Darwinism in Global International Thought, c.1859–1914

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Abstract

This thesis reinserts Charles Darwin into the history of international thought and excavates a distinctive idiom of 'Darwinian internationalism' inspired by his theory of evolution by natural selection—one widely influential across the globe in the latter half of the long nineteenth century, yet oddly overlooked in existing scholarship.

Part I of the thesis presents a portrait of Darwin as a thinker both created by and concerned with international politics. This is established through an exegesis of his corpus of scientific writings, which were in themselves produced by travel and encounter, and which also engaged with themes of war (transposed into nature as the 'struggle for existence') and intersocietal difference (with a focus on what 'savagery' reveals about evolution), foregrounded respectively in two major texts: the Origin of Species *and the* Descent of Man. *I argue that we see Darwin caught between a mid-century liberal way of thinking about international politics and a radically new way of thinking latent at the heart of his theory, which others would more fully embrace.*

An interlude pivots from Darwin to the Darwinians, where I define the distinctiveness of 'Darwinian internationalism' through its four core motifs: evolutionism, national selectionism, organicism, and naturalism.

Part II of the thesis then examines the spread of this idiom in a global reception history. I unpack the ideas of a broad cast of Darwinian internationalists in three 'contexts of position' in the late nineteenth century: the core, with a focus on late Victorian Britain; the semi-periphery, with a focus on the Eastern polities (China and Japan) and Latin America; and the periphery, with a focus on South Africa. It is shown how flexible Darwinism proved for articulating a myriad of strategies across the range of positionalities in late nineteenth-century international social space—becoming an accessible 'weapon of the weak' as much as of the strong—and how as a way of thinking about international relations it thus cut across the moral-cultural hierarchies of the period.

By 'bringing Darwinism back in', an alternative narrative of late nineteenth-century international society is found—one which dislocates the dominant notion of the period as wholly defined by the 'standard of civilisation', instead showing how infused the period also was with a competing 'standard of nature' which prophesised and produced conditions of holistic, ineliminable existential conflict, and which sowed the seeds of the catastrophes of the short twentieth century.

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— *C.B.*

Timeline of major events

1809	Birth of Charles Darwin
1831–6	The second voyage of the *Beagle*, with Darwin on board
1839	*Journal and Remarks* (*Voyage of the Beagle*) published
1859	*On the Origin of Species* published
1860	The Huxley-Wilberforce Oxford evolution debate
1871	*The Descent of Man* published
1872	*The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* published
1877	Edward Sylvester Morse delivers first lecture at the Imperial University, kickstarting Darwinism in Japan
1879	The Anglo-Zulu War
1880–1	The First Boer War
1882	Death of Charles Darwin
1884–5	The Berlin Conference, beginning the Scramble for Africa
1887	*Autobiography* published posthumously
1894–5	The First Sino-Japanese War

1895	Yan Fu's four *Zihao* pieces published, kickstarting Darwinism in China
1898	The Spanish-American War
1899–1902	The Second Boer War
1904–5	The Russo-Japanese War
1914	The First World War begins

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INTRODUCTION

> And now there came out of this building a form—human;—was it human? It stood on the broad way and looked around, beheld me and approached. It came within a few yards of me, and at the sight and presence of it an indescribable awe and tremor seized me, rooting my feet to the ground… It was the face of man, but yet of a type of man distinct from our known extant of races… I felt that this manlike image was endowed with forces inimical to man. As it drew near, a cold shudder came over me. I fell on my knees and covered my face with my hands.[1]

Thus recounts Edward Bulwer-Lytton in *The Coming Race* (1871), one of the earliest examples of dystopian fiction.[2] In the story, a wealthy American adventurer descends into a cavernous world, wherein he discovers a highly advanced, winged, subterranean race named 'the *Vril-ya*'.[3] Untouched by history for aeons, the *Vril* are said to have escaped the Noachian deluge by venturing underground. Thereafter, they developed supernatural abilities through the discovery of a mysterious liquid known as *vril* (their species-namesake), which possessed such power as to have rendered conflict moot: 'If army met army, and both had command of this agency, it could be but to the annihilation of each. The age of war was therefore gone.'[4]

Despite the pacific nature of intra-*Vril* relations, the species come to want to exterminate the inferior human race, driven by the prophecy of their 'destined… return to the upper world… [to] supplant all the inferior races now existing therein.'[5] