appeal to moral sentiment because the extermination of lower races is “an occurrence rooted in natural laws.” In the struggle among races “talent decides, [and] the final result is advantageous to the surviving aggregate (*Gesamtheit*).”⁶⁵

The biologist Ziegler was another outspoken proponent of militarism, since wars, he explained, were a natural occurrence caused by population pressure. In 1893 he asserted that “according to Darwin’s theory, war has constantly been of the greatest importance for the general progress of the human race, in that the physically weaker, the less intelligent, the morally inferior or morally degenerate peoples must clear out and make room for the stronger and better developed.”⁶⁶ According to Ziegler, even preparation for war is a part of the relentless struggle for existence.⁶⁷

Racial struggle was an even more prominent theme than nationalist militarism in the writings of German biologists. Oscar Schmidt, a zoology professor at the University of Strassburg, upheld a rather brutal form of Social Darwinism, maintaining that natural selection “is a pure question of might,” not right.⁶⁸ Because he viewed some races as mentally inferior, he concluded that “if we contemplate the ethnology and anthropology of savages, not from the standpoint of philanthropists and missionaries, but as cool and sober naturalists, destruction in the struggle for existence as a consequence of their retardation (itself regulated by the universal conditions of development), is the natural course of things.”⁶⁹ Richard Hertwig, professor of zoology at Munich, Richard Semon, professor of biology at Jena, and Ernst Krause all wrote about the extermination of human races as a natural and inevitable part of the process of natural selection.⁷⁰

Turning to the Social Darwinists outside the ranks of biologists, Fröbel in the 1860s and Lilienfeld in the 1870s adopted the idea of collective struggle, while simultaneously upholding individual struggle. Fröbel’s inegalitarianism extended not just to economics but to race. As with his economic views, his racism did not seem to derive from Darwinism, but evolution seemed to

⁶⁵ Friedrich Rolle, *Der Mensch, seine Abstammung und Gesittung im Lichte der Darwin’schen Lehre* (Frankfurt am Main, 1866), 110, 112, 114, 119, 142-44.

⁶⁶ Ziegler, *Naturwissenschaft*, 167-68.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 169, n. 1.

⁶⁸ Oscar Schmidt, “Darwinismus und Socialdemokratie,” *Deutsche Rundschau*, 17 (1878), 284, published separately under the same title (Bonn, 1878).

⁶⁹ Oscar Schmidt, *The Doctrine of Descent and Darwinism*, (4th ed.; London, 1881), 296-97. This quotation comes from an 1873 lecture appended to this book.

⁷⁰ Carus Sterne [Ernst Krause], *Werden und Vergehen*, (6th ed.; Berlin, 1906), II, 381-82; Richard Hertwig, *General Principles of Zoology*, tr. George W. Field (2nd ed.; New York, 1897), 55; Richard Semon, *Im australischen Busch und an den Küsten des Karallenmeeres* (Leipzig, 1891), 243.

confirm and buttress his position.⁷¹ Lilienfeld considered war a natural phenomenon necessitated by Malthusian population pressure and the resultant struggle for existence.⁷²

While upholding the need for economic competition in his 1895 address, Max Weber also stressed national and racial competition. He attributed the West Prussians' victory over the Poles in the "economic struggle for existence" to superior physical and psychical racial qualities.⁷³ He consistently employed Darwinian language and concepts to justify nationalism and expansionism:

It is not peace and human happiness that we have to pass along to our descendants, but rather the eternal struggle for the preservation and cultivation of our national species [*Art*].... Our descendants will not hold us responsible primarily for the kind of economic organization that we pass on to them, but rather for the extent of elbow-room [*Ellbogenraum*], that we obtain through struggle [*erringen*] and leave behind.⁷⁴

Weber's emphasis on elbow-room (*Ellbogenraum*) seems to parallel Friedrich Ratzel's earlier view of the struggle for space (*Kampf um Raum*) as well as later formulations of *Lebensraum*.⁷⁵

Another important Social Darwinist in the 1890s embracing both individual and collective competition was Otto Ammon. He systematically applied Darwinism to society in *Die Gesellschaftsordnung und ihre natürlichen Grundlagen* (1895, *The Social Order and Its Natural Foundations*), which went through three editions in five years. Ammon used the discussion of the collective social struggle as a platform to extol the glories of militarism:

In its full effect war is a blessing for humanity, since it offers the only means to measure the strengths of one nation to another and to grant the victory to the fittest. War is the highest and most majestic form of the struggle for existence and cannot be disposed of and therefore also cannot be abolished.⁷⁶

He also supported navalism, colonialism, and German nationalism.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Fröbel, *Theorie*, II, 10-11, 44, 47.

