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# Social Darwinism and War: A Study of British Attitudes, 1890-1900

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SOCIAL DARWINISM AND WAR;

A STUDY OF BRITISH ATTITUDES, 1890 - 1900

(TITLE)

BY

GILBERT NEAL EARLY

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1969

YEAR

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**SOCIAL DARWINISM AND WAR:  
A STUDY OF BRITISH ATTITUDES, 1890 - 1900**

**BY**

**GILBERT NEAL EARLY**

**B.A., Greenville College, 1964**

**THESIS**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Graduate College of  
Eastern Illinois University**

**Charleston, Illinois**

**1969**



## PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between social Darwinism and war. My original understanding of the relationship was that it was direct, that Darwinism was a cause of the militaristic spirit leading to the First World War. This study led to a modification of that view.

Social Darwinism, imperialism and racism are commonly lumped together as causes of war. The problem with calling anything an "ism" is that it automatically assumes a unitary character. "Isms" are convenient handles for quick and easy manipulations of varied phenomena. The necessity for this will always be with us in the study and teaching of history. But generalization often obscures the unique and the individual in history. In the case of social Darwinism the application of concepts like "survival of the fittest" was in reality quite varied in effect, and therefore does not lend itself to easy generalization about the connection between Darwinism and war.

Two sources of interest have led me into this study, one from the past and one from the present. The subject of war was for the late Victorians themselves, paramount in their minds. They devoted great energy in grappling with the problem of war. It was an irritant to the Victorian conscience, and thus is a window on the soul because their most important assumptions were revealed in dealing with it. Although social Darwinism represents

only some of these attitudes and assumptions, other ideas are suggested in Chapter IV and in the Appendices.

The second reason for this study is that the subject of war is for us today still an important one. We seem inextricably bound to it in the delta mud and jungles of Vietnam. We have our Vietnam; England in the nineties had South Africa. Both wars have been terribly divisive. As they were, we also have been engaged in great debates over armaments, expansion, and schemes for peace. England in the 1890's represents, in a sense, our infancy. For the first time, mass participation in the problems of war was brought about by the culmination of public education, literacy and the popular press.

For this reason I have tried to deal not only with the intellectuals, but also with journalists and publicists. The writers dealt with are by no means of equal quality. My purpose has been to recreate the din and clamor of English public opinion and to trace the effect of Darwinian concepts as they were passed from the scientists to social thinkers, to journalists, and ultimately, the reading public. Several foreign writers have been included because they were widely read in England, the subject of Darwinism being, of course, a universal one.

I wish to express thanks to my adviser, Leonard C. Wood and to my readers, Rex Syndergaard and Ramond L. Koch.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This study is an assessment of the influence of evolutionary concepts on British attitudes toward warfare. The question in view is, "Did social Darwinism tend to foster militarism during the 1890's or not?" By "evolutionary concepts" is meant terms used in biology such as: (1) natural selection, (2) survival of the fittest, and (3) adaptation of the conditions of existence. As in "artificial" selection, or the breeding of animals by a human "selector," natural selection was the process whereby the fittest were left to continue. Nature selected the fittest by means of providing a state of continuous struggle. Fitness resulted from successful adaptation to the needs of struggle.<sup>1</sup>

None of these phrases had any one standard meaning among scientists or social scientists. Natural selection could mean different things depending on what the struggle was against, which in turn determined the kind of adaptation needed. If, for example, struggle was primarily against environment, mutual cooperation between all humans could be emphasized, and war minimized. If the struggle was all against all, including members of the same species, then adaptation could mean

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1962), p. 6; David Thompson, Europe Since Napoleon (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), p. 257.

development of strong individualism and a laissez faire social order. If the struggle was primarily against members of other species, then adaptation in the human case might involve compact organization leading to strong nationalism or even socialism within the group, while between groups violent war was the order. If struggle was primarily between classes, then supra-national loyalty to one's class was called for.<sup>2</sup>

Survival of the fittest indicated variously, physical, mental, moral, intellectual or economic superiority in the case of individuals. In the case of groups, collective efficiency, military prowess, racial superiority, or economic success could be the measurement of fitness. If fitness came by acquiring habits or by education, then popular education might be supported. If change was primarily genetic, a product of inheritance rather than environment, then an elitest program of education might be prescribed along with eugenics to limit multiplication of inferior types. Each of the writers to be dealt with will further illustrate the diverse meanings of these terms.

All of these definitions do have in common the idea of struggle. Another assumption shared by many was that evolutionary concepts when applied to the human experience had the force of natural law. Von Bernhardi, a widely read German general, expressed this idea with a characteristic sense of finality:

War is not merely a necessary element in the life of nations but an indispensable factor of culture, in which

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



a truly civilized nation finds the highest expression of strength and vitality... War gives a biologically just decision, since its decisions rest on the very nature of things... It is not only a biological law, but a moral obligation, and, as such, an indispensable factor in civilization.<sup>3</sup>

"Social Darwinism" will be used in a neutral sense, that is, meaning merely the application of evolutionary concepts to human life and society. The need for neutrality is not without its cause. Many authors make social Darwinism practically equivalent to militarism, and a primary cause of war. Jacques Barzun says that the application of Darwin's ideas to human life by social Darwinists affected the whole tone of the period:

War became the symbol, the image, the inducement, the reason, and the language of all human doings on the planet. No one who has not waded through some sizeable part of the literature of the period 1870-1914 has any conception of the extent to which it is one long call for blood...

Novicov, a Russian sociologist, writing in the nineties and first decade of the new century attacked social Darwinism. It was the doctrine, he said, that "collective homicide is the cause of the progress of the human race."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Gertrude Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1968), p. 417.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Barzun, Darwin, Marx and Wagner: Critique of a Heritage (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1941), p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> George Nasmyth, Social Progress and the Darwinian Theory (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), pp. 7, 9. (It must be remembered that the assertions of Barzun and Novicov are a general indictment. While this writer is willing to admit that German Darwinism, for example, may fit the description, it is an unproven assumption that social Darwinism was monolithic world-wide. Our purpose is to examine these assertions in relation to England in the nineties including some foreign writers who were widely read.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY DARWINISM AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHARLES DARWIN'S WORK TO VIOLENCE AND WAR

If we ask the question, "What has Charles Darwin's work to do with war?" we will get many different answers from scholars in the field. George E. Simpson thinks that Darwin bears responsibility for imperial conquest. Quoting Ashley Montagu, he says:

If it is true that the appeal to Darwinian theory for support of a social system based on ruthless competition and exploitation of colonial peoples represents a misinterpretation of evolutionary theory, the conclusion seems inescapable that Darwin himself was the first to make this misinterpretation. The few passages in which Darwin mentions altruism and cooperation come exclusively from The Descent of Man, where in a book of a thousand pages they are virtually crowded out by the numerous statements that appear to stand in direct and unequivocal contradiction to them.<sup>6</sup>

An opposite view is held by George Masmyth who thinks that social Darwinism was a "distortion" of Darwin, whose purpose was pacific and humane.<sup>7</sup>

Besides the alternatives of condemnation or justification there is a middle position taken by other writers. Gertrude Himmelfarb sees "In the spectrum of opinion that went under the name of social Darwinism almost every variety of belief," many contradictory.<sup>8</sup> Richard Hofstadter deals with Darwinism in

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<sup>6</sup> George E. Simpson, Darwin and Social Darwinism, Vol. II of The European Past, eds. Shepard B. Clough, Peter Gay, and Charles K. Warner (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> Masmyth, Social Progress, pp. 6, 28, 32, 58.

<sup>8</sup> Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, p. 431.

America and concludes that "There was nothing in Darwinism that inevitably made it an apology for competition or force...intrinsically it was a neutral instrument capable of supporting opposite ideologies."<sup>9</sup> These last two quotes will be taken as a guide for our study. In addition to the heterodox nature of evolutionary concepts and the idea of social Darwinism as a "neutral instrument," divergence of later views on warfare may be related to the contradictory nature of Darwin's statements.

If Darwin had made no statements about the nature of war or violence, the sheer convenience of his phraseology for militarists would probably have linked him with them anyway. "Natural selection," and "The Preservation of Favored Races in the struggle for life,"<sup>10</sup> were ready made for later imperialists as we will see. On the other hand, Darwin argued that the practice of war was opposed to the principle of natural selection because the best physical specimens were killed and the weaker left to marry and propagate. However, he was not always so restrained. By the beginning of the last quarter of the century he had acquired the habit of thinking of struggle in organic terms, that is, the struggle of races in violent conflict. In The Descent of Man, published in 1871, he linked the "wonderful progress of the United States" and "the results of natural selection" to the "great stream of Anglo-Saxon emigration to the West." In 1881 he wrote:

Remember what risk the nations of Europe ran, not so many centuries ago of being overwhelmed by the Turks,

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<sup>9</sup>Hofstadter, Social Darwinism, p. 201.

<sup>10</sup>Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, p. 416.



and how ridiculous such an idea is! The more civilized so-called Caucasian races have beaten the Turkish hollow in the struggle for existence. Looking to the world at no very distant date, what an endless number of the lower races will have been eliminated by the higher civilized races throughout the world.<sup>12</sup>

These rather violent statements were made in spite of a revision made by him and shared by Thomas Huxley. Around 1875 Darwin began to de-emphasize natural selection as a cause of change. He came to accept other causes such as the "effects of use and disuse," "sexual selection" and even saying that some change arose from an unknown cause, not always "spontaneously" and not subject to any "selective process."<sup>13</sup> This revision seems not to have affected his idea of racial conflict already cited, however.

Darwin could never be credited alone with painting a view of nature as the sole arbiter between men whose solutions were violent and harsh. That had already been done by Alfred Lord Tennyson. It was he who held the dual titles "poet laureate" and "poet of science," the latter unofficial. To him nature was "red in tooth and claw" and men a product of brute, unconscious forces.<sup>14</sup> His poem, In Memoriam, was published in 1850; Origin of the Species appeared in 1859. Some of the verses had been composed as early as 1833, and show an awareness of geology which had become popular before the Origin:

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<sup>12</sup>Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man, Revised edition (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896), p. 142.

<sup>13</sup>Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, pp. 362, 367, 443.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 228, 230.

Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams?  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life;

That I, considering everywhere  
Her secret meaning in her deeds,  
and finding that of fifty seeds  
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod...

"So careful of the type?" but no.  
From scarped cliff and quarried stone  
She cries, "A thousand types are gone;  
I care for nothing, all shall go."<sup>15</sup>

One cannot help but sense Tennyson choking with regret at the thought of nature no longer existing for the individual, an object of aesthetic enjoyment, but the individual existing for nature, and he but a moment, a phase, in the scheme of things. Tennyson consoled himself, as many were to do after him, with a view of change which was progressive. Man became "...the herald of a higher race" and his hope was for nature to "Move upward, working out the beast/ And let the ape and tiger die."<sup>16</sup>

There were many others before and after Darwin who contributed to the idea of natural law as harsh and violent. Malthus' law of population and food supply was certainly violent.<sup>17</sup> Herbert Spencer, to whom credit must be given for popularizing Darwinism, and above all, making it social, broke through the scientific reserve in 1876 and published his Principles of Sociology. In it he claims that inter and intra-group struggle is the mode of progress, and that war is its method:

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<sup>15</sup>Quoted by Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, p. 230.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

As carried on throughout the animate world at large, the struggle for existence has been an indispensable means to evolution. Not simply do we see that, in the competition among individuals of the same kind, survival of the fittest has from the beginning furthered the production of the higher type; but we see that to the unceasing warfare between species is mainly due both growth and organization . . . Inconceivable as have been the horrors caused by the universal antagonism which, beginning with the chronic hostilities of small herds tens of thousands of years ago, has ended in the occasional vast battles of immense nations, we must nevertheless admit that without it the world would still have been inhabited only by men of feeble types sheltering in caves and living on wild food.<sup>18</sup>

Thus Spencer was to evolutionary thought what fundamentalists were to Christianity during this time. Both took their doctrines literally. There was no allegory in Genesis or mere analogy in biology, and both fought with little uncertainty. Herbert Spencer, unlike Darwin, worked diligently with the problem of war in relation to evolutionary concepts, and the above quote does not fully represent his views. We will hear Spencer again, since he was still writing in the nineties, and is a primary figure in relation to our topic.

Sir Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin, applied some of Darwin's concepts to reproduction and came up with a scheme to keep records of "superior" families for interbreeding. Galton's new science was called "eugenics."<sup>19</sup> Walter Bagehot was another writer who quickly adopted "Darwinism." His book, Physics and Politics, which first appeared in 1876 was subtitled Thoughts on the Application of the Principles of "Natural Selection" and "Inheritance" to Political Society.<sup>20</sup> In it he concluded that:

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<sup>18</sup> Masmyth, Social Progress, pp. 8,9. (It was Spencer who actually coined the term "survival of the fittest.")

<sup>19</sup> Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, p. 425.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



In every particular state of the world, those nations which are the strongest tend to prevail over the others; and in certain marked peculiarities the strongest tend to be the best.<sup>21</sup>

We will leave it to Thomas Henry Huxley to make the transition between early Darwinian thought and the fin de siècle decade, as the nineties were called. He was both a companion of Darwin and a leading figure of the last decade, and he spearheaded the attempt to bring Darwinism to terms with moral and political problems.

Thomas Huxley, a self-educated son of a clerk, was no easy convert to the ideas of Darwin. Both Darwin and Huxley were Fellows of the Royal Society. They met in 1851 and soon had a working agreement. Huxley became Darwin's specialist in the field of zoology. He used the term evolution before Darwin, but did not come to believe in evolution as transition between species until after the Origin in 1859. He continued to hold reservations about the theory, chiefly that it did not explain the real cause of variation between species.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless he became Darwin's gladiator and entered the arena of doubt. It was to Huxley the famous question was posed by Bishop Wilberforce who asked whether he traced his descent from a monkey through his grandfather or grandmother. Huxley's reply was characteristic of his lethal tactics:

...If there were an ancestor whom I should feel shame in recalling it would rather be a man...who...plunges into scientific questions with which he had no real acquaintance, only to obscure them by an aimless rhetoric,

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 426.

and distract the attention of his hearers from the real point at issue by eloquent digressions and skilled appeals to religious prejudice.<sup>23</sup>

The battle continued through the end of the century both as a scientific and as a religious issue. But by Darwin's death in 1882 general acceptance had been won for evolutionary ideas. Intelligent religious people concluded that Darwin had not explained why new species appeared and that God could work through the laws of nature. Not all Christians took this attitude as demonstrated in the U. S. by the Scopes' "monkey trial" and the fundamentalist upsurge. Yet acceptance there was. Darwin was buried in Westminster Abbey and Huxley despaired of supporting such an orthodox cause.<sup>24</sup>

As we enter the nineties, the Darwinian legacy is an uncertain one. Darwin declared that "the struggle between races depended entirely upon intellectual and moral qualities."<sup>25</sup> Yet apart from restrictions like these we cannot forget that he saw struggle between higher and lower races with approval; the defeat of the Turks and the progress of Anglo-Saxon America are examples already mentioned. We cannot say therefore that Darwin was misinterpreted and "distorted" as George Nasmyth says, unless we overlook his prejudice for the "favored races" which in the case of humans were the civilized nations and especially Anglo-Saxons. On the other hand, we cannot overlook Darwin's own intentions, his emphasis on mutual cooperation and argument against warfare as being contrary to natural selection. His own

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 211-213, 265, 266.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 441, 442 and passim.

<sup>25</sup>Nasmyth, Social Progress, p. 278.

contradictory attitude toward war and violence and the diversity of appeal in evolutionary concepts left the field wide open for debate on perhaps the most popular subject of the nineties, war.

## CHAPTER III

## SOCIAL DARWINISM AND WAR IN THE NINETIES

If one could find in Darwin many different suggestions, how did others in the decade after 1890 apply the concepts of evolution to men and nations, and how did this affect their attitudes toward warfare? It was during this decade that the moral, social and political implications of evolutionary thought were debated, with religious controversy somewhat abated.

Huxley attempted to face the moral problems resulting from Darwinism. In Evolution and Ethics (1894) he said:

From the point of view of the moralist the animal world is on about the same level as a gladiator's show. The creatures are fairly well treated and set out to fight --whereby the strongest, the swiftest and the cunningest live to fight another day. The spectator has no need to turn thumb down, as no quarter is given.<sup>26</sup>

Early man was no better off:

...the weakest and stupidest went to the wall while the toughest and shrewdest, those who were best fitted to cope with their circumstances, but not the best in any other sense, survived.<sup>27</sup>

It is the history of civilization which tells us of man's attempt to escape this condition, says Huxley. Evolution is away from primitive conditions. "Ethical progress depends, not

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas H. Huxley, Evolution and Ethics, and Other Essays (London: Macmillan and Company, 1894), pp. 199, 200. (In this same passage Huxley says that evolution is not necessarily toward perfection. It may even be regressive. No comfort from the harsh process can be found in the "increased perfection of the progeny." p. 198).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it."<sup>28</sup> The struggle must continue, but humanized, no longer gladiatorial. It demands self restraint, helping others and fitting as many as possible to survive. It also demands duty of the individual to the state, rather than "self assertion in the name of rights."<sup>29</sup>

To Huxley the struggle was changed in nature and he campaigned for better technical education and teachers so that England could survive in the "war of industry."<sup>30</sup> In this respect Huxley's social Darwinism--it was certainly social and Darwinian --rather than being militaristic and reactionary, had an impulse to social reform. But this impulse was limited by his view of individual differences. Ownership and economic success spring out of "native inequalities" which in turn give rise to "corresponding political inequalities." Thus to Huxley the struggle, refined and sublimated, was to be carried on individually with property and power as its rewards within the nation, and industrial survival the goal in competition between nations.<sup>31</sup>

To Huxley industry was another form of war, a substitute for militarism. Like modern war the industrial war was fought with scientific weapons. England had dropped behind, he thought, because there was no organized attempt to offer technical

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 217-235.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Huxley, "On the Natural Inequality of Men," Nineteenth Century, XXVII (January, 1890), pp. 20, 22.



education to artisans. Only the application of science to industry at all levels could improve methods and organization. In this respect he supported in the late eighties establishment of an "Imperial Institute" for industrial education. It was to be state supported, just as the army and navy because, as he saw it, "the latter years of the century promise to see us embarked in an industrial war of far more serious import than the military wars of its opening years."<sup>32</sup>

In spite of this militant view of industrial relations, or conversely, a sophisticated view of military conflict transformed into economic conflict, Huxley did not adopt all of the imperial armor available to him in Darwinism. He was very cautious about the idea of race and any superiority implied therein. He warned others that such claims were based on speculation, not scientific fact. While claiming impartiality in race controversy he debunked the idea of race characteristics with his unique wit:

The combination of swarthiness with stature above the average and a long skull, confer upon me the serene impartiality of a mongrel.<sup>33</sup>

Huxley's view of nature was a violent one. Prince Peter Kropotkin did not see nature or evolution that way. Kropotkin was a Russian aristocrat who devoted his life to study. His observations in Siberia led him to a different view of the evolutionary process than that of Huxley. He had become an anarchist

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<sup>32</sup>Leonard Huxley, Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley, Vol. II (London: Macmillan and Company, 1900), p. 153.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 269.

and fled to Europe where he published and lectured widely in support of his revolutionary anarchism. In 1890 he published in England, Mutual Aid, A Factor in Evolution, which was an attack on Huxley's view. Rather than a blood-letting competition between members of the same species, he saw progress based on cooperation, man having progressed farthest because of his "social qualities." He described two things which impressed him during his Siberian observations:

One of them was the extreme severity of the struggle for existence which most species of animals have to carry on against in inclement nature...and the other was that...I failed to find although I was eagerly looking for it -- that bitter struggle for the means of existence among animals belonging to the same species...<sup>34</sup>

Thus we have two views of nature, one emphasizing violence, the other harmony; Huxley's led him to support individual economic competition, Kropotkin's led him to campaign for loose communal societies of intellectuals and workers. Both held common ground in campaigning for better technical education for workers.<sup>35</sup>

Ernst Haeckel, German professor at the University of Iowa, scientist and social critic, was an important thinker in this decade.<sup>36</sup> In England he was widely read and was a close

<sup>34</sup> Kropotkin, Social Progress, pp. 75, 76. (Actually Darwin had made the same observation. See Kropotkin, p. 274.)

<sup>35</sup> Kropotkin curiously left room for struggle as cooperation was between members of the "same species." See Kropotkin's article, "Brain Work and Manual Work," The Nineteenth Century, XXVII (March, 1890), pp. 467-473.

<sup>36</sup> Most of Haeckel's books were translated into English. At least seven of his works were either translated and published or republished in London during the nineties. He was not accepted uncritically, but significantly, most of the objections were against his anti-religious views and older science (many of these translations were thirty years old or more). "H. Haeckel in 1848," The

personal friend of Huxley. Huxley supported Haeckel's attempt to eliminate the association, especially strong in Germany, between socialism and evolution. Haeckel's remarks are startling frank. Instead of evolution being socialist, it was "aristocratic." Arguing typically from a biological analogy he says:

The theory of selection teaches that in human life, as in animal and plant life everywhere, ... only a small and chosen minority can exist and flourish, while the enormous majority starve and perish miserably and more or less prematurely.<sup>37</sup>

His description of the natural state of things is all against all, individual against all others, no sympathetic co-operation needed. Adam Smith would surely have relished the following which is a classical statement of individualist social Darwinism:

The cruel and merciless struggle for existence which rages throughout all living nature ... this unceasing and inexorable competition of all living creatures, is an incontestable fact; only the picked minority of the qualified fittest is in a position to resist it successfully, while the great majority of the competitors must necessarily perish miserably. We may profoundly lament this tragic state of things but we can neither controvert it nor alter it. "Many are called but few are chosen"... The selection, the picking out of the "chosen ones" is inevitably connected with the arrest and destruction of the remaining majority.<sup>38</sup>

Judging by the violent frame of mind these words seem to portray, our first impulse is to classify Haeckel as a good

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Spectator, LXVI (June 6, 1891), pp. 795-796; and "Philosophy and Theology," The Westminster Review, CXXXV (March, 1891), pp. 323-325.

<sup>37</sup>See Huxley's introduction to Ernst Haeckel's Freedom in Science and Teaching (New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1879), pp. viii and xix. As the title suggests it was intended to foster educational reform by freeing education from the grips of religious, political and scientific dogmatism.

<sup>38</sup>Haeckel, Freedom in Science and Teaching, pp. 92, 93.



illustration of the link between social Darwinism and militarism. That Haeckel was a pacifist comes then as something of a surprise. In *History of Creation*, published in 1870 just before the Franco-Prussian War, he said:

This infernal militarism, this cancer of contemporary Europe, has assumed an absolute and unprecedented preponderance since universal military service ... has been united ... with the permanent army that serves absolutist and dynastic ends.<sup>39</sup>

How came this social Darwinist to such a position? He argues that humanitarians would be indignant if crippled infants were put to death as the Spartans did, but

...this same humanitarian civilization finds it quite natural that with each explosion of war ... hundreds and thousands of the most vigorous youths should be exposed to the chances of battle! And why, I demand, is this flower of the population thus massacred?<sup>40</sup>

Ernst Haeckel offers an interesting study because he was an early convert to evolution, friend of Darwin, and lived to see the "Great War." His book, *Eternity*, was published while the

<sup>39</sup> "Haeckel's Conversion to Militarism," *The Literary Digest*, LIV (January 13, 1917), p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65. As the title of this article suggests the author believed Haeckel to have a convert to militarism. His evidence is that in subsequent German editions of *History of Creation* in 1872 and 1875 these passages were deleted. The charge is strengthened by noting that Haeckel's extreme anti-clericalism coincides in time with Bismark's *Kulturkampf* against the Catholic Church. To the charge that this is simply another example of a German intellectual selling out, this author has found no explanation and certainly offers no apology. The facts are damning. It is inconceivable that later editions did not reflect the author's own permission. Two things must be noted, however. First, if at this time Haeckel was bending to political pressure and the popular success of German arms, it was against the logic springing out of his views on natural selection and evolution. Nationalism and anti-clericalism were his motives, not "Darwinism." Second, in *Eternity* he discusses his views on evolution and war. He reaffirms his pacifism, though he remains a nationalist in the final reckoning, as almost everyone else did.

war was in progress, and is both evolutionary and pacifist. He abhorred the war but remains thoroughly nationalist. As a member of pacifist organizations, he says that he campaigned to prevent the "inevitable but bloodless 'competitive struggle' from degenerating into a bloody and murderous struggle for existence." As a pacifist "on principle" he believed in "mutual tolerance" between nations, cooperation for "cultural work in the service of humanity" and the elimination of "rude force" by courts of arbitration. Human progress was toward a "lasting peace" with a neutral world court having authority and power to enforce its decisions.<sup>41</sup>

He was nevertheless, a strict believer in evolution. He lamented the "over-estimation" of life reflected in refusal to grant capital punishment and euthanasia. His "monistic religion" called for "Spartan selection" - killing deformed infants or allowing terribly wounded soldiers death. This was the proper balance between "ego and altruism" and the real way to realize the golden rule.<sup>42</sup>

"Underestimation" of personal life was also opposed on evolutionary grounds. Demands made by society on the individual in war were tragic because the most promising young men were killed. His concern for German dead was greater and a concept of race was the reason:

These losses are especially hard for us Germans, since the intellectual and educational level among us and our

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<sup>41</sup> Ernst Haeckel, Eternity: World-War Thoughts on Life and Death, Religion, and the Theory of Evolution (New York: The Truth Seeker Company, 1916), pp. 141, 142.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-35.

Austrian ally is much higher on an average than among our opponents, and therefore the personal life-value is also much higher. A single one of the finely educated German warriors, such as now fall by the thousands, alas! has a higher intellectual and moral life-value than hundreds of rude savages from Africa or elsewhere, whom England opposes to them.<sup>43</sup>

Face fraternization in the war he saw as a danger to England and the "white race" as a whole.<sup>44</sup>

Thus Haeckel provides a physical link between Darwin and World War I. Some of his rhetoric is quotably militaristic in tone. He exhibits a strong racial-nationalist tendency springing out of his evolutionary ideas. Yet close inspection has revealed him to be pacifist in sympathy, activity, and doctrine. His anti-militaristic stand we have seen, moreover, proceeds logically out of his evolutionary views. George Nasmyth quotes only the violent sounding passage from Haeckel. It is important to note also that Nasmyth's book was written at the beginning of the war and associates the distortion of Darwin by some social Darwinist as primarily a German phenomenon.<sup>45</sup> This is not to doubt the common idea that in Germany Darwinism was often called to support the philosophy of force. The point is that in this case the distortion is Nasmyth's at the expense of Haeckel and at the expense of our understanding of the immense variety which characterized Darwinism. From the American side as well as the English, our perception is still incalculably

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 36,37. It is interesting to note that Haeckel believed the "proper balance of ego and altruism" would lead the educated man to "gladly offer up his life for the preservation of the fatherland." p. 46.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>45</sup>Nasmyth, Social Progress, pp. 4-67, 69 and passim.



affected by our war experience. As Richard Hofstadter points out, social Darwinism received a mortal blow when we entered the war because, as part of the "philosophy of force" emanating from thinkers like Nietzsche and von Bernhardi, it became an "enemy doctrine."<sup>46</sup> Vernon Kellogg characterized the German attitude as a "crude Darwinism ruthlessly applied to the affairs of nations."<sup>47</sup>

Another writer blamed by Nasmyth for distorting Darwin is Herbert Spencer. Indeed, it is impossible to study the development of social Darwinism without him. His talent for generalization led him to popularize the biological 'jump' from the world of animals to human society. Writing profusely even through a life time of addiction to morphine and opium, he produced works on psychology, biology, sociology and ethics. Himmelfarb describes him thus: "Spencer was the Victorian philosophe, a civil engineer and journalist by profession, inventor by avocation, rationalist and atheist by conviction, ... and popularizer by temperament."<sup>48</sup>

As with the other writers dealt with in this study we cannot enter into Spencer's work in full, only as it relates to militarism. The volume of his writings and diverseness of his fields prevent this, especially in this day of specialization. Spencer's love for generalizing and racing over broad territory with no more empirical footing than a few examples was described

<sup>46</sup>Hofstadter, Social Darwinism, pp. 198-200.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>48</sup>Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, p. 222.

by Euxley who said that Spencer's "idea of a tragedy was a deduction killed by a fact."<sup>49</sup>

His general view of evolution was one of the growth of animals and societies from simpler forms to more complex, from uniformity to a higher state, "heterogeneity," until a stage of "equilibration" was reached. Politically this stage was based on natural rights with the ethical restraint to do as one pleased so long as other's rights were not impaired. The role of the state was totally negative - a policeman to ensure rights. On these grounds he therefore opposed any state legislation for the poor or less fortunate. Individualism, self help, laissez-faire economics, a belief in the process of struggle rewarding those who are most able and beneficial to the race as a whole are the assumptions of Spencer.<sup>50</sup>

We have already noted Spencer's extravagant praise of war as a method of human evolution and progress. War led to social cooperation, and organization of states. Universal competition encouraged the "least favorably modified" to adapt to necessary conditions "with loss of life as the penalty for failure."<sup>51</sup>

From these ideas we would certainly conclude that Spencer was a blood-thirsty philosopher of force. Yet if we follow Spencer's thinking to the end - both in substance and time, we

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Hofstadter, Social Darwinism, pp. 36-38, 40, 41.

<sup>51</sup> Nasmyth, Social Progress, p. 64.



will see a very different conclusion. As Nasmyth notes,<sup>52</sup> his philosophy takes a different turn in Principles of Sociology (1876-96):

Mark now, however, that while this merciless discipline of Nature "red in tooth and claw," has been essential to the progress of sentient life, its persistence through all time with all creatures must not be inferred... recognizing our indebtedness to war for forming great communities and developing their structures, we may yet infer that the accrued powers, available for other activities (protection of rights), will lose their original activities. While conceding that without these perpetual bloody strifes, civilized societies could not have arisen, and that an adapted form of human nature fierce as well as intelligent, was needful ... the brutality ... will disappear.<sup>53</sup>

Spencer curtly makes his conclusion by stating:

From war has been gained all that it had to give ... Only further evils are to be looked from the continuance of militancy in civilized nations.<sup>54</sup>

To Spencer the biological analogy had limited applications. Primitive men were like animals in nature, competing against circumstances and other creatures for life. But the analogy does not fit later stages. "Natural selection" was to Spencer a misconception - it implied a passive humanity and a favorably active

<sup>52</sup> Although Nasmyth recognizes some prohibition against war, he terms this a "qualification" of his theory (Social Progress, p. 14) when in fact, it is a logical outgrowth. If human nature is developing, then previous stages were not essential; they were adaptations to peculiar circumstances and needs. This is how Spencer viewed barbarism. Evolution is progressive not imitative of earlier defunct stages. Man could evolve mentally and ethically as well as physically.

Nasmyth further charges Spencer with distorting Darwin and transferring by biological analogy animal strife to human strife. He lumps Spencer with Bernhardt and other social Darwinists who appealed to the aunts who waged war as a justification for human war (Social Progress, pp. 64-68).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 14, 15.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

agent called "Nature." Rather, he saw progress is through "artificial selection" - as Darwin used the idea in relation to a breeder of pigeons. Since nature was an aggregate of "blind" forces, some favoring life, others not, man developed past the primitive stage because he could control the process of evolution. Men could learn, human consciousness could be altered by education and passed on from one generation to another. This doctrine was called the inheritance of acquired characteristics, and was the basis, during the decade, of a furious debate between Spencer and August Weisman, who held that acquired characteristics die with the body cells.<sup>55</sup>

What kind of society should man, the agent-selector, evolve to? Or more relative to our subject, what is the man of peace to do with man the warrior, the barbarian? Fortunately, Spencer addressed himself to these questions in Facts and Comments, published in 1902. His fully developed, or "fittest" man is no barbarian:

Considered in respect of their fitness for life, individual and social, those in whom the altruistic sentiments predominate are far superior to those who, with powers of perception and reasoning of the highest

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<sup>55</sup>Herbert Spencer, The Inadequacy of Natural Selection (London: Williams and Norgate, 1893), pp. 10-12, 44-45. Neither this book nor Facts and Comments, cited next, is dealt with by Nasmyth. This omission is inconceivable if one is to deal fairly with Spencer and militarism, since these works represent his most intense effort to deal with this subject, coinciding with a peak in public interest. The question arises, who distorted whom? Did the followers of Darwin distort his evolutionary synthesis into crude militarism, contributing to the World War? Or did the World War (or both Wars) distort our perspective of social Darwinism into a monster doctrine of war? Nasmyth's omissions and the case of Haeckel argue the latter case as being at least equally as valid as the first.



kinde join anti-social feelings - unscrupulous egoism and disregard of fellow men.<sup>56</sup>

Spencer was anti-militarist and anti-imperial. One of his last public acts before health forced him to private writing was in 1882 when he formed the Anti-Aggression League against war with Frederic Harrison and Lord Morley. He opposed the Boer war as an imperialist war. He opposed imperialism because it implied subordination by coercion of slave to master.<sup>57</sup>

Although our present topic is not militarism in general, Spencer describes this spirit so prevalent at the century's end and attacks it with great vitality. He pointed out that an imperial society which diminishes liberty of others abroad does the same at home. The master becomes the slave. This process he saw in the rising cost of foreign adventures and the

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<sup>56</sup>Herbert Spencer, Facts and Comments (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902), p. 46. It is memorable that this high idealism was used in practice to support laissez faire capitalism, and the minimal state idea. Consequently there was no check on the "heroic entrepreneur." His extreme individualism became associated in America with conservatism and monopolistic exploitation as pointed out by Hofstadter in the Introduction and page 202 of Social Darwinism in American Thought. Hofstadter is certainly correct in painting the unappealing aspects of Spencer's Darwinian individualism; there are other aspects of it that we might notice. If there is no guarantee that individuals will benefit the public in a semi-anarchic society, there is no guarantee that the liberal state, without effective control, will either. The evidence is that our government in relation to war making decisions is out of public control. The Executive, as William J. Fulbright has pointed out in Arrogance of Power has been operating without the restraint of Congress. The influence of the "military-industrial complex" is highly suspect.

It is in this respect that Spencer's individualism, resisting the intrusion of a militarily dominated government in private life, appealing to the economic and moral burden resulting from imperial intervention abroad, seems to recover some of its sanity and moral good sense.

<sup>57</sup>Spencer, Facts and Comments, pp. 157-160.

curtailment of the ability of Parliament to question the government, worse than anything else, the citizen become "serf of the state" may pay with his life if military service was compulsory.<sup>58</sup>

He bemoans the practice of target practice and public drilling among the volunteer militia. From this,

a revived interest in war necessarily resulted; and the partially dormant instinct of the savage, readily aroused, have been exercising themselves if not on actual foes then on foes conceived to be invading us.<sup>59</sup>

He points to the popular "Salvation Army" and its magazine The War Cry with its motto "Blood and Fire" as illustrating the violent frame of mind. From its hymns were sung lines like these:

Made us warriors forever, Sent us into the field  
of fight ... We shall win with fire and blood ...  
stand to your arms, the foe is nigh, The powers of  
Hell surround ... the day of battle is at hand! Go  
forth to glorious war.<sup>60</sup>

These same songs were sung in church services sending troops to South Africa. Churches also sponsored Church Lads Brigades with uniforms, arms and drill. Ministers argued for public military instruction in the schools. Mobs attacked war dissenters while police stood aloof. The Great Exhibition of 1851, a very pacifist event, was commemorated with a great military display in 1901. In the increase of "athleticism," violent soccer matches and cock-fights, he saw a perverted love of brutality. Literature, journalism, and art had all been aiding the process of "rebarbarization." Tales of bloodshed poured from the press. Rudyard Kipling was singled out as joining

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 161-171.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

"nine-tenths of real paganism" with "one-tenth of nominal Christianity" into an idolization of the soldier and glorification of "brute force" in school life.<sup>61</sup>

No finer condemnation of militarism from the period can be found than this, and it is from the lips of an evolutionist, a social Darwinist, and a believer in survival of the fittest (he coined the term).

Since Spencer was writing in the twilight of his years, we may well ask what was done with his work. How was he represented by other writers? C. O. Ovington, a journalist writing for the Westminster Review during the upheaval of the Boer War, provides an interesting example. We could reasonably expect the heat of chauvinism to test the mettle of Spencer. If his evolutionary doctrines were in support of a philosophy of force they would certainly be exposed in this war, a test case for social Darwinism.

Ovington opens his lengthy article with a long complaint against "literary jingoes" who misuse evolutionary ideas for imperial wars. These jingoes believed that peace was degenerative and was the cure for national social ills. Ovington aptly labels these ideas "reactionary dialectics."<sup>62</sup>

He appeals to Herbert Spencer as the antidote to advocates of slaughter. From Spencer he advances the belief that only defensive war is glorious. Armed services are mere protectors of

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 172-185.

<sup>62</sup> C. O. Ovington, "War and Evolution," Westminster Review CLIII (April, 1900), p. 411. Spencer also expressed a sense of disappointment and doubt in the utility of evolutionary thoughts to solve social problems. (Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, p. 431).



industry, which is the real basis of national strength. Arbitration, not war, is the solution to international conflict. Though war served some early benefit in forming societies, no further benefits remain. The "purifying process" of struggle is now carried on by "industrial war" which is the final stage of evolution. The progress from "militancy to industrialism" will never reach a Utopian level. Internal struggle will continue, for the present, to crush individuals "for the advancement of the race," but militarism can be suppressed and societies "controlled by law" and "beneficence." Not only can military war be abolished, but the industrial war can be eventually "mitigated."<sup>63</sup>

Thus far we have considered the ideas of Huxley, Spencer, and Ovington. Huxley viewed the natural world with pessimism. The "cosmic process" was brutal; ethical man must resist it. He could resist by civilizing himself and by constructing a state. But severe competition there would always be. Spencer and Ovington also viewed evolution as basically a harsh process, working for future good, but never reaching a utopia, retrogression being possible. Men could change (voluntarily, by education), but not so completely that competition would be eliminated. We might describe the attitudes of both as cautious optimism.

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 412-420. It is Spencer's opposition to war that Ovington agrees with. He does cite, in the manner of Malthus, the idea that excess population struggling for work is the "painful necessity" for natural selection to work. But he recognizes the limitation of natural law because economic success does not reward virtue or recognize social tragedy. He cites Huxley as a compromise between Socialism (change by legislation) and Spencer's Individualism (voluntary evolutionary change). Huxley would admit to state legislation, but still maintains competition.

Alexander Sutherland, an Australian journalist and author, represents a different view of evolution. He is a total optimist. To him evolution did not mean fixed laws of brutal combat recurring eternally and marking the rise and fall of nations. Rather, he saw in history a process of change affecting attitudes toward warfare. History tells us, he says, that:

...with the birth and death of centuries, human sympathy has been developing, and...as it grew, it has been sapping the military spirit. A minute inquiry brings the conviction that this beneficent process...is now more vital and more active than ever.<sup>64</sup>

He examines English history to show this "beneficent" process. Beginning with the coming of Teutonic tribes, life was made

one long ferocious nightmare, wherein no occupation was of any repute save that of the warrior, nor any pursuit capable of kindling ardour save that of slaughter... Peaceful industry was degrading and fit only for slaves; and a man's surest passport to the heaven of yassail was to die amid the frenzied slaughter of battle.<sup>65</sup>

The practice of massacre was only restrained by the need for forced labor. Heads were used for decoration; infants were playfully caught on spear point.<sup>66</sup>

From this barbaric situation medieval custom began to regulate war and combat. With the growth of law and a strong

<sup>64</sup>Alexander Sutherland, "The Natural Decline of Warfare," *The Nineteenth Century*, XLV (April, 1899), p. 570. This article is an outgrowth of his book The Origin and Growth of the Moral Instinct (1898) in which he traces the idea of sympathy through the lower animals to man. See "The Development of Morality," *The Spectator*, LXXXI (July 2, 1898), pp. 17, 18, for a critical discussion of this work. See "Alexander Sutherland," *The Athenaeum*, II (October 11, 1902), pp. 486, 487, for a biographical note.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 570, 571.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

king, the "king's peace" and the "ordeal by battle" began to ameliorate the brutality. After a siege women and children were spared, though men taken in arms were killed, or as William the Conqueror did, the hands and feet of leaders might be cut off. Finally came the "Truce of God" instituted by the Church which seemed in its day "as wild as in our days a proposal for disarmament may seem." The truce called for no fighting from Wednesday evening until Monday morning of each week, and none on holy days.<sup>67</sup>

In the Tudor period the "lust of killing as in itself a delight" disappeared. Civilians, except in religious wars, were not slaughtered. War became the business of gentlemen, and thinkers like Grotius developed concepts of international law.<sup>68</sup>

In the present period, Sutherland pointed out, people went unarmed and instead of slaying the wounded, battlefield surgeons cared for them.<sup>69</sup> His attitude toward the present is a fair indication of what was so distasteful about the Victorians, their moral certainty and sense of righteousness. Actually one might have argued that Sutherland's progress overlooked the law of diminishing returns. As fighting became more "humanized" by medical care and international conventions, it probably became more tolerable. There is no end to the literature on preparation of Rudyard Kipling's "Tommy Atkins" for the battlefield. Public concern was focused on everything from his education in school

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 570, 571.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 575.



to his military training, his weapons, and his care before, during and after the battle. One cannot but wonder what insulating effect this had on the public mind--the idea that modern methods of war were better, the product of "progress."

Sutherland adds to this impression by saying that although armies were larger, warfare was "immensely diminished." War was "much rarer" and briefer. Modern weapons, though more destructive, had actually killed only one out of ten thousand of the population. Compared to the Middle Ages this was one-hundreth as destructive.<sup>70</sup>

All of these developments had resulted in "radical changes in human nature." Even in the barbaric and medieval periods, Sutherland saw the "softening mood of men," tempers growing milder, the "current of history" pushing men, and "giant forces" working for the growth of human sympathy. He applied his evolutionary Darwinism with unquenched optimism:

[The growth of sympathy] ...is a natural process, through which brutal and unsympathetic strains by slow degrees are worked out leaving the earth to be possessed by the sympathetic...See what breeders can do by persistent culling of their flocks. And a natural process culls the human race with equal efficiency.<sup>71</sup>

The "culling" process will be carried out because brutal individuals will not mate as successfully and therefore will not leave as many offspring. The "honest, helpful, kindly competitor" has a better chance of leaving prosperous grandchildren. Races (or nations) also will prosper if they have internal cohesion while others are torn by dissent and strife, as Germany prior to

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 576.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., pp. 576, 577.

1870 illustrates. Human will can only aid this process a little, the "influence of nature [being] hugely preponderant."<sup>72</sup>

Thus far we have examined the ideas of representative scientists, social thinkers, and journalists, all utilizing evolutionary concepts. These concepts have been applied to many social questions with varying success as later generations may judge. In our study, however, it is becoming evident that there was a body of social thinkers diligently applying evolutionary concepts to the problems of war and militarism. They opposed chauvinism, jingoism and militarism on various grounds. Huxley, Spencer, Haeckel and Ovington did so on the general grounds that physical combat is primitive and that struggle is to be sublimated into industrial competition. Sutherland saw war as a passing phenomenon, with evolutionary forces working a change in human nature. The important point is that they arrived at their conclusions in ways logically consistent with the Darwinian concepts they used.

If these "social Darwinists" do not reveal any preference in their thinking for the "call for blood" described by Barzun, we may ask ourselves if there were not other concepts which did connect them with war and militarism. Was not the idea of superior race used to justify war, and especially in England, imperial war?

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., pp. 577, 578. This rather fantastic set of ideas, derived from Darwin, well illustrates the degree to which science had displaced religion and even in Comptean fashion, assumed the function of the thing it displaced. Instead of God guiding earthly events, Sutherland has "unseen force," a "great under-flowing current," "giant forces," and "great, slow world forces" which Calvinistically are neither "made nor marred by human effort." These forces are sweeping man toward a millennial abolition of war, in the prospect of which "we may rest in faith" on the tide of human sympathy.

In connection with race, imperialism and war, we will examine the thoughts of three men who were particularly concerned with these ideas, Benjamin Kidd, J. H. Robertson and Edmond Demolins. All were prominent in the 1890's and all worked within the framework of evolutionary ideas. Within this framework each developed his own unique theory. Their conclusions further present the diversity within social Darwinism. They and others considered with them provide more examples of how social Darwinists met the critical subject of imperial war.

Edmond Demolins startled the so-called "Anglo-Saxon" world as well as his own countrymen in France when he published a book titled Anglo Saxon Superiority: its What it is Due. Published in 1897, the book seemed to be an overture for the Fashoda crisis and the Spanish-American War. In two years it went through ten French editions, in one year two English editions, and was even translated into several Oriental, as well as other European languages. A contemporary writing from the English viewpoint said of Demolins that "No modern author has been more widely read and translated."<sup>73</sup> On the flyleaf of the book is a map of the world with an inscription by the author which seems to fulfill the expectation of its contents created by the title:

The map illustrates the extraordinary power of expansion of that race which seems destined to succeed the Roman Empire in the government of the world. The parts occupied by the Anglo-Saxon race are shaded and the islands are

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<sup>73</sup>Miss Betham-Edwards, French Men Women and Books: A Series of Nineteenth Century Studies (London: Chapman and Hall, 1910), p. 178.



underlined; the parts that are only threatened as Egypt and the Argentine Republic are dotted.<sup>74</sup>

The reaction of a French reviewer, Edouard Drumont, gives a fair indication of the climate of opinion spiced bitter by racial ideas. Drumont says:

If the English trample us underfoot it is because we are no longer ourselves...England is governed by statesmen, we are really governed by Jews and cosmopolitans, of whom our statesmen are but the flunkys.<sup>75</sup>

Drumont chides Demolins for not seeing this truth and hopes that

there may come out of the bosom of the nation some anti-Semites, some representatives of traditional ideas, who lawfully and after a regular trial, may bring about the execution of a few notable cosmopolitans, guilty of actual treason.<sup>76</sup>

The seed-bed in which this rather grotesque opinion flourished was the agitation surrounding the trial of a Jewish army officer, Captain Dreyfus, who had been convicted of spying. The trial of Dreyfus split the French nation much as the Boer War split Great Britain.<sup>77</sup> In both cases the honor of the army was at stake (French reactionaries had suppressed evidence of a forgery that had led to Dreyfus' conviction). In both cases, though in a different way, the ideas of race played an important part. In the case of Britain the honor of the army was at stake because a supposedly superior race suffered an unexpected reverse at the hands of a small number of Dutch farmers. In the case of the

<sup>74</sup>Edmond Demolins, Anglo-Saxon Superiority: To What it is Due (London: The Leadenhall Press, 1899), Flyleaf and Preface p. xxviii.

<sup>75</sup>Quoted in Demolin's Anglo-Saxon Superiority, pp. 417, 418, from La Libre Parole, 21 June, 1897.

<sup>76</sup>Demolins, Anglo-Saxon Superiority, p. 418.

<sup>77</sup>David Thomson, Europe Since Napoleon (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), p. 344.



French, the humiliation resulted from the alleged betrayal of the French nation by a Jew. This led to agitation like that of Drumont for extreme actions against Jews. Demolins did not participate in this kind of sentiment, however.

Demolins' idea was that English superiority could be attributed to the quality of their social organization and its predominance over political power. The eventual triumph of Saxon over Celt, Anglo, Dane, and Norman proved the "power of private life" over military conquerors.<sup>78</sup>

In contrast to the French, Saxon-England had two distinct advantages. First, the character of her government was individualistic; it encouraged the solution of social problems by private initiative rather than depending on the group or communistic method. The second great contrast was in the field of education, family life, and labor. Englishmen were "self-made men" who, because of their care and schooling, were superior

Young men brought up the Anglo-Saxon way -- that is, made strong in their bodies, accustomed to material facts, having always been treated as men, trained to rely on themselves alone, and looking upon life as a battle (the Christian view of life) -- bring a superabundance of youthful strength to cope with the difficulties of existence; they enjoy these difficulties, they expect them, triumph over them; fitted as they are for strife, they improve in the midst of it as in their element.<sup>79</sup>

In contrast to these "happy warriors" French children were dominated by parents who arranged marriages. Instead of being industrious, Frenchmen chose to have small families. French schools were too regimented to encourage initiative and

<sup>78</sup> Demolins, Anglo-Saxon Superiority, pp. xvii-xiv.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

too speculative for an industrial society. Since a few government positions provided the only chance for profession and respectability much French education was spent mostly in "creaming" for these exams instead of useful learning.<sup>80</sup>

Thus far Demolins has identified himself firmly as a social Darwinist. His frequent use of the concepts of race, fitness, struggle and survival are unmistakable identifications. He also has sided with the Spencerian individualist band of Darwinism. To him the process of evolution is the triumph of the independent minded Saxon principle over the Celtic, which is socialistic and the Norman which tends toward nobility, "landlordism" and militarism.<sup>81</sup> Another Spencerian characteristic is seen in the Saxon ability to work: "Englishmen produce in the shortest amount of time, the greatest amount of work, so as to be able to take afterwards the longest spell of rest."<sup>82</sup>

How does Demolins treat the subjects of race, war, and militarism? If we were going to stereotype him as one of those who participated in the "call for blood," we could find some passages which seem to demonstrate this. Nasmyth quotes Demolins in this fashion:

When one race shows itself superior to another in the various externals of domestic life, it inevitably... gets the upper hand...and establishes predominance. Whether this predominance is asserted by peaceable means or feats of arms it is...unreservedly acknowledged... that this law is the only thing which accounts for the history of the human race and the revolutions of

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 140, 141.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 157, 354.

empires, and that...it explains and justifies the appropriation by Europeans of territories in Asia, Africa, and Oceania, and the whole of our colonial development.<sup>83</sup>

Without doubt Demolins supported imperialism. But this representation obscures the fact that he was anti-militarist in the strongest sense. Although past empires had been established by arms, as the Roman Empire and the expansion of Louis XIV, that was the inferior way in Demolins' view. The distinguishing characteristic of English patriotism was that they established control without arms. They depended on "the more formidable might of the social constitution." Their patriotism was different because they completely "repudiated militarism." Demolins was impressed because the size of the army was limited, there was no conscription, peace societies flourished and they preferred to settle international disputes by arbitration.<sup>84</sup>

Militarism and armaments, rather than being a source of strength, were a source of weakness. Comparing the relative threat of Germany and England he says:

The great peril, the great rivalry, are not, as we think on the other side of the Rhine; militarism and Socialism will spare us the trouble of getting rid of that enemy--and that before long.

The great peril, the great rivalry are on the other side of the channel, and on the other side of the Atlantic; they are wherever is to be found an Anglo-Saxon pioneer, and Anglo-Saxon settler or squatter... he does not come, like the German,...with big battalions and perfected weapons; he is despised because he arrives with his plough and by himself. This comes from our being ignorant of what that plough is worth and what that man is worth.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup>Nasmyth, Social Progress, p. 48. See also Demolins, Anglo-Saxon Superiority, p. 268.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., pp. 268, 286, 287, 294.

<sup>85</sup>Demolins, Anglo-Saxon Superiority, p. 104. See also p. 257.



Unlike Spencer, Demolins believed in imperialism, but as Spencer he was strongly anti-militarist. Far from leading him to the orgy of battle, his darwinism led him toward a "soft" brand of imperialism and toward educational reform. His idea of race was a rather general one, with nations being equivalent to races in practice. Others may have been erecting barriers of racial superiority, merchantile trade barriers and physical shields of armor--guns, ships, and large armies--but not Demolins. The effect of Demolins' educational reform was to break down these barriers by encouraging the exchange of students and teachers between England and France (there had been a state prohibition against importing teachers). Until the end of his life in 1906 Demolins' campaign against militarism mounted in intensity, his anxiety over rising chauvenism extending to England as well as France. He has been called an "Anglophile" reformer.<sup>86</sup>

Edmond Demolins' work was not accepted in England without criticism. One reviewer protested that English superiority was not so much due to differences in education as much as temperament and social freedom. An American writer pointed out that Demolins did not account for the growth of socialism in England, as Salisbury had said, "We are all Socialists now."<sup>87</sup> The important thing to note about these reactions is in what they did not say. None challenged the ideas of race, struggle for survival, the value of individualism, the superiority of the

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<sup>86</sup> Betham-Edwards, French Men Women and Books, pp. 182-185.

<sup>87</sup> "The Superiority of the Anglo-Saxon," The Spectator, LXXIX (September 18, 1897), pp. 371-372.



Saxon, or the de-emphasis of the gun.

Stephen L. Gwynn, an Irish critic, journalist and biographer accepted Demolins' ideas substantially. Gwynn did not even challenge Demolins' disparaging remarks about the Celtic race as being "communistic" and less ambitious than the Saxon. He did point out the inconsistency of equating socialism with the "laggard" attitude toward work, especially in Germany. He also questioned the "too exclusive cult of self help" which in America caused a loss of respect for private office. Yet Gwynn thought it was good to study the book because it taught Englishmen their strength. This reviewer's reaction gives a key to a common psychological state of mind in this period which we may call the assertive attitude. Demolins' work merely strengthened the idea that

it is not by patching up what is weak but by strengthening what is strong, not by assuming the defensive but by pushing a successful line of attack, that nations as well as individuals attain success.<sup>88</sup>

Gwynn compares Demolins' book to another by Guglielmo Ferrero, Young Europe, which appeared in 1897. Both authors are credited with recognizing that victors in "the international struggle" are those nations who "adapt themselves to the changed conditions of life," or the industrial revolution. Ferrero, an Italian, claimed that the Latin "race" (which included the French) were inferior to northern Europeans from colder zones because sexual desire made them precocious and bored by machine labor. At the same time French thrift, according to Demoline, weakened

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<sup>88</sup> "Success of the Anglo-Saxon," Edinburgh Review, CLXXXVII (January, 1898), pp. 131, 141-48.

the nation by limiting the size of families -- two interpretations, which if not contradictory, do not lie down together with much felicity.<sup>89</sup>

Another Darwinian writer who used concepts of race and struggle as a basis for imperialism was Benjamin Kidd. Kidd had been a civil-service clerk until 1894 when his book Social Evolution appeared. Its popularity in England and abroad, which led to translations in seven languages, allowed Kidd to travel and write. In 1898 he produced Control of the Tropics which dealt with the problems of imperialism. His ideas are without any natural consistency. He believed in collective progress but was anti-socialist. He believed in "natural selection" as well as progress through the "supernatural." He believed that individual freedom was the basis of progress, but that reason and intellect were antagonistic to group welfare. It was probably this kind of intellectual grab-bag which accounted for much of his popularity. The antagonisms in his work were separated by many pages of print. At the same time, of course, this prevented him from acceptance by the serious academic community. His role reminds one of that ascribed to Herbert Spencer in the United States, who according to Hofstadter was "the metaphysician of the homemade intellectual."<sup>90</sup>

To Benjamin Kidd evolution was primarily social or collective, rather than individual. Natural selection tended to develop the society (or nation) toward the "highest type of social efficiency." Human reason and individualism were

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp. 131, 132, 150.

<sup>90</sup> Hofstadter, Social Darwinism, p. 32.

antagonistic to the group, never considering the interests of unborn generations. Coherence could be found only in adopting an "ultra-rational sanction for behavior," religion. The most efficient social organism was the one based on religious belief which encouraged a willingness to sacrifice for the good of the race.<sup>91</sup>

The process of natural selection must continue otherwise the race would "actually retrograde." Competition should be enhanced by allowing formerly excluded masses into "the rivalry of life on terms of equal opportunity."<sup>92</sup> Yet this process must be controlled:

Natural selection seems, in short, to be steadily evolving in the race that type of character upon which these forces act most readily and efficiently; that is to say it is evolving the religious character in the first instance, and intellectual character only as a secondary product . . . (The) willingness to submit reason to the control of sanctions beyond the reach of reason is the most important product of the process of evolution at work in human society.<sup>93</sup>

Kidd's natural selection is eternal and non-utopian. It resembles a system of controlled combustion. Competition is a source of energy, but it must be controlled, otherwise it would be destructive. The controlling element is the religious society. Natural selection weeded out "self-assertive" elements of society. In France human reason led to rational destruction of marriage as a sacred institution, limitation of child-birth, and an influx and co-mingling of "strangers" resulting in "racial self effacement." The religious element produced "winning" qualities --

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<sup>91</sup> Benjamin Kidd, Social Evolution (London: Macmillan and Company, 1906), pp. 344-348.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., pp. 193, 348.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 290, 291.



especially a "sense of reverence" and also

. . . great mental energy, resolution, enterprise, powers of prolonged and concentrated application, and a sense of simple-minded and single minded devotion to conceptions of duty.<sup>94</sup>

These virtues plus the ability to do more work (as Demolins) made the Anglo-Saxon race superior. This superiority was partly due to the influence of climate. The greatest manifestation of this superiority was moral. Superiority had nothing to do with color or intellectual capacity. The superior race was the one with moral qualities contributing to social efficiency. British influence was humanitarian and efficient, as Egypt illustrates. Egypt's agriculture had benefited by irrigation, her credit was restored, and improvements in administration all demonstrated British "efficiency." Milner said of Egypt:

. . . [British rule] is not exercised to impose an uncongenial foreign system upon a reluctant people. It is a force making for the triumph of the simplest ideas of honesty, humanity, and justice, to the value of which Egyptians are just as much alive as anyone else.<sup>95</sup>

The thing that Europeans "could not tolerate" was inefficiency -- "wasting of the resources of the richest regions of the earth." Colonial people could not manage it by themselves. Africa was going to waste and places where British influence had been withdrawn were reverting to savage corruption and inefficiency. The tropics had to be governed by white men as a "trust for civilization." But the problem was, according to Kidd, that

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp. 21, 285.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., pp. 57-58, 321, 328, 329, 326.



Europeans could not acclimate themselves to tropical areas. The climate deteriorated the European and he tended to "sink slowly to the level around him" if he settled in mass.<sup>96</sup>

Kidd's answer was for Europeans to "parcel out the entire equatorial regions" and administer them not by permanently resident settlement but from the "temperate regions" with only a token administration actually in these lands. He cautioned quite seriously that there must be first a "clear call of duty or necessity to provide the moral force necessary for such action." He had already demonstrated the necessity -- European lack of raw materials -- and the moral rationalization -- inefficiency of colonial people. His suggestion was merely a description of what had been going on for a long while. The Berlin Conference of 1885 had provided for "slicing up the pie." But Kidd did not envision the neo-mercantile situation which tended toward exclusive, insular colonial empires divided by tariff walls. His idea was colonial free trade.<sup>97</sup>

We have seen how Benjamin Kidd developed his ideas of race, struggle, and natural selection, in true social Darwinist fashion. He differs from Spencer in that he supported imperialism. His concept of religion as a mode of progress in evolution and a restraint on individuality, and the idea of society (or race) as an organic whole, rather than a mere sum of individual wills, are also in contrast to Spencer. But like Spencer, he was in doctrine if not in effect, anti-militarist. How came he to this position, especially since he believed in imperialism?

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 327; Benjamin Kidd, The Control of the Tropics (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898), pp. 51, 53, 76-77.

<sup>97</sup> Kidd, The Control of the Tropics, pp. 56, 77-73.

His position was similar to that of Demolins, who was impressed that the British could do it all without a gun. Kidd viewed military power as Spencer; it was beneficial only in early stages of the evolution of nations and states. But military societies and empire by conquest was limited because they fostered too much individual and class power. The case of Rome illustrates for Kidd the fact that slave labor weakens the ruling class by corrupting respect for work and trade. Rulers became indolent. In addition military states are limited because they exclude the masses from government. Hereditary classes holding power and protected by law constrict the goal of evolution which is to raise the "cosmic process" to its highest efficiency by extending to "all the members of the community the right to be admitted into the rivalry of life." Rather than trying to eliminate the cosmic process as Huxley, men should recognize that there is a "softening process" going on which does not eliminate struggle, but aids it. Altruism led to a breakdown in the power enjoyed by England's ruling classes and a related breakdown in the military structure of society associated with nobility.<sup>98</sup>

This altruism had eliminated slavery, and finally in Kidd's time had come to the point at which:

The right of occupation and government in virtue of conquest or force tended, it was felt, to become an anachronism; it was antagonistic to, and it involved a denial of, the spirit which . . . was slowly bringing equality. Although almost every European people . . . had in the past endeavored to imitate the military ideals of ancient empires, and to extend their rule by conquest over other peoples of equal civilization, they had done so with ever-diminishing success.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Kidd, Social Evolution, pp. 40-43, 138-145, 166-67.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., pp. 310-11.

Domination of European people by one group became a human impossibility. Attitudes even changed regarding colonial people:

To keep in subjection, therefore, by purely military force a people of even greatly lower development must . . . become correspondingly difficult; and this, not so much because of the fear of effective resistance in a military sense, but because of the lack of a moral force on the part of the stronger people to initiate . . . a principle antagonistic to the spirit governing the development which these peoples were themselves undergoing.<sup>100</sup>

Clearly Kidd thought that military imperialism was inconsistent with the altruistic spirit which was not so much a doctrine of equality as equal right to struggle. He attempted to circumvent the problem of native hostility to outside control. As we have seen, involvement was only because of necessity and the inefficiency of native people. British rule, he seems to infer, would always be accepted without resistance because it was a "trust for civilization" and because the "word of an Englishman" was respected everywhere.

Imperial wars were not always necessary anyway. Kidd boasted that the Anglo-Saxon had "exterminated" inferior competitors more thoroughly than any other race! Not, however, "by fierce and cruel wars of extermination but through . . . laws not less deadly and even more certain in their results." What are these laws? They are the process by which (as if by magic) "weaker races disappear before the stronger by mere contact." European drink, disease, clothing, peace and wealth played havoc among the natives. Kidd drops a telling phrase when he remarks

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 310-311.

that "the virtues of our civilization are scarcely less fatal than its vices."<sup>101</sup>

Even without war, struggle, though humanized, was still "hard" and "unalterable":

The Anglo-Saxon looks forward . . . to the day when wars will cease; but without war, he is involuntarily exterminating the Maori, the Australian and the Red Indian . . . he may beat his sword into plough shares, but in his hands the implements of industry prove more effective and deadly weapons than the swords.<sup>102</sup>

As Ernst Haeckel, Kidd witnessed the First World War and wrote of its relation to his thought. After the war he attacked Haeckel for compromising ideals of civilization with Darwinism, which gave to the pagan doctrine of force an extraordinary prestige in the minds of the millions who read the popular editions of his works in Germany.<sup>103</sup>

Kidd said that the old Darwinism which was individualistic was passing away and the new, a philosophy of "integration" was in vogue. The "social emotion" was replacing the philosophy of force with ideals of "subordination," "sacrifice," "service" and "renunciation." These ideals, long suppressed by the male mind, were now becoming predominant as the female mind became a "psychic center" of modern civilization. Power in civilization would rest on the "emotion of the ideal in the collective mind," which was a characteristic of feminine mind.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-51.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>103</sup> Benjamin Kidd, The Science of Power (London: Methuen and Company, 1920), p. 56.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 6, 39, 40, 236-240, 256-57. Kidd's anti-rational approach indicts three characteristics of nineteenth century life as he saw it: (1) the rational method of solving



One cannot escape the impression that Kidd's anti-militarism was weakened by the actual nature of imperialism. Neither the Zulus nor the Boers, Afghans, or Chinese welcomed British rule without the gun. G. D. Campbell, the Duke of Argyll, thought that Kidd's idea of natural selection was only "the ruthless elimination by slaughter, and disease, and starvation, of all weaker organisms . . ." <sup>105</sup> It is undeniable that over and above protestations of anti-militarism, the effect of Kidd's words particularly his stress on unending struggle, helped create a hostile environment. But, as we shall see there were many other sources besides Darwinism that the "violent state of mind" as we

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disputes by agreements, or diplomacy, (2) the male character of civilization revels in the pagan ideal of force, and (3) individualism which by its selfish and egotistical spirit leads to violence and war.

As to the rational method of diplomacy, it is still needed and after the enfranchisement of women in politics. Unfortunately the passing of the ideal of rugged individualism, and its replacement with "collective" ideals of patriotism, race, or corporate loyalty, cannot be regarded as bringing "other oriented" ideals of self renunciation and pacific attitudes. Rather, as we will see, the organic views of Darwinism were equally if not more militaristic than the individualistic.

<sup>105</sup> G. D. Campbell, "Kidd on Social Evolution," The Edinburgh Review, CLXXIX (April, 1894), p. 483. Campbell's article is highly inflammatory claiming that Kidd "out-Darwins Darwin" in advocating violence. Despite the popular reception of the book and importance assigned to Christianity it was a "crude" view of social evolution (p. 511). Other writers were openly appreciative. Their reaction strengthens the impression that his book fulfilled a psychological need felt in the period ---a justification for aggressive imperialism that would seal off the accusing conscience of the liberal tradition and men like Gladstone and Spencer. See "Mr. Kidd on the Control of the Tropics," The Spectator, LXXXI (August 20, 1898), pp. 235-236; Maurice Eden Paul, "Social Evolution in Japan," The Cornhill Magazine, LXXVII (May, 1898), pp. 657-674. Paul says that Kidd's selection "involves the capital punishment or the sterilization of the unfit" (p. 657). This was not Kidd's idea, but probably was drawn from Karl Pearson.

have called it, could draw upon. There was no inevitable, direct causal relation between Darwinism and the war spirit, except its rhetoric.

Kidd's anti-militarism was weaker than Spencer's because Spencer still held the liberal ideal of free trade and laissez faire individualism; he could not, therefore, support colonial war and a "greater England" policy. Kidd's position was weaker, not only because of his imperialism, but perhaps because individualism was the best point of resistance against military encroachment. Kidd weakened his position by advocating "ultra-rational sanctions," "duty" and sacrifice to race. Spencer's undiluted individualism saw the economic burden of imperialism, the sacrifice of lives in battle, and the intrusion of government into private life as a direct result of militarism and war. It was adverse to race-nation animosity because it was cosmopolitan.

In the United States today, the best argument against excessive military intervention in foreign countries has been made by Senator William J. Fulbright in his book The Arrogance of Power. It is the best, not in any innate sense, but in the sense of utility; it is the most plausible to the American public mind which is still very conservative. It is conservative, in the Spencerian sense of individualism. It still holds the ideal (if not in practice) of the independent man, having personal rights upon which government cannot encroach. The average citizen will never advocate withdrawal from Vietnam because his country has made an incalculable blunder, costing thousands of lives. American mothers will never say that their son's deaths were useless, and worse than useless because the ideals for which they

fought were tricks of Saigon politicians who have no love for democracy. They will never say that the "military-industrial establishment" deluded us. In short, the appeal to the moral guilt of our intervention entails a consequent burden of guilt for an unjust war and a sense of futility, of loss of ideal, which the average man will not bear.

On the other hand, he may listen and act, if he is appealed to on the grounds of self interest. If he believes that government which exists in his dream only by his wish is squandering his money and his sons, if he thinks that the government has squelched in Congress his right of dissent and decision making power regarding war, he may rebel. Individualism is only a relatively good ideal. Its moral bankruptcy and antidote were memorably revealed in the depression. Yet, perhaps it has certain sources of power as this study suggests.

John Mackinnon Robertson, a humanist scholar, treats the concept of race differently from Kidd. Though he was an evolutionist, he believed that ideas of race led to animosity leading to forced suppression. From a scholarly viewpoint he tried to show how illusory was the idea of a race with common characteristics. The British "races" were particularly cross-fertilized. The idea of race had been useful in organizing nation states, he said, but it was essentially barbaric. It gloried in wars of liberation and exulted in the defeat of an enemy. Contrary to Kidd, Robertson observed that religion contributed to strife by fostering hostile loyalties. Socialism encouraged class warfare.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> John Mackinnon Robertson, The Saxon and the Celt: A Study in Sociology (London: University Press, 1897), pp. 90-109.



Robertson derides the idea that Englishmen were superior because they were better colonists than the French. Rather than social characteristics it was, he thought, due to a large extent to circumstances and chance. Furthermore, the idea of race was used as a rationalization for military suppression. First one would establish the inability of natives to rule themselves and then posit the solution as English rule. Balfour's speech in the House of Commons, May 1893, against Irish home rule illustrates this process:

Before the English went to power in Ireland, Ireland was a collection of tribes waging constant and internecine warfare. All law, all civilization in Ireland was the work of England . . . The perfect unity that Ireland now enjoyed was also the work of England.<sup>107</sup>

Goldwin Smith, a historian and political journalist, said that:

In France the Celt underwent Roman and afterwards Frankish training. What he would have been without that training, Brittany, amiable but thriftless, slatternly, priest-ridden, saint-worshipping, legendary, is left to tell.<sup>108</sup>

Even G. D. Campbell, the Duke of Argyll, who was outraged by the violent nature of Darwinism, used the race-cultural inferiority idea as justification for British rule. Irish leaders, he asserted, were "incapable of laying even the rudest foundations of civilized condition among their own people."<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Robertson, The Saxon and the Celt, p. 306.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 240. The idea of race was not always used to support war. J. A. Hobson in a pamphlet called How the Press was Worked Before the War (London: National Press Agency, 1977), credits a good deal of the blame for the Boer War not only on Rhodes' manipulation of the press but also popular sympathy with the "Jew-Imperialist design that is in the course of execution" (p. 15).



Thus we have the efforts of Robertson, a scientific scholar, attempting to combat the corrupting influence of racism, an idea usually associated with evolution or Darwinism. But as the case of the Duke of Argyll illustrates, opponents of Darwinism could be equally as racists as proponents. Robertson's hope, as Alexander Sutherland's, was that the evolution of man would lead to

the continuous transformation of strife from an animal energy . . . to an energy of reason; a continuous shifting of the grounds of hostility from primary passions to purified ideals, and from the plane of barbarism to the plane of intelligence. And it is because the prejudice of race . . . is just an energy of mere animal passion, surviving unpurified from the stage of sheer barbarism, that it is here impugned.<sup>110</sup>

Thus far we have surveyed many shades of opinion and many varying interpretations of evolutionary theory. A graphic representation of these writers would have to represent them as a series of over-lapping circles. Each shares some ideas with others; most differ in some vital point. They all have two characteristics in common, however. First, they all apply evolutionary concepts to social problems which we have termed "social Darwinism." Second, they all develop as an integral part of their evolutionary thought an anti-militaristic stance. Their arguments varied in strength according to their views.

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<sup>110</sup> Robertson, The Saxon and the Celt, p. 124. Robertson published in 1916 a whole work dealing with militarism, The Future of Militarism (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1916). In this he reveals his modest national egoism; he disclaims the mythology which established Germany as militarist and England as peace-loving. He points to English militarism, mostly its political sources, and claims that circumstances and political institutions limited its course of development. One of the primary circumstances was the fact that England did not have the physical ability to be militaristic (p. 153-155 and passim).

Those of Haeckel and Kidd were weakened by collective ideals (nationalism and imperialism), those of Sutherland perhaps by his great optimism regarding a change in human nature. In no case were their anti-war sentiments inconsistent with Darwinism --which is another way of saying that Darwinism was pluralistic, it could accommodate many differing views. It has not been our purpose to show that all Darwinists were anti-militant, but that there was an important group directing to the English public of the nineties, just such a stand.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOCIAL DARWINISM IN THE NINETIES AND SANCTIONS FOR WARFARE

The writers of this second group also represent a great variety of opinion. As the first group they all use in various ways some or all of the ideas we have called social Darwinism. What distinguishes them is that there is no conscious attempt to combat militarism. It must be emphasized that the difference between these groups do not represent any difference of kind but of degree. Prohibitions against violence may be found in their work, but they are so few and diluted that we may regard these writers as important contributors to militarism, though their militarism was not always the most extreme variety to be found.

In considering Karl Pearson we have traveled to a polar position from Herbert Spencer. Pearson was completely anti-individualist. He took the step that Benjamin Kidd would not take and advocated socialism. Kidd introduced certain limitations on struggle for survival - religion, the "softening process," and the growth of altruism - which would limit chiefly the internal struggle of class against class. These limitations characterized Kidd as an organic thinker; he thought of struggle between nations as determined by compact efficient groups, but stopped short of socialism and maintained the value of individualism.

Pearson does not throw out struggle. To the contrary he magnifies it without restraint. To him the law of struggle and

survival was "inexorable" and was the source of progress without which there would be only "catastrophe." He posits a secular hell, with advance through "pain and suffering only," and Laxrus' small drop of relief being the hope of benefit to future generations.<sup>111</sup>

The uniqueness of Pearson's view was that the internal struggle must be limited. Man was basically gregarious; his safety depended on his social instinct and his group loyalty:

You must not have class differences and education differences so great within the community that you loose the sense of common interest . . . No tribe of men can work together unless the tribal interest dominates the personal and individual interest at all points . . .<sup>112</sup>

Since safety depends on group loyalty and willingness to sacrifice, the "true statesman" must limit the internal struggle "in order to make . . . [the nation] stronger for the external struggle." The winner will be the nation mentally and physically better organized. Strikes and class war, as well as inequality of wealth and opportunity -- must be eliminated. But the true statesman does not limit struggle so that inferior breeds multiply equally with superior. That was the weakness of Spencer and Kidd; they had no way to control reproduction. Competition was insufficient to do this. Pearson was a professor of mathematics at University College of London from 1884 until 1911, when he became professor of eugenics. He endeavored to prove

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<sup>111</sup> Karl Pearson, National Life From The Standpoint of Science (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1901), pp. 21-24, 41, 62. This book as well as The Grammar of Science (1892) made Pearson very well known in England.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 48.



statistically that natural competition does not select the fittest and his evidence indicated that the poor or lower classes (presumably inferior) live and multiply as successfully as the upper classes.<sup>113</sup>

Pearson had a problem in finding a way to prevent inferior stocks from breeding. Part of the responsibility he placed on the "true statesman" who must

insure that the fertility of the inferior stocks is checked, and that of the superior stocks encouraged; he must regard with suspicion anything that tempts the physically and mentally fitter men and women to remain childless. He must see to it that a reserve of brain and muscle is pushed down into occupations that have little apparent need of them, or forced into new lands.<sup>114</sup>

His reason for urging these measures was the crisis which he thought was imminent. The Boer War was merely a test crisis. British reverses had shocked people into realizing that success was determined not by size, armaments, material resources or even bravery, but by organization. The war had revealed a "dearth of brains and . . . physique." The birth rates of professional classes had been decreasing and could in two generations change the national character.<sup>115</sup> Pearson suggested that parenthood was primarily a duty of citizenship, or obligation to the state:

From the standpoint of the nation we want to inculcate a feeling of

<sup>113</sup> Karl Pearson, "Socialism and Natural Selection," The Fortnightly Review, LXII (July, 1894), pp. 12-14. Pearson was greatly influenced by Sir Francis Galton, cousin of Darwin, and originator of the eugenics movement. Pearson was a member of the Royal Society and received its Darwin medal in 1898.

<sup>114</sup> Pearson, National Life, p. 59.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp. 28, 54, 60.

shame in the parents of a weakling,  
whether it be mentally or physically  
unfit.<sup>116</sup>

Pearson complained that under the current system there was no "test of ability" before a man "multiplied his type." The state must recruit from its best stock, not on the basis of wealth and patronage. Science through education was to play a great role in providing leadership through a system of trained "scouts." This military analogy came from General Redvers Buller in South Africa who complained that the primary need was for scouting. Science was the solution. Science could supply to all fields men trained to observe and reason.<sup>117</sup>

All of this preparation must strike the modern reader as undesirable as well as futile. The methods he publicly endorsed stopped short of sterilization and infanticide. If Pearson's methods for attaining internal efficiency were muddled, the goals he had in mind were absolutely clear. Selection operated between groups, "extra-group" selection was the most important; "Societies prepare for years and perhaps for centuries, for the extra-group struggle, which eventually changes the predominant races of continents."<sup>118</sup> Preparation for this day of Armageddon was not only internal, but external by "contests." War with inferior races and struggle with superior nations for trade routes, sources of raw material, and food were the "lesser" struggles which provided warm-ups for the big game of war which must come. These last phrases, not Pearson's, certainly enter the realm of

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp. 26, 29.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., pp. 28-29, 36 and 43. Education could not improve inferior stocks; they must be bred out. Environment played only a small part; heredity a larger part in Pearson's scheme.

<sup>118</sup> Pearson, "Socialism and Natural Selection," p. 17.

the ridiculous, but they are suggested in his use of sporting terms -- "contests," "scouts" and "master-scouts." It brings to mind the condemnation by Spencer of "athleticism" in connection with martial spirit and also the old belief of Wellington that there was a vital connection between the "playing fields of Eton" and the battlefield.<sup>119</sup>

As Kidd, Pearson thought that no mixture of races should occur in imperialism, nor even co-existence. Slavery and inter-marriage were degenerative. Pearson's solution, unlike Kidd's control from temperate regions, was ejection of inferior races. It would be impossible to reach a "healthy social state" in South Africa until "the white man replaces the dark in the fields and in the mines, and the Kaffir (the South American native) is pushed back toward the equator."<sup>120</sup>

Pearson defended socialism as being consistent with natural selection. Darwin had called the connection in Germany a foolish idea and Kidd especially attacked it.<sup>121</sup> Pearson said that by controlling land, capital, and labor, socialism would lessen the internal struggle, prevent waste, and knit society more compactly for the more important extra-group struggle. The need for efficiency would cause European nations to turn socialist in the struggle. Furthermore, internal struggle was only limited and struggle against physical environment would be unaffected by socialism.<sup>122</sup> When food supply limits were reached, the physical

<sup>119</sup>Pearson, National Life, p. 44.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21, 48.

<sup>121</sup>Pearson, "Socialism and Natural Selection," p. 1.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., pp. 7, 16-17.

struggle would become a struggle between nations perfectly harmonious to socialism. "A hungry nation would sooner break its bounds and consume its neighbor's, especially if an obviously inferior neighbor is to be found, than gnaw its own vitals."<sup>123</sup>

Pearson's socialism was very loose in nature. He could be called a collective nationalist or a believer in what was popularly called "state socialism." His attitude toward war was not that of Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, the German Marxist. They hoped to see war between rival capitalist nations fighting over imperial possessions. To them imperialism was the "highest stage" of capitalism and marked the beginning of decline and possibility of international war which would so weaken capitalist nations that workers could initiate violent revolution.<sup>124</sup> As we have seen, Pearson thought that the need for social efficiency in international competition, whether industrial or military, would force nations to become socialist. He never advocated revolution. Furthermore, collectivization would not initiate a reign of peace between socialist nations, but continued war. The struggle for supremacy did not recognize any international socialist brotherhood.

This also distinguished him from the "soft" socialists like August Bebel of Germany and Jean Juarez of France, who opposed war between their countries and planned to prevent it by refusing war credits and by a general strike. Juarez and the French socialists opposed imperial wars, only defensive wars

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>124</sup>British Imperialism: Gold, God, Glory, ed. Robin W. Winks (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1963), pp. 26-27.



being justifiable. German socialists opposed naval armaments bills around the turn of the century.<sup>125</sup> None of these policies could be found in Pearson who saw the external struggle as paramount.

Ernest Renan, a French moralist and historian, was widely read in England. Primarily dealing with religious subjects, his Life of Jesus, History of the People of Israel, and Recollections of My Youth, as well as others, were translated and published in England between 1863 and 1895. Renan's writings grew more extreme after 1870. He was much taken up with the role of war in human civilization and expressed his ideas in at least nominally evolutionary terminology.

As with Pearson, race struggles were the ultimate social problem to Renan:

The struggle against nature does not suffice. By means of industry man succeeds in reducing it to an unimportant matter. Then comes the struggle of races.<sup>126</sup>

Renan expresses the old idea of war as a source of progress. He says that stagnation would result without the fear of conquest from neighboring states. States grow old when they are content to enjoy what they have. The impulse of youth is to expand and build. War is also a natural selector of governments; it eliminates the "bad" ones and prevents them from expanding.<sup>127</sup>

Not only was war the "out of the whip" which kept nations from going to sleep, it was an answer to the search for personal

<sup>125</sup> Thomson, Europe Since Napoleon, pp. 389-393.

<sup>126</sup> Naamyth, Social Progress, p. 144.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

identity:

The wars of the giants of the Revolution have made nobles of us all. We are the sons of a race of heroes. Each of our fathers was entitled to say of himself: "I am an ancestor." You are the great grandchildren of crusaders; I am the son of a soldier of the Revolution, and [I] am as good as you.<sup>128</sup>

Because of the impetus given to the idea of race by evolutionary thought, especially by anthropology and sociology, it has been included as an important concept of social Darwinian thought. Racial imperialism was promoted most vigorously by those thinkers that were described variously as nationalists, or collectivists, such as Kidd, Pearson and Renan.

Yet the racial idea was in vogue before Darwin published his Origin in 1859. Arthur Gobineau, a French aristocrat, published in 1853-1855, The Inequality of Human Races which was a plea for supremacy through race purity.<sup>129</sup> While Gobineau used the term to mean white, yellow, and black races, Renan's use was the more common. Race to him was a non-scientific term meaning distinct cultural and national groups. Struggles between France and Germany were vaguely racial, which meant of course, national.

Two British soldiers provide insight into how the idea of race literally entered into battle. Sir Garnet Wolseley and Horatio Herbert Kitchener were premier soldiers of the day. Wolseley, among other accomplishments, became Commander-in-Chief

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., p. 12; Ernest Renan, The Future of Science (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1893), p. 490.

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Arthur de Gobineau, The Inequality of Human Races (London: William Heinemann, 1915), pp. 205-210. As Hofstadter points out it is doubtful whether such writers as Edward Freeman, Charles Kingsley, or John Mitchell Kemble were much influenced by Darwinism even though they wrote race histories of Anglo-Saxon England (Social Darwinism, p. 172).

of the South African Army during the Boer War. Kitchener, who made his name as avenger of Gordon in Egypt, became a Field Marshall and was given the title of Lord Kitchener of Khartoum.

Members of the army were particularly in the spotlight during the nineties. G. W. Stevens serialized Kitchener's exploits in Egypt in The Daily Mail, a popular newspaper.<sup>130</sup> Wolseley published essays and memoirs in various periodicals. This was an old custom for successful generals, but a practice given new urgency by the need of the military to propagandize for armaments and the visceral need of the public to participate vicariously in their national life.

Wolseley accepted the idea of Anglo-Saxon superiority even though battlefield experience did not always reveal it. He attributed a great deal of this superiority to the cultivation by Anglo-Saxons of "those manly sports which entail violent exercise." These sports bred valor and physical strength which other races did not have. But "effeminacy of mind," "indolence," and "over-cultivation" threatened to corrupt Englishmen to cow-ardies.<sup>131</sup>

The Negro was to Wolseley innately cowardly and lazy. The Zulus were somewhat above this general indictment because they had elements of pride in their "race," nationality, and king. But the Fanti (another south African tribe) were cowardly. Wolseley was mystified because Fanti boys would go into battle

<sup>130</sup> Philip Magnus, Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), p. 94.

<sup>131</sup> Sir Garnet Wolseley, "The Negro as a Soldier," Fortnightly Review, XLIV (December 1, 1888), p. 692.



fearlessly as servants. But when they reached puberty they refused. He consequently describes the boys as "cleverer" and "brighter" than the old ones who were "duller and more stupid." The chief reason for Negro inferiority was that they had to be taught discipline and forced upon the threat of death to fight. According to Wolseley, Englishmen resolutely faced battle and its two alternatives, death or glory. Infusion of "white blood" into the Negro race strangely did not improve their bravery; in fact they deteriorated physically, he thought.<sup>132</sup>

As Wolseley, Kitchener also viewed the world from the pinnacle of Saxon superiority. Kitchener's idea of race was more tailored to imperial needs of the time. It was not the savage, but the Boer who was inferior:

[Boers] are uncivilized Afrikaner savages with a thin white veneer . . . The Boer woman in the refugee camps who slaps her great protruding belly at you and shouts, "When all our men are gone, these little Khakis will fight you," is a type of savage produced by generations of wild lonely life.<sup>133</sup>

Kitchener wanted most of the Boers deported so that British immigration could develop the resources.<sup>134</sup> Thus his racism and imperialism were but different sides of the same coin.

As Wolseley, Kitchener also emphasized sports as basic to national and military success. He campaigned for elimination

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., pp. 600, 691, 693. Wolseley makes another revelation of his own when he compares the difficulty of teaching some Africans to fight to the difficulty of teaching "some breeds of dogs" special tasks (p. 689). One problem Wolseley had with racial superiority was the fact of so many defeats by Zulus, Afghans, Mohammedans, etc. He reasoned that British officers depended on text book tactics in the field instead of English superiority in weapons and discipline (p. 702, 703).

<sup>133</sup> Kitchener, Portrait of an Imperialist, p. 185.



of "weaklings" from the army and recommended hunting and polo as good solutions to building the nation. His whole outlook is framed by sporting metaphors. Enemy casualty lists he referred to as his "bag." As current enemy-friendly death ratios are published from Vietnam as supposed indicators of success or failure, Kitchener said in 1901, "the real criterion of the war is my weekly bag." The Boers were like "wild animals" who had to be caged. They would not stand up to a sporting "fair fight" whereas in Egypt the Khalifa's men stood and "died game."<sup>135</sup>

Neither Kitchener nor Wolseley were social Darwinists in a strict sense. They did not use evolutionary terms such as natural selection as social analysts did. They did employ the idea of racial superiority and in effect regarded trial by battle as a test of fitness or superiority. Their emphasis on sports and their use of metaphors from sports reveals that they saw life in terms of struggle and contest.

At any rate neither Kitchener nor Wolseley seem as militarist as some of the American soldiers writing during the period. Alfred T. Mahan, author of The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783, was present at the Hague Peace Conference in 1899. He defended war as a method of solving international problems, and therefore a means of progress. It was also an instrument of national conscience which was higher than "the clearest intellectual perception...." War was to Mahan not the greatest evil, tyranny was. War was ordained by the Christian religion which taught that the sword was the "resister and

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<sup>135</sup>Ibid., pp. 153, 171, 177, 195.

remedier of evil. "1 6

Although Mahan used the idea of progress by war, as did many of the social Darwinists, he was no more Darwinist than Kitchener or Wolseley, though more overt in praise of war. Another American, Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, did use evolutionary terms more freely. Strife was the "law of existence" for Luce and war was a "fixed law" of evolutionary progress. War had been the parent of liberty, and even civil war benefits a nation. God sends these "convulsions" which are for the ultimate good of the race, and as a form of divine punishment.<sup>137</sup>

General Homer Lea, an adventurer and soldier, exhibits perhaps the most unrestrained form of social Darwinism by an American. Lea fought against the Boxer Rebellion and later became military advisor to Sun Yat Sen. His book, Valor of Ignorance reveals a mind totally compassed by biological analogy and natural law,

It has been shown . . . how irrevocably national entities in their birth, activities, and death, are controlled by the same laws that govern all life, plant, animal or national; the Law of Struggle, the Law of Survival.<sup>138</sup>

Lea argued, as Mahan against the Hague principle of arbitration, or at least against compulsory arbitration which was

<sup>136</sup> Alfred T. Mahan, "The Peace Conference and the Moral Aspect of War," North American Review, CLXIX (October, 1899), pp. 435, 436, 444, 446.

<sup>137</sup> Steven B. Luce, "Benefits of War," North American Review, CLIII (December, 1891), pp. 674-676, 679.

<sup>138</sup> Homer Lea, The Valor of Ignorance (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1909), pp. 11, 76. Homer Lea's The Day of the Saxon (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1912), is also filled with ideas of race struggle and prophecies of doom regarding the decline of military potency.

never adopted by those conferences. He warned of danger from the yellow races and of the danger from wealth. Of the latter he says in unique language:

Commercialism is only a protoplasmic gormandization and retching that vanishes utterly when the element that sustains it is no more. Military or national development . . . is not only responsible for the formation of all the nations on the earth but for their consequent evolution and the peace of mankind.<sup>139</sup>

The significance of the book is increased by the fact that endorsements in the introduction are given by Lieutenant-General Adna R. Chaffee, who was Chief-of-Staff for the army, and by Major-General J. P. Story.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., p. 27. There were American authors, as in Britain, who argued against war from an evolutionary viewpoint. Two of these were N. S. Shaler and David Starr Jordan. See Shaler's "The Natural History of Warfare," North American Review, CLXII (March, 1896), pp. 328-340; "The Last Gift of the Century," North American Review, CLXI (December, 1895), pp. 674-684 for his views. For Jordan's see his The Blood of the Nation: A Study of the Decay of Races Through the Survival of the Unfit (Boston: American Unitarian Society, 1902). This book is a statistical development of Darwin's idea of war as reverse selection.

<sup>140</sup>See the Introduction to Lea's The Valor of Ignorance, pp. xi-xxiii. Hofstadter says that the U. S. lacked "an influential military caste" that glorified "war for its own sake." He says that Roosevelt's "Strenuous Life" speech, which was Darwinist and militarist, was a "rare" occurrence. He also mentions Luce's belief in war as a natural law (Social Darwinism, pp. 184-190). He does not mention (along with Mahan, Lea and Luce) Chaffee, Story or H. C. Taylor who was President of the Naval War College begun by Luce. See H. C. Taylor's "The Study of War," North American Review, CLXII (February, 1896), pp. 181-189. That these men did not glorify war for its own sake is no virtue; violence and war clothed in ideals is probably a more dangerous brand of militarism (as Mahan's Christian conscience and the moral obligation to intervene in Cuba illustrate). All of these men were strong militarists and four (Luce, Lea, Story and Chaffee) expressed their ideas in social Darwinism terminology. Perhaps if Germany had not lost both wars scholars would be searching for sources of violence in the Anglo-Saxon mind. If we never experienced Nazism, we certainly have our own strong militarist tradition.



Military professionals were not the only ones bringing the subject of war to the people. There was a special class of civilian journalists who wrote only about military matters. Spencer Wilkinson was one of these. Another one of more immediate interest to us was Fred T. Jane. An Englishman, Jane wrote many articles and several books during the nineties which were published on both sides of the Atlantic. An amazing amount of technical detail is thrown to the public in his articles; popular demand evidently justified the nuts and bolts approach to ships' construction and military tactics of all kinds.<sup>141</sup> Jane attempted to counter what he considered an extreme view, the belief held by Mahan that seapower was the determining factor in history. Only island empires, he claimed, were primarily dependent on a navy. Continental powers, including the United States, did not need a large navy.

Another point of disagreement with Mahan's approach was that it overemphasized the importance of machinery, superior weapons and tactics. Jane dances a tautological jig to the tune of social Darwinism and comes out with the idea that those who have won battles in the past have done so because they were the fittest, and, the fittest always win. "Fitness to win" never lost to superior weapons, but could be undermined by "ease, comfort, and relaxation" and especially women -- that was the downfall of Hannibal, the distraction of a petticoat.<sup>142</sup> But what

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<sup>141</sup> Fred T. Jane, "The British Ship of War: From the Naval Point of View," Contemporary Review, LXXIII (February, 1898), pp. 174-178.

<sup>142</sup> Fred T. Jane, Heresies of Sea Power (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1906), pp. 1-7, 321, 325, 327, 141.



was this fitness? Jane says, "It is probable that Fitness to Win embodies little else besides the fixed desire to kill the enemy."<sup>143</sup> It was the killer instinct which won the Russo-Japanese war for Japan and enabled Britain to finally beat the Boers. The Russians had in fact been hindered because they did not properly hate Japanese soldiers. The "survival of the fittest test" was battle with victory determined by the primitive desire to destroy the enemy.<sup>144</sup>

Another writer who demonstrates the potentialities of Darwinism to support militarism is H. F. Wyatt, also an English journalist. The title of one of his articles is synoptic of many attitudes. The article, written for The Nineteenth Century magazine, was called "War as the Supreme Test of National Value."<sup>145</sup> It suggests the enormous importance that the subject of war had assumed. The amount of consternation, debate, fantasy and entertainment the subject supplied is attested to by the sheer volume of print devoted to war in books, magazines and newspapers. Wyatt's point of departure was the Tsar's proposals for peace which culminated in the first Hague Peace Conference in 1899. Wyatt's whole article is directed against the belief of the Tsar that if men would but "agree to disarm . . . it would be done."<sup>146</sup>

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., pp. 324, 325, 333-335.

<sup>145</sup>H. F. Wyatt, "War as the Supreme Test of National Value," The Nineteenth Century, XLV (February, 1899), pp. 216-225.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., p. 216. The validity of this belief is realistically challenged in view of the difficulty Russia had in keeping up in the arms race; however, the important point is that writers like Wyatt and Mahan took it seriously and launched long justifications of war. They did not think that disarmament would succeed (the question was never considered at the conferences). Rather, they saw the ideas and schemes of peace as corrupting influences.

If we asked, "How does war test a nation?" Wyatt would answer that war was the "essential factor in social evolution," and war was a test ultimately of moral power. One need only to observe, he thought, to see that the nations that were "most potent in war" were also "the most moral and civilized." Thus war was the highest test of a nation's moral value, and an element of progress.<sup>147</sup>

Since war-making ability was "the true reflex of . . . mental and moral vigor," it was a "law" that those who were the most ethically sound must dominate the weaker ones. Weakness and immorality were linked. The Turks, French, and the Latin races all experienced decline, thought Wyatt, because of corruption.<sup>148</sup>

Wyatt's suppositions had a new development which resulted in a radical view of international relations. His ideas were unique not because other social Darwinists did not share his belief, but because he pushed a common assumption to its extreme conclusion. The common assumption of the unrestrained Darwinists was that in the struggle for existence, force, and ultimately military force, determined a nation's place in the sun.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., pp. 216, 219.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., pp. 219, 225.

<sup>149</sup>One might say that this was no different than Bismarck's idea of might and right. But there was a difference. Regardless of the importance Bismarck placed on raw force, or "Blood and Iron," after 1870 he applied the brakes to Germany's power. In the manner of a classical diplomat he relied on rational restraints---treaties, conferences, and diplomatic negotiations. After Germany became, in Bismarck's view, a satisfied power, he supported stable or fixed boundaries. His restraint on the Kaiser in 1866 regarding Austrian annexation is an example of his sense of limitation even before 1870. If it was not the integrity of national boundaries that restrained him, it was probably knowledge of retribution by a coalition of powers if he tipped the balance of power too far. See Franz Schnabel's "The Bismarck Problem," The European Past, pp. 234-248. Wyatt's idea goes far beyond this.

The next logical step from this is to say that no national boundaries are fixed in any way but by one's brute ability to maintain or extend them. Wyatt took this step. As in the nature, so in international relations, flux was natural:

The appearance of fixedness in the bounds and conditions of nations is entirely fallacious . . . In reality, these bounds and conditions are constantly changing . . . due to increases and decreases in the essential vigor of those strongly differentiated groups into which, in the course of human evolution, mankind has become divided.<sup>150</sup>

The view that constant flux and change is the normal state, and the idea that a nation's place results from expansion by force at the expense of weaker nations, are different from the classical and the liberal romantic views of national existence. The classical view<sup>151</sup> was that the integrity of the major powers must not be seriously violated; only a certain amount of change would be tolerated. Excess expansion would be met by what came to be known as the "balance of power" system, which in the nineteenth century, operated through the "Congress system" and the "Concert of Europe." The idea was that unrestrained aggrandizement would be met by a coalition of counterbalancing powers. But Wyatt's view does not recognize any normal state of "balance" or peace. In fact, since change is continuous, and it is accomplished by war, and since a nation either expands by war or decays, peace is only a "stagnancy, ending in social death."<sup>152</sup>

<sup>150</sup>Wyatt, "War as the Supreme Test," p. 222.

<sup>151</sup>Henry A. Kissinger, "The Congress of Vienna: A Reappraisal," The European Past, pp. 18, 19; F. H. Hinsley, Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations Between States (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 172 and passim.

<sup>152</sup>Wyatt, "War as the Supreme Test," p. 222.



This is an activist view of international relations and does not recognize any limitations in struggle.

The nineteenth century romantic-liberal view<sup>153</sup> was that a nation's place was determined by historical development --- race, religion, common traditions, and language. These things determined a nation's right to exist and the right of freedom from foreign domination. Wyatt's idea of race was either - or, either domination or decay with continuous flux oblivious to any rights but force.

Wyatt also expresses another characteristic not before mentioned. His idea of absence of fixedness is really a cyclic view of history. Nations grow and decay as Edward Gibbon saw in the rise and fall of Rome. This idea will be investigated in the next chapter. We might say that the concepts of evolution, mixed by Wyatt with a vague idea of progress and a cyclic view of history, became a volatile concoction, and a very unstable compound.

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<sup>153</sup>Carlton J. Hayes, The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 133-161.



## CHAPTER V

THE TREATMENT OF WAR FROM SOURCES  
INDEPENDENT OF DARWINISM

While some social Darwinists advocated war in an unrestrained manner, we need not think that such a practice was theirs alone, or that the prohibitions of the first group were ineffectual before a surge of militancy flowing inevitably from social Darwinism. To the contrary there is evident in the nineties another tradition quite distinct, though sometimes mingled with evolutionary ideas.

We can describe this tradition as the "Gibbonic" one, but only in the same loose sense that we speak of Darwinism as being something different from its originator. Edward Gibbon was an eighteenth century historian who authored the classic work, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, which was completed in 1787. Gibbon became an institution both in England and on the continent. The French referred to him as "Le Gibbon." One biographer says that "By common consent he has taken his place among the Olympians." Walter Bagehot, a mid-Victorian writer, described his recommended way of reading Gibbon as "the best way to reverence" him.<sup>154</sup>

Gibbon admired Roman qualities of law, order, lack of fanaticism and the ideal of Pax Romana in which Roman arms guarded

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<sup>154</sup>J. M. Black, The Art of History: A Study of Four Great Historians of the Eighteenth Century (London: Methuen and Company, 1926), p. 143.

the world from war and violence. He admired also the mildness of Roman lawmakers and their just laws.<sup>155</sup> That many of these same ideals were shared by nineteenth century Englishmen is undeniable. One is reminded of Palmerston's famous speech in Commons during the Don Pacifico Affair (1850) in which he compared British to Roman citizenship. Palmerston thought that a British citizen such as Don Pacifico (a Portuguese Jew born in Gibraltar) should have the same rights of citizenship and safety as the Apostle Paul when he appealed "civis Romanus sum" -- I am a Roman citizen.<sup>156</sup> Lord Randolph Churchill, Alfred Milner and Rudyard Kipling all saw England's mission as the spread of civilization and especially British law and government.<sup>157</sup> One might say that many imperial ideals would be adopted by any empire. Ideas of mission, duty, a sense of righteousness regarding laws and governments imposed on others -- all of these are useful. But Rome had a special attraction to late nineteenth century Englishmen, as we shall see. What was the reason for this interest?

Gibbon supplies some of the answer. His theme was, as the title suggests, decline or decay. History was to him more than facts; it was "an organized sequence of cause and effect . . . Design formed its very warp and woof." Thus Gibbon describes the visible signs, causes and conditions of Rome's decline.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> A. P. Thornton, The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power (New York: Anchor Books, 1968), pp. 2-4.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>158</sup> Black, The Art of History, pp. 158, 159, 165.

In his epic description there is the unmistakable connection between moral decadence and national decline. He says that long periods of peace destroyed the Roman genius for war and government by molding the empire into a servile mass. The diseases of peace, "luxury" and "effeminacy," undermined the martial spirit of the legionnaires. Excessive taxation of the poor combined with an abandonment of the ideals of citizenship and duty were more important, Gibbon thought, than the barbarian armies.<sup>159</sup>

As the Darwinists conjured biological analogies from the animal world to represent human experience, Gibbon also compared the fall of Rome to natural phenomena, those of rise and fall, birth and death, growth and decay. For example, he says that "prosperity ripened the principle of decay." The biological analogy also gave his theory a sense of law and inevitability. He speaks of the "natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness."<sup>160</sup> Thus, as many point out, Rome contained the seeds of her destruction which was then predetermined.