⁷² Lilienfeld, *Gedanken*, II, 260-61.

⁷³ Max Weber, "Der Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik," *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* (2nd ed.; Tübingen, 1958), 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁵ On Ratzel's views, see below.

⁷⁶ Otto Ammon, *Die Gesellschaftsordnung und ihre natürlichen Grundlagen* (3rd ed.; Jena, 1900), 164.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 274, 298.

Ammon also illustrates the rightward shift in the political thought of Social Darwinists, which paralleled the movement of German liberalism as a whole. In arguing against socialism, he denied that Darwinism was democratic; rather it is thoroughly aristocratic and monarchist. By this Ammon did not mean to give a blanket endorsement to the status quo. He argued that the struggle for existence in society should bring the talented into leadership roles in industry and government. He wanted to retain social stratification but in a more flexible system than the closed caste of the traditional aristocracy.⁷⁸

In 1878 Haeckel had used the term aristocratic to describe Darwinism in a polemical book directed against Rudolf Virchow's insinuation that Darwinism might lead to socialism.⁷⁹ However, like Ammon's, Haeckel's aristocracy was an aristocracy of talent, a bourgeois aristocracy. The Social Darwinist Alexander Tille, who acknowledged the influence of Haeckel and whose books Haeckel praised, used the term "social aristocrats" to refer to the fittest members of society, who should be allowed to move up into leadership in society.⁸⁰ The insistence that Darwinism is aristocratic did reflect a shift toward conservatism among Social Darwinists, but it was a shift common to German liberals.

In few writings is this move toward conservatism more apparent than in *Der alte und der neue Glaube* (1872, translated as *The Old Faith and the New*) by the theologian David Friedrich Strauss. His book was a sensation and required an unprecedented six large editions in the first six months. However, its reception by scholars was generally cool or hostile.⁸¹ Haeckel was an exception to this by publicly endorsing Strauss's views.⁸² Strauss erected his new faith on the foundation of natural science and biological evolution. A considerable portion of his book is devoted to political and social ideas. Strauss was formerly a political radical, but by 1872 he was legitimating a constitutional monarchy and the aristocracy. However, he still claimed to represent the bourgeoisie, the class that was the source of welfare, education, knowledge, and culture. He demanded free competition for government and military positions, which hitherto had been the prerogative of the aristocracy. He also argued for private property and economic inequality and viewed war as a progressive force.⁸³

⁷⁸ Otto Ammon, *Der Darwinismus gegen die Sozialdemokratie: Anthropologische Plaudereien* (Hamburg, 1891), 112; *Gesellschaftsordnung*, 31-32, 137-39.

⁷⁹ Ernst Haeckel, *Freie Wissenschaft und freie Lehre* (Stuttgart, 1878), 73-74.

⁸⁰ Alexander Tille, *Von Darwin bis Nietzsche. Ein Buch Entwicklungsethik* (Leipzig, 1895), 237; Gasman, *Scientific Origins*, 149-50.

⁸¹ Horton Harris, *David Friedrich Strauss and His Theology* (Cambridge, 1973), 239, 244-45.

⁸² Haeckel to Hellwald, 24 February 1874, in *Briefwechsel zwischen Ernst Haeckel und Friedrich von Hellwald* (Ulm, 1901), 9.

⁸³ David Friedrich Strauss, *Der alte und der neue Glaube* (Leipzig, 1872), 252-55, 268-70, 278-79.

Strauss's ideas paralleled (and anticipated) Social Darwinist thought to a remarkable degree, with one important exception. Strauss rarely tried to base his social views on Darwin's theory. Instead, he maintained that Darwin's theory was the application of well-known social ideas to nature. Thus he justified Darwin's theory by appealing to social theory rather than vice versa, as was more common.⁸⁴ This illustrates the mutual interpenetration of ideas concerning nature and society in late nineteenth-century Germany. There was not a one-way street from scientific to social thought.

The first true conservative to embrace Social Darwinism in late nineteenth-century Germany was the ethnographer Friedrich von Hellwald, who, like most Social Darwinists, combined individualism and collectivism. Hellwald disseminated his Social Darwinist views in the journal *Das Ausland*, which he edited from 1872 to 1881, as well as in his book, *Culturgeschichte* (1875, *History of Culture*). Haeckel, to whom the book was dedicated, considered Hellwald's book "path-breaking."⁸⁵ Hellwald later claimed that this was the first book accurately to apply Darwinism to politics by demonstrating that it supported aristocracy and opposed liberalism.⁸⁶ In this work Hellwald depicted the struggle for existence as an ineluctable force driving human history forward. Unlike many fellow Social Darwinists, Hellwald did not display even a tinge of ethical concern. He considered the struggle for existence a violent contest between individuals, races, and nations, with the annihilation of weaker nations by stronger a necessary concomitant of historical progress. Since the status quo is the result of evolution, it is an inevitable stage of history. Thus, Hellwald argued, it is silly to oppose militarism, oppression of other peoples, absolutism, and the class system. The struggle for existence ensures that the strongest will always rule:⁸⁷

Science, however, proves with the same force (of course!) the necessity of all those phenomena, which are usually viewed as hindrances of culture, e.g. slavery, servanthood, despotism, tyranny, the spiritual yoke of the church, etc., for all these are *inventions of men for the purpose of self-preservation*, namely weapons in the struggle for existence.⁸⁸

In the 1880s and 1890s there were a few important Social Darwinist thinkers whose explanations relied exclusively on the collectivist struggle. Ludwig Gumplowicz, an Austrian professor of sociology at the University of

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁸⁵ Haeckel to Hellwald, 22 November 1874, in *Briefwechsel*, 17.

⁸⁶ Friedrich von Hellwald, "Freie Wissenschaft und freie Lehre," *Das Ausland*, 51 (1878), 635.

⁸⁷ Friedrich von Hellwald, *Culturgeschichte in ihrer natürlichen Entwicklung bis zur Gegenwart* (Augsburg, 1875), 20, 58, 158, 796-98.

⁸⁸ Hellwald, *Culturgeschichte*, 569, quoted in a review in *Deutsche Rundschau*, 2 (1875), 465.

Graz, was probably the most prominent of these. In the 1860s and 1870s, before becoming a professor, he was a leader in radical democratic circles and edited a democratic newspaper.⁸⁹ He was best known for his book, *Der Rassenkampf* (1883, *The Racial Struggle*), in which he depicted races as cohesive social units competing with other races, but they are historically and socially constructed rather than fixed biological entities. War is inevitable and peace is merely an armistice in the continuous battle among races and groups for survival. He denied that Europeans could come to a peaceful settlement with Asians and Africans. Rather, the weaker would be eliminated.⁹⁰ He also justified the subjugation of one ethnic group by another, asserting that this is the foundation of civilization and that “we do not hesitate to recognize that the most cruel and barbarous conquerors are the blind instruments of human progress and powerfully promote civilization, nay, even found it.”⁹¹ What more justification could be needed for German supremacy in the Austrian Empire!⁹²

Gumplowicz found a disciple in Gustav Ratzenhofer, an officer in the Austrian military. In his three-volume work *Wesen und Zweck der Politik* (1893) he defined politics as “the purposeful struggle for existence of humans among themselves,” and he glorified violent conflict between races and nations. He used the concept of racial struggle to justify colonialism and the extermination of other races. In his view a state would atrophy if it ceased to fight military battles. This collective competition, according to Ratzenhofer, necessitates internal harmony in society and helps build civilization and culture.⁹³

The collectivist struggle for existence was also defended by Friedrich Ratzel, who began his career as a zoologist and in 1869 wrote a book on Darwinism that included discussions of racial inequality and competition.⁹⁴ In the 1860s Ratzel was a political radical, but in the 1870s he moved rightward to the National Liberal Party.⁹⁵ After 1871 Ratzel switched from zoology to geography and became a professor in Munich and later Leipzig. His *Anthropogeographie* (1882-91) was a landmark in the field of geography and

⁸⁹ *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, (Berlin, 1957-), VII, 307.

⁹⁰ Ludwig Gumplowicz, *Der Rassenkampf: Soziologische Untersuchungen* (Innsbruck, 1883), 181, 193, 176-77; Gumplowicz, *Sociologie*, 96-99.

⁹¹ Ludwig Gumplowicz, *Outlines of Sociology*, ed. Irving L. Horowitz (New York, 1963), 125-26.

⁹² Th. Laves, review of *Der Rassenkampf*, by Ludwig Gumplowicz, in *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im deutschen Reich*, 8 (1884), 676.