This approach of Gibbon, which was a cyclic view of the life of empires, became after 1890 more than a view of history; it became a psychological state of mind. Decline and fall psychology was expressed by Lord Balfour in 1906:

When through an ancient and still powerful state . . . there spreads a mood of deep discouragement, when the reaction against recurring ills grows feebler . . .

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., pp. 166, 167.

<sup>160</sup> Moses Hadas, Gibbon's The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1962), p. 230.

when learning languishes, enterprise slackens, and vigor ebbs away . . . there is present some process of social degeneration which [is called] . . . decadence.<sup>161</sup>

The thinking of H. F. Wyatt merged evolutionary concepts with a cyclic view of nations. He spoke of decaying races, and corruption coming in peace. Corruption weakened the moral strength of a nation and consequently its fighting ability. Only the "morally sound" could dominate. "Growth and retrogression," decline resulting from moral corruption, the connection between morality and power, and immorality and military defeat,<sup>162</sup> --- all of these point distinctly to the "Gibbonic" viewpoint.

In the expressions of Charles H. Pearson, decline and fall psychology took a very pessimistic turn. Pearson was Professor of Modern History at Kings College and wrote National Life and Character which appeared in 1893.<sup>163</sup> Balfour saw English decadence as possible or merely in the beginning stage. Charles Pearson saw decadence as probable, even inevitable. As Wyatt, he employed Darwinistic terminology: "We were struggling among ourselves for supremacy in a world which we thought of as destined to belong to the Aryan races and the Christian faith."<sup>164</sup> But rather than expecting victory in the struggle by his own higher race, Pearson was pessimistic. Change is inevitable.

<sup>161</sup> Mack, The Art of History, p. 168.

<sup>162</sup> Wyatt, "War as a Supreme Test," pp. 219, 222, 225.

<sup>163</sup> Charles H. Pearson, National Life and Character: A Forecast (London: Macmillan and Company, 1893). This book and its author are easily confused with another of the same period, Karl Pearson, eugenicist and author of National Life From the Standpoint of Science, 1899.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 85.



Other races would rise to challenge: "We shall wake to find ourselves elbowed and hustled, and perhaps even thrust aside by peoples whom we looked down upon as servile."<sup>165</sup>

External challenge by the black and yellow races would be combined with internal decline, as in the case of Gibbon's Rome. In Pearson's mind this would be the rise of socialism and the decline of individualism, accompanied by lower social morality, marriage and family life losing their importance (as in Decolins and others). Genius in the arts would pass and the race would grow older.<sup>166</sup> All of this he says has happened before: "An old order, which we call . . . the Roman Empire, broke up as invaders poured down upon it from Germany and Russia, from Central Asia, and from Persia."<sup>167</sup>

He offers praise for Gibbon, even though Gibbon was inaccurate in some factual aspects.<sup>168</sup> But more important than his sympathetic view of Gibbon's interpretation, is the fact that he thought of the British empire as parallel to the Roman. Having reached the zenith of development, decline and fall were ahead for England. It was a great re-enactment, internal decay followed by external challenge by new races. "The Englishman was the first to reconstruct the Roman Empire," and now he faced a similar fate:

<sup>165</sup>Ibid.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., pp. 260-270.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid., pp. 88, 89, 303, 304.

It is now more than probable that our science, our civilization, our great and real advance in the practice of government are only bringing us nearer to the day when the lower races will predominate in the world.<sup>169</sup>

In this state of decadence men would "shrink from violence" because they were excessively tender, and because it was "noisy and coarse." War would come, though hopefully more humane, but necessary, as in Shakespeare's view, as "the great corrector of enormous times." Above all, war could bring "moral regeneration," social reform and liberty. Though Pearson, as Gibbon, did not view militarism as an unalloyed blessing, this is one of the few positive aspects of his book.<sup>170</sup>

It is evident that decline and fall psychology and the cyclic view of empire focused attention on social morality as one looked for the causes of decay. This is very similar to the search by Edmond Demolins and Benjamin Kidd for the sources of "fitness" in the Darwinian struggle for existence. The Gibbonian view was simply an earlier method of discovering sources of social fitness. In both there is implied a close connection between morality and war. Moral degeneration will be accompanied by military challenge. War is a purifier, a corrector, and

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., pp. 303, 344.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid., pp. 135-141, 338. Gibbon, himself a soldier, said of himself that "the Captain of Hampshire Grenadiers has not been useless to the Historian of the Roman Empire," (C. P. Hawkes, Authors-At-Arms; The Soldiering of Six Great Writers (London: Macmillan and Company, 1934), p. 83. He describes battles with great detail and attributes Rome's success, as we noted, to her genius for war and government. But he recognized the limitations of over-extension: "The causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest," he says, and decline was marked by the overthrow of the senate by army dominated emperors. (Hadas, Gibbon's The Decline, pp. 58, 230.)

and a natural method of retribution for corruption.<sup>171</sup>

The relationship of personal and national morality to war had been described earlier by John Ruskin. Ruskin's life spanned the Victorian era; his birth was the same year as Queen Victoria's, 1819, and his death one year before hers in 1901. As an art critic, moralist, and aristocratic socialist, he turned out a mass of literature on many subjects. One of his works was on the topic of war and was delivered in 1866 as an address to the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich.<sup>172</sup>

In this address Ruskin claims that war is the inspiration for all art. He tries to demonstrate that warrior nations are the most inventive by the examples of Egypt, Greece, Rome and Gothic chivalry. Since they were not notable in art, the case of the Romans was something of a problem. He concluded that the Roman was "at heart, more a farmer than a soldier."<sup>173</sup>

Passing from his loose treatment of history, we find that he has come to the position that vice exists in direct ratio to peace:

The common notion that peace and the virtues of civil life flourished together, I found to be wholly untenable.

<sup>171</sup>For examples see Wyatt, "War as the Supreme Test," p. 217; S. B. Luce, "Benefits of War," pp. 672, 673; A. T. Mahan, "The Peace Conference," p. 46. The connection between social morality and national strength also led to support of social reform by many social Darwinists. Already mentioned in support of educational reform are Buxley, Haeckel, Demoline, Kidd, Karl Pearson, Spencer and we may add Charles Pearson. Most supported technical education; many supported greater academic freedom.

<sup>172</sup>John Ruskin, "War," Crown of Wild Olives: Four Lectures on Work, Traffic, War and the Future of England (New York: W. L. Allison Company, 1887), p. 125.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., pp. 125-131.



Peace and the vices of civil life only flourish together . . . I found that . . . coupled together . . . were peace and sensuality, peace and selfishness, peace and corruption, peace and death.<sup>174</sup>

This passage is very similar to Gibbon's description of the effect of "effeminate luxury" on Roman soldiers. Gibbon considered that "the immediate cause of the downfall of the empire" had been a result of these "enervated" soldiers abandoning their duty.<sup>175</sup>

More than developing the arts, Ruskin believed the "game of war" brings out the "full personal power of the human creature." It decides who is the "best man" -- in birth, morality, bravery and skill. Battle or duel exposes evil in a man:

Whatever is rotten and evil in him will weaken his hand more in holding a sword hilt, than in balancing a billiard cue; and on the whole, the habit of living lightly hearted, in daily presence of death, always has had . . . a tendency both to the making and testing of honest men.<sup>176</sup>

Ruskin even went so far as to say that it was better to ride a war horse than a "hack race horse" and better to kill a neighbor than cheat him. But he did not like modern war because it involved the use of machines and mass conscription, both of which he was against. He condemned war for selfish greed but condemned the policy of non-intervention because it was also selfish. Non-intervention was selfish because it

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., pp. 132, 133.

<sup>175</sup> Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. V (New York: Fred Deau and Company, 1907), pp. 69, 70.

<sup>176</sup> Ruskin, Crown of Wild Olives, pp. 142, 143.



refused to help by aggressive measures and this willingness was a source of strength: "There is no true potency, remember, but that of help; nor true ambition, but ambition to save."<sup>177</sup>

Ruskin, as Gibbon, put limits on the virtues of war; he valued work and creative arts more. Yet the reader is struck by the extreme moral value attached to military experience.

In 1894 Lord Wolseley exhibited this same moralistic attitude as he reflected on the battle of Sebastopol in the Crimean War:

I could not help but moralize upon the contrast between the lives and aims and manners of those soldiers [of Sebastopol] and of those who stayed at home -- the talker, the frothy orator, the would-be tribune of the people.<sup>178</sup>

He goes on to say that the ambitious politician may have his day, but his existence is "hollow": "There is little reality about it . . . Where is the Englishman who had he the choice left to him would not prefer the soldier's manly work in the field . . .?"<sup>179</sup> (Italics mine)

Thus we have come from Gibbon's attempt to trace the fall of Rome in part to a decline of military and the effects of a long peace, to the belief that militarism is a source of virtue and war a test of the social morality of a nation.<sup>180</sup>

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., pp. 142, 155, 157, 158.

<sup>178</sup> Lord Wolseley, "Sebastopol Revisited," Review of Reviews (New York), I (December, 1894), p. 677.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 677.

<sup>180</sup> For additional sources dealing with military experience as a source of personal and national virtue, see Appendix I.

The moral nature of war and empire probably reached its most extreme utterance in Professor John A. Cramb's lectures at King's College. These lectures on war and empire were given around 1900 by Cramb, who was Professor of Modern History, and they coincide with the Boer War. They were later published in 1915 under the title, Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain.

Exultation in battle is found everywhere in Cramb's book. He sees the battle field as an "altar." The heroism of the Boer War is in Cramb's mind like a frenzied religious desire to die:

These youths . . . of modern days, prodigal of their blood, rushing into the Mauser hailstorm, as if in jest each man had sworn to make the sterile velt . . . blossom like the rose, fertilizing it with the rich drops of his heart, since the rain is powerless!<sup>181</sup>

In reality, of course, British soldiers were more inclined to surrender than sacrifice their lives, which was partly due, no doubt, to the liberal treatment by the Boers of British prisoners. Yet, the former was reality for Cramb and perhaps for the young men to whom he lectured in the nineties. But what was it that drove these warriors to such prodigious death? It was the power of an ideal, an imperial mission:

Fighting for ideal ends, he dies for men and things that are not yet; he dies, knowing in his heart that they may never be at all. Courage and self renunciation have attained their height.<sup>182</sup>

The ideals which merited the deaths of English men were eternal imperial ideals. All past empires had passed but lived

<sup>181</sup>J. A. Cramb, The Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain and Nineteenth Century Europe (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1915), pp. 111, 156.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

on in thought. Rome did not exist for itself but for all men, leaving a heritage of ideals. Gibbon, therefore, was wrong in lamenting the passing of Rome. Roman ideals were being reborn in Britain. Cramb estimated that British history corresponded to the period of Titus and Vespasian, "when Rome has still a course of three hundred years to run." Britain's imperial mission was to spread democratic justice which was higher than Rome's because Rome's justice came from benevolent rulers. Freedom in action and thought were also ideals. Other empires were mentioned by Cramb, but Rome was uppermost: "Britain is laying the foundations of States unborn, civilisations undreamed till now, as Rome in the days of Tacitus." <sup>183</sup>

Thus in Cramb's thinking men had good reason to die. It was a moral achievement. War was "the intensification of life" which is remindful of Lord Wolseley's idea that in practical terms amounted to the assertion that only soldiers really live; battle is the ultimate reality. Cramb spoke of war as "the most sublime and awful that can enthral the contemplation of man." <sup>184</sup>

In the thoughts of Gibbon, Ruskin, Charles Pearson and Cramb we have seen a set of attitudes evolve which looked to the experience of Rome as an example. The cyclic view of nations was very much alive in the nineties. A natural consequence of this view was the attempt to race the causes of decline. Decline and fall psychology in Charles Pearson resulted in a pessimistic

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<sup>183</sup>Ibid., pp. 229-231, also 93-95, 187-189, 204-206.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

outlook regarding the coming of new races. Cramb was optimistic in his estimation, seeing Britain with a long and glorious role. But what is more important was the role of war in these outlooks. We began with Gibbon tracing the fall of Rome in part to a decline of war potency, but this was only an aspect of general social decay; social decay brought military defeat. In the writings of Pearson and Ruskin war became a source of social and personal morality. In Wyatt it was a test of national virtue; in Wolseley, the most virtuous life.<sup>185</sup> Finally in Cramb, it is an "altar" of human sacrifice to glorious ideals.

In none of these writers, except for the journalist H. F. Wyatt, does social Darwinism exercise an important influence. Rather, the Gibbonian view of change is evident. The cyclic nature of empires, the biological analogy to growth and decay, and even an idea of progress, all of these could be gotten from Gibbon, and this is generally the way Ruskin, Pearson and Cramb see change.<sup>186</sup> They are closer to Gibbon than to Darwin, but not very close to either.

Another aspect of the preceding which is very evident is the romantic view of the soldier and the romanticizing of the

<sup>185</sup>For additional sources which view war as a source of moral virtue, see Appendix I.

<sup>186</sup>Gibbon's view of progress was a consolation for the passing of Rome. He reflects that Rome's passing results in the increase of the "wealth...happiness...knowledge, and perhaps the virtue of the human race" (Black, The Art of History, p. 173). Charles Pearson and Cramb use some evolutionary terms, but the cyclic idea of empires is more important. Cramb denounces those evolutionists who believe in unending progress because that would lead to the position of Leo Tolstoy who in the nineties was a campaigning pacifist. Rather, change was eternal; the conflict of ideals in war would always be. His idea of change resembles an Hegelian conflict of ideals more than a scientific evolutionary view (Cramb, The Origins and Destiny, pp. 134-154, 231, 239).



nature of war.<sup>187</sup> Ruskin emphasized the role of the individual in war, hand-to-hand combat being the highest realization of an individual.<sup>188</sup> Ruskin was widely read in the last decade of the century and one writer complains of his influence in an article written for the Westminster Review. That Ruskin "should join hands with bishops and archdeacons in glorifying such detestable and criminal blunders as most wars are, is much to be regretted."<sup>189</sup>

Cramb admired Thomas Carlyle. A Scottish historian and critic, Carlyle moved toward a less than democratic view as he grew older. In 1865 he completed his six volume, Friedrich II of Prussia, which was an admiration of strength and genius. This represented a transition from his earlier, On Heroes, in which warrior types are not so prominent. Cramb describes the "glory and delight in war" of later Carlyle works:

Since the heroic age there are no such battle-pictures as these. The spirit of war that leaps and laughs within these pages is the spirit of Homer and Firdusi, of Beowulf and the Song of Roland, and when it sunk, it was like the going down of a sun.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>187</sup>By romantic is meant the tendency to emphasize the importance of the individual above society; and emotion, will, and sentiment above reason. Romanticism is also associated with heroism and worship of individual genius (Thomson, Europe Since Napoleon, p. 122). By "romanticize" is meant the process of idealizing reality, but by no means is the implication meant that all romantics are escapists or are unrealistic.

<sup>188</sup>Ruskin, Crown of Wild Olives, pp. 142, 143.

<sup>189</sup>Walter J. Baylis, "Is War a Blessing?" The Westminster Review, CLIC (September, 1900), p. 253. Another writer had the same view. She quotes Herbert Spencer who claimed in 1882 that "we are held degraded by priests because we have not slaughtered the Boers successfully for resisting our trespasses." So widespread was the militant variety of Christianity, she concluded that "agnosticism and peace principles go together." She found the military spirit most widespread among Anglicans, less among Dissenters, and non-existent among Quakers, (Norm Dwyer, "The Clergy and the War," The Westminster Review, CLIV (September, 1900), pp. 256-259).

<sup>190</sup>Cramb, The Origins and the Destiny, p. 132.