⁹³ Gustav Ratzenhofer, *Wesen und Zweck der Politik: Als Theil der Sociologie und Grundlage der Staatswissenschaften* (Leipzig, 1893), III, 6; I, 3; II, 242-43; Gustav Ratzenhofer, *Soziologie: Positive Lehre von den menschlichen Wechselbeziehungen* (Leipzig, 1907), 16, 106.

⁹⁴ Friedrich Ratzel, *Sein und Werden der organischen Welt* (Leipzig, 1869), 469, 496, 498, 507.

⁹⁵ Woodruff Smith, *Politics*, 91-92, 137.

it evinced the influence of both Darwin and Schäffle.⁹⁶ He based his geographical analysis on the migration theory of the Darwinian biologist Moritz Wagner, to whom the first volume is dedicated. A concept implicit in the first volume and explicit in the second volume is the struggle for space or land (*Kampf um Raum*), which he obviously derived from the struggle for existence. Later he made this connection explicit.⁹⁷ As a geographer he considered the control of land the crux of the struggle for existence. Stronger peoples continually suppress weaker ones and wrest land away from them, often but not always through violence.⁹⁸

Contrary to Alfred Kelly's assertion, Ratzel's work, *Lebensraum* (1901), was not "only about plants and animals competing for space."⁹⁹ Although it dealt primarily with bio-geography, Ratzel made it clear from the first page that bio-geography includes anthropo-geography. There are also passages in the book applying the *Kampf um Raum* to the human species. He cited the American Indians as an example of losers in this struggle. Furthermore, "the history of the extinction of the primitive races (*Naturvölker*) in the face of the advance of the cultured races (*Kulturvölker*) provides some examples" of how progress comes through the extinction and displacement of one species by another.¹⁰⁰

Considering the number, status, and influence of scholars in late nineteenth-century Germany propagating Social Darwinist tenets of some sort, it is evident that Social Darwinism was a dynamic intellectual current. It took root in the 1860s in Germany, calling into question Bannister's claim that "Social Darwinism was initially a British disease."¹⁰¹ Indeed, it was the German economist Hugo Thiel who first made Darwin aware of social applications of his theory. This does not mean that it was a dominant ideology or that most scholars embraced it. Reviewers of Social Darwinist books often objected to their competitive view of society.¹⁰² Max Weber reported that his

⁹⁶ Gustav Antze, "Dem Andenken Friedrich Ratzels," *Politisch-Anthropologische Revue*, 3 (1904-5), 518; James M. Hunter, *Perspectives on Ratzel's Political Geography* (Lanham, Md., 1983), 42-43.

⁹⁷ Friedrich Ratzel, *Der Lebensraum: Eine biogeographische Studie* (Tübingen, 1901), 51-52.

⁹⁸ Friedrich Ratzel, *Anthropogeographie, I, Grundzüge der Anwendung der Erdkunde auf die Geschichte* (1st ed.; Stuttgart, 1882), 116-17 (4th ed.; Stuttgart, 1921), 150-51; II, *Die geographische Verbreitung des Menschen* (1st ed.; Stuttgart, 1891), xxxiv.

⁹⁹ Kelly, *Descent*, 102. This presentation of Ratzel also totally ignores Ratzel's previous work. A more balanced presentation of Ratzel is Woodruff D. Smith, "Friedrich Ratzel and the Origins of Lebensraum," *German Studies Review*, 3 (1980), 51-68; and Woodruff Smith, *Politics*, 219-29.

¹⁰⁰ Ratzel, *Lebensraum*, I, 51-56, 59-60.

¹⁰¹ Robert C. Bannister, review of *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, by Greta Jones, *Victorian Studies*, 25 (1981-82), 250.

¹⁰² Laves, review of Gumplowicz, 672-77; Dr. Hasbach, review of *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, I, by Albert Schäffle, *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im*

inaugural address was greeted with "horror over the brutality of my views."¹⁰³ Most socialists obviously disputed this inegalitarian social philosophy. We also must not forget that Darwinism itself had numerous opponents in the late nineteenth century, including Conservatives, Catholics, orthodox Protestants, and others. Nonetheless, Social Darwinism was an important intellectual current and, as Kurt Bayertz has asserted, was undoubtedly more influential in Germany than reform Darwinism.¹⁰⁴

Contrary to the stereotype of Social Darwinism as conservative or reactionary, however, we have seen that it appealed primarily to liberals, most of whom depicted the human struggle for existence as both an individual economic struggle within society and a collective struggle between nations and races. Like most liberals, German Social Darwinists considered economic competition a progressive force but socialism a dangerous development, and they argued that restrictions on competition should be kept to a bare minimum. Thus their ideas were congruent with laissez-faire economics, especially before the late 1870s, when enthusiasm for laissez faire began to wane. At the same time, many upheld the need for internal social rivalry to be fought out in an honest, non-violent manner so that society could be stronger to face external threats. Thus, even those who placed some emphasis on helping the poor and weak in society did so not for humanitarian reasons but as a means of strengthening society to fight a violent external struggle and to expand at the expense of other nations or races.

The collectivist phase of Social Darwinism, which Hofstadter claimed arose late in the nineteenth century in America, was evident already in the 1860s in Germany, and it received even more emphasis than the individualist mode. It received impetus from the liberals' support for German national unity and the militarism that flourished in the wake of Bismarck's successful campaigns from 1864 to 1871. Since collective struggle was emphasized from the start, there could not have been a shift from Social Darwinism as individual struggle to Social Darwinism as collective struggle in the late nineteenth century.

The shift that did occur in Social Darwinist ideology accompanied a pronounced shift in the ideas and values of German liberals toward conservatism, as liberals became supporters of the Bismarckian regime and thus came to have a stake in the status quo. This change was presaged by the German liberals' inegalitarianism and insistence on social stratification that repeatedly surfaced in the Social Darwinist literature. Stress on inequality was especially

deutschen Reich, 10 (1886), 258-60; Gustav Schmoller, review of *Die Gesellschaftsordnung und ihre natürliche Grundlagen*, by Otto Ammon, *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im deutschen Reich*, 19 (1895), 1040-44.

¹⁰³ Mommsen, *Max Weber*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ Bayertz, "Darwinismus als Ideologie," 111.

prominent in Social Darwinist polemics against the socialists, demonstrating the liberals' wariness of the masses. However, most Social Darwinists never abandoned the liberal principle of a social structure flexible enough for the talented to advance. By no means did they support a rigid landed aristocracy.

After 1890 another sort of shift occurred in Social Darwinist thinking in Germany...the introduction of eugenics.¹⁰⁵ Eugenics attracted an even broader audience than previous Social Darwinist ideology, because it appealed not only to many liberal and conservative Social Darwinists, but also to radicals and socialists.¹⁰⁶ One of the most influential socialist thinkers in Germany, Karl Kautsky, supported eugenics or, as it was called in Germany, race hygiene.¹⁰⁷ Alfred Ploetz and Ludwig Woltmann, two of the most prominent figures in the race hygiene movement, began as socialists.

Among German and Austrian scholars, Social Darwinism, including its new expression, eugenics, received even greater attention from 1900 to 1918. The Krupp Prize competition in 1900 for the best essay on the political implications of Darwinism and the subsequent publication of several entries provided much publicity for Social Darwinist views.¹⁰⁸ Ploetz and Woltmann each founded a journal to promote eugenics shortly after the turn of the century. Racism, nationalism, and colonialism were reaching ever new heights as the government pursued its policy of *Weltpolitik*. However, the height of political applications of Social Darwinism lay in the future. A young Austrian growing up in the pre-war period would later implement more radical Social Darwinist views, culminating in World War II and Auschwitz.¹⁰⁹

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¹⁰⁵ Many recent works have appeared on eugenics or race hygiene in Germany. Some of most significance are Weindling, *Health*; Peter Weingart, Jürgen Kroll, and Kurt Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene: Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 1988); Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); and Sheila Faith Weiss, *Race Hygiene and National Efficiency: The Eugenics of Wilhelm Schallmayer* (Berkeley, 1987).

¹⁰⁶ Weindling, *Health*, brings out this point well. See also Diane Paul, "Eugenics and the Left," *JHI*, 45 (1984), 567-90. Paul, however, concentrates on Anglo-American thought and does not deal with Germany.

¹⁰⁷ Karl Kautsky in *Vermehrung und Entwicklung in Natur und Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1910) devoted a chapter to race hygiene.

¹⁰⁸ A good discussion of the Krupp competition is found in Weiss, *Race Hygiene*, 64-74.

¹⁰⁹ For the influence of Social Darwinism on Hitler's thought, see Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power*, tr. Herbert Arnold (Middleton, Conn., 1972), ch. 5; and Gasman, *Scientific Origins*, ch. 7.

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