The strength of the romantic view of war may be judged by the sources of attack. Gradually there was dawning on some writers the consciousness that technology was changing the nature of warfare. There was boundless speculation on what these effects would be, and consequently one of the chief literary topics was the future of warfare. A few writers recognized that the influence of machines, chemistry, and scientific methods in general, would be to de-romanticize war. One of these was Jean de Bloch, a Polish Jew and author of a six volume work, The Future of War, published in 1893 in Russian. Bloch's thesis was that modern technology had made war impossible -- too costly, too terrible and without any benefit to victor or vanquished. One of the effects of technological warfare, he reasoned, was that

the romance of war has vanished into the air with its gaudy uniforms, unfurled banners and soul stirring music. Military operations have become as prosaic as ore-smelting, and far less respectable. Armies of today are not composed of gallant, jovial cavaliers, but of entire peoples who curse the fate that compels them to abandon their trades . . .<sup>191</sup>

Another writer claimed that in the past it was the side which had the "personal prowess" which won, "but now victory belongs to the side which has the best slaughtering machines." Bravery was impossible because "men have to combat infernal machines." The result was that the quality sought in the modern

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<sup>191</sup> Jean de Bloch, "The Wars of the Future," The Contemporary Review, LXXX (September, 1901), p. 311.

soldier was "passive obedience to submit to be an unknown unit in a human target for the engines of war that science has produced."192

Even before 1890 some realized that new rapid-fire weapons like the Maxim gun would put to an end those cherished dashes of the cavalry. The cavalry, as immortalized by Tennyson in "The Charge of the Light Brigade," was perhaps one of the greatest romantic symbols. General Boulanger, an ambitious French officer with Caesarian hopes in the 1880's, propagated the romantic attitude toward cavalry and aggressiveness in general. "No troops in the world can withstand a French force hurling itself recklessly forward," he said. But others thought that the "hail of magazine rifles" had ended that glory.<sup>193</sup>

The views of Count Leo Tolstoy also had an undermining effect on the romantic-heroic view of soldiers. In his most famous work, War and Peace, finished in 1869, Tolstoy captures the realism of battle. Most important was his treatment of Napoleon. Contrary to the Napoleonic Legend, Tolstoy saw history as being determined by forces other than human will. Thus Napoleon was not the genius, the sole causative agent, but merely a small part among larger forces such as the Russian winter.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>193</sup>"General Boulanger on the Future of War," The Spectator, LX (September 24, 1887), pp. 1272-1273.

<sup>194</sup>Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace (New York: Random House Inc., 1957), pp. 1101-1136. Tolstoy takes pains to show at every juncture the limitations on Napoleon, especially at the battle of Borodino (pp. 637-765). See also Isaiah Berlin's The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), passim. For differing treatments of Tolstoy in the nineties see A. E. Street's "The Realities of War," Macmillans Magazine, LXII (October, 1890), pp. 431-437 and also Cramb's The Origins and Destiny, pp. 129-139.



Tolstoy's argument against Napoleon and human will did not originate out of a strictly pacifist position. He did not have his spiritual conversion until the late 1870's. By the eighties and nineties he was campaigning for his Christian socialism.

Another writer who struck his blow at the romantic view of the soldier was George Bernard Shaw. Shaw founded the Fabian Society in 1884 after reading Henry George and Karl Marx. His socialism was of a rather puzzling nature, however, since he admired Hitler, Mussolini, and Lenin at various times. He came out in support of the Boer War in hopes that a British victory would mean a socialization of South Africa. He was not, therefore, anti-war, but simply anti-romantic.

Shaw's play, Arms and the Man, was published in 1894 and was performed in that same year. The "hero" of the play, a Swiss officer fighting for the Serbians, is not exactly the swashbuckling type. In facing the opposing Bulgarians he almost goes to pieces from hunger and sleep. He hides in a lady's bedroom and carries chocolates in his pouch rather than cartridges. Bluntschli is the Swiss officer and his opponent is Sergius, a young Bulgarian who charges the Serbian positions and wins a mighty victory. Sergius' fiancée, Raina, exclaims that the dashing cavalry charge proved that their "ideals were real after all." When questioned as to what she meant, she explained:

Our patriotism. Our heroic ideals. I sometimes used to doubt whether they were anything but dreams . . . that perhaps we only had our heroic ideas because we are so fond of reading Byron and Pushkin . . . Oh to think that it was all true! that Sergius is just as



splendid and noble as he looks! That the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance.<sup>195</sup>

Malina's dream was dispelled by Bluntschli who, hiding in her bedroom, reveals to her that the glorious charge was a farce. Bergius had led his men to certain death; only a fluke saved them. The cannons they charged had been supplied with the wrong ammunition. Thus was born the hero who was really a "Don Quixote" charging windmills.<sup>196</sup>

In this play Shaw says that the kind of idealism that leads to military intervention is only

a flattering name for romance in politics and morals [and] is as obnoxious to me as in ethics or religion . . . I can no longer be satisfied with fictitious morals and fictitious good conduct, shedding fictitious glory on robbery, starvation, disease . . . war, cruelty, cupidity and [the] . . . pretences that such things are progress, science, morals, religion, patriotism, imperial supremacy, national greatness and all the other names the newspapers call them.<sup>197</sup>

It is interesting to note that Shaw picked out for his target, the cause of all the above mentioned things, romantic idealism. More than that, it is important to realize what was not his target, social Darwinism. Shaw was ardently anti-Darwinist<sup>198</sup> and against violence,<sup>199</sup> yet he saw romantic heroism as the chief source of militarism in the early nineties.

<sup>195</sup>George B. Shaw, "Arms and the Man," Nine Plays (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1944), p. 137.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>198</sup>Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956), p. 737.

<sup>199</sup>He said, "I detested violence and slaughter whether in war, sport, or the butcher's yard." Shaw, Nine Plays, p. vii.

In this chapter the existence of two large tendencies has been sketched. What has been called the "Gibbonic tradition" fostered a decline and fall psychology characterized by the close connection between morality and war. In the nineties this approach culminated in the position that war and military experience was a creator of personal and social morality. The second body of thought revolved around the attempt by men like Professor Cramb to maintain an ideal of romantic heroism in the face of attacks by men like Bloch, Tolstoy, and Shaw. Both of these tendencies merge in Cramb's hero who sees the empire as a mission with a moral purpose and is ready to sacrifice himself heroically in battle.

Thus it has been demonstrated that independent of social Darwinism, other important currents of thought were at work. What is evident in this chapter is that war was given an extreme moral value conducive to a militarism made more dangerous because it was moralized and idealized.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

English social Darwinism of the 1890's did not foster militarism or contribute to war in any special sense. Many social Darwinists were strong opponents of militarism. Herbert Spencer and the journalist, C. O. Ovington, opposed imperialism as well as militarism. Ernst Haeckel was a pacifist and Alexander Sutherland believed that evolution was making men less hostile and would eliminate war. Even some of the Darwinists who supported racial imperialism, as Benjamin Kidd and Edmond Demolins, did so with the hope that it could be done without the gun. J. M. Robertson even opposed the idea of race because it led to military domination.

Not every social Darwinist was anti-militarist. Thinkers like Karl Pearson, Ernest Renan, and popular writers like Frederic T. Jane and H. F. Wyatt did not offer the restraints and prohibitions of the above group. As a general rule those social Darwinists who were most opposed to militarism were those of the Spencerian individualist school. As we move from the individualists like Spencer, Haeckel and Ovington to those who emphasized evolution in terms of collective groups (races or nations), anti-war arguments grow weaker. Karl Pearson was the furthest removed from the individualism of Spencer and promoted violent struggle between races. Thus the element of laissez faire liberalism seems to have been the preserving salt of social

Darwinism. Though this kind of individualism tends to be associated with reaction in resisting reform efforts in the name of "self help," as Spencer did, yet among social Darwinists militarism was resisted most fiercely by this group.

Variety is the real characteristic of English social Darwinism and the glorification of war in evolutionary terms was not representative of the whole movement. Other currents of thought contributed greatly to the glorification of war. War and the importance of military experience had been given intense justification by those who thought in terms of the Roman experience. Decline and fall psychology as demonstrated by Charles Pearson, Wyatt, J. A. Cramb, and other writers searched for causes of decadence and saw war and military life as a source of moral virtue.

Rather than social Darwinism causing war, in the case of Spencer, Haeckel and Demoline, war caused social Darwinism, that is, our war experience stereotyped Darwinism as an enemy doctrine, and an evil "ism" which led to the atrocities. Revision of this distortion is in order. Doubtless the need to cage the nazi in mentally tangible enclosures, like "Darwinism," has passed. If we can disassociate social Darwinism from militarism, we can greatly increase our understanding of the period.



## APPENDIX I

ADDITIONAL SOURCES DEALING WITH WAB  
AS A CREATOR OF MORAL VIRTUE

As writers like Jean de Bloch prophesied peace because machine warfare would take the romance, the color and dazzle out of battle, writers like Cramb reasserted a romantic idea of soldiery. Cramb answered Bloch's claims by saying that the modern soldier would be even more a hero. It was understood that the din and expanse of territory covered would cut off the close rapprochement between officer and private. In his book, The Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain and Nineteenth Century Europe, Cramb claimed that the old methods of drum-beating and flag-maying ceremony before battle, actually deadened consciousness. In modern battle, he said, "faculties are awake" and this creates the new heroism because "solitude is the touchstone of valor, and the modern soldier cast in upon himself, undazzled, unblinded, faces death singly" (pp. 155-156). In this state of aloneness it would be the power of the ideal, Britain's imperial mission, which would justify Carlyle's faith in heroes and insure obedience to death. In this claim Cramb was supplying an answer to a very important problem for late Victorians, the problem of discipline and allegiance of modern armies (See Appendix II).

Beyond making men heroes many claimed that it made better men. Cramb's heroism resulted from the fact that his soldier

was performing a high ethical task. Other writers saw the process of war itself as making men better. The following articles are rather prosaic descriptions of the value of combat and military training. Manliness, courage, self-reliance and obedience are the supposed effects of wars.

1. "The Appetite for War," The Spectator, LXXVI (February 15, 1896), pp. 235-236.
2. "The Opera-Box Feeling in Regard to War," The Spectator, LXXX (April 23, 1898), p. 571.
3. "An Oppressive Peace," The Spectator, LXX (April 1, 1893), pp. 410-411.
4. "A Warless World," The Spectator, LXXXI (September 3, 1898), pp. 302-303.
5. "A School for Heroism," The Spectator, LXI (July 21, 1888), pp. 996-997.

## APPENDIX II

## WAR AS A CRISIS IN THE ARISTOCRATIC MIND

Many were questioning the influence of modern times -- popular enfranchisement and education, mass literature and mass armies, added to the consequence of mass participation, increased taxation and perhaps conscript armies. Would not these and the havoc of new methods of war cause disaffection among civilians at home and soldiers on the field? What was to guarantee allegiance and discipline? Perhaps the people were pacific and unwilling to fight if not moved by the old aristocratic force of command.

The following articles deal with this problem. They offer practically no solutions as Cramb did, but in so doing reveal the extent to which pessimism and worry had reached. Their general tone is a singular doubt as to effective discipline in democratic armies.

1. Lord Colseley, "War," Fortnightly Review, LI (January 1, 1889), pp. 1-17, especially p. 16.
2. "The Discipline of Conscript Armies," The Spectator, LXV (September 6, 1890), pp. 302-303.
3. "The Distaste for Discipline," The Spectator, LXIX (October 22, 1892), pp. 553-554.
4. "The Genesis of Discipline," The Spectator, LXVIII (April 9, 1892), pp. 491-492.
5. "The New Doctrine of Discipline," The Spectator, LXXI (July 22, 1893), pp. 103-104.

The subject of warfare was an irritant to the late Victorians and functions as a window on the soul. In this case, it reveals a crisis for the aristocratic tradition brought on by the advent of political democracy and new technology.



## APPENDIX III

SCIENCE AND SPECULATION:  
SOURCES DEALING WITH THE PROBABLE INFLUENCE  
OF TECHNOLOGY ON FUTURE WAR

No one in 1914 took the dangers of war seriously except on a purely military plane . . . none expected a social catastrophe . . .

The Balkan wars had taught a deceptive lesson. Everyone supposed that decisive battles would be fought at once, and a dictated peace would follow. The Germans expected to take Paris; the French expected to break through in Lorraine . . .

None of these things happened . . . By November [1914] there was a line of trenches running from Switzerland to the sea . . . Everywhere siege warfare superseded decisive battles. The machine-gun and the spade changed the course of European history."

Popular attitudes on the eve of the First World War have a puzzling aspect to them. For us the horror and utter calamity of two world wars are vivid impressions. It is difficult to conceive the light-hearted and even optimistic attitudes that were widespread before the war. Not everyone shared this outlook, of course, but A. J. P. Taylor's description seems accurate for the majority. The question naturally arises as to the reason why people were not prepared for what ensued. Were populations not warned of the capabilities of new machines and methods?

The material covered in this study does not cover the period 1900-1914, and so cannot supply any absolute answer to

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\*A. J. P. Taylor, "The Outbreak of War in Europe, 1914," The European Past, II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 360, 361.

the question. Obviously many important events intervened between 1900 and 1914 which could modify or even abort tendencies issuing from the 1890's. Nevertheless, the last decade of the nineteenth century was a seed bed for early twentieth century outgrowths. A little spade work into the nineties does reveal two currents of opinion flowing into the new century which doubtlessly influenced attitudes toward war.

The first current of opinion somewhat enhances the riddle because it supplies an answer to the question about warnings which may not be expected. The answer is yes, warnings were given. In England, at least, there was a body of journalists and writers addressing themselves to the task of predicting and describing the actual effects of the new machinery. Some of these writers were telling readers that the new weapons were so deadly that future war would be different from all others.

One of these with such a message was Jean de Bloch. William T. Stead, journalist, social critic and editor of the Review of Reviews introduced Bloch to English readers in the nineties. Bloch was a Polish Jew who had started as a peddler, became a successful banker, managed the Moscow to Crimea railroad and finally began enormous studies on the subject of war. Using statistics freely, he hoped to show that the fearful developments in weaponry would make war economically and socially impossible.

Bloch's book, The Future of War, appeared in 1899 with the Introduction by Stead. Bloch's original six volume work had been read by the Tsar before he proposed the Hague conference.

Bloch pointed out that the small-bore rifle with its smaller shell and flat trajectory, plus the use of smokeless powder, all aided the defense. He repeatedly predicted that the next war would be dominated by trench warfare, with the spade playing a vital role. The offense would flounder on prepared defenses, draining the attacking country of enormous supplies and causing social and economic chaos. War would then be impractical. The soldier would make himself extinct by perfection of weapons. For the views of Bloch and others sharing this hopeful pessimism see the following books and articles:

1. Jean de Bloch. The Future of War: In Its Technical, Economic and Political Relations. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1899. The opinion of Rudyard Kipling, W. T. Stead, Edwin D. Mead and many other writers on war are presented in this work and share Bloch's general outlook. See also Jean de Bloch's "The Wars of the Future," Contemporary Review, LXXX (September, 1901), pp. 305-332.
2. Archibald Forbes. "The Warfare of the Future," The Nineteenth Century, XXIX (May, 1891), pp. 782-795.
3. "General Boulanger on the Future of War," The Spectator, LX (September 24, 1887), pp. 1272-1273.

If the hope that new weapons would make war undesirable was illusory, these writers were at least realistic as to the possibilities of new weapons. Perhaps their opinions were ignored in the crescendo of events prior to 1914. Certainly the Schlieffen Plan was an attempt to prevent the stalemate predicted by Bloch. Yet there may be another reason why these warnings did not register an appropriate sense of dread in the public mind.

Another current of opinion, one of the primary themes of the nineteenth century, held a basic optimism toward machines and what they could do. It was associated with the idea of progress,



but this optimism was by no means unqualified. John Stuart Mill expressed disappointment and yet retained hope regarding mechanical benefits:

It is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the days toil of any human being. They have enabled a greater population to live the same life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number to make fortunes. But they have not yet begun to effect those great changes in human destiny which it is in their futurity to accomplish.

Optimism toward the value of machines was still alive in the nineties. It is especially evident in relation to machinery of war. Many writers on both sides of the Atlantic proclaimed that the deadly efficiency of new weapons would be to shorten war. Because battles and wars would be short and decisive, the total amount of suffering would be actually diminished. Each of the following articles expresses this view, the title of the first being suggestive of the faith invested in machines, even lethal ones.

1. "The Humanity of the Small-Bore Rifle," Review of Reviews (London), II (December, 1890), p. 597.
2. A. E. Forbes. "The Future of the Wounded in War," Scribners Magazine, XV (June, 1894), pp. 781-788.
3. "The Peace Conference," The Spectator, LXXXII (May 20, 1899), pp. 708-709.
4. "The optimist View of War," The Spectator, LXXII (February 24, 1894), pp. 259-260.
5. Theodore A. Dodge, "Von Moltke and the Future of Warfare," The Forum, XI (June, 1891), pp. 353-366.
6. E. L. Zelinski. "The Future of Warfare," North American Review, CLI (December, 1890), pp. 688-700.

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\*George Nasmyth, Social Progress and the Darwinian Theory (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), p. xiv.



7. H. L. Abbot. "War Under New Conditions," The Forum, IX (March, 1890), pp. 13-23.

Thus the last group of writers must have created at least an ambivalent attitude toward war machines if they did not erase altogether the warnings of the first group. The first current of opinion diminished the effect of their own warning perhaps by saying that weapons were so destructive that war was unthinkable. The logical deduction from this was to say that since destructive weapons prevented war, even more weapons will insure peace. In either case a basic optimism was retained.

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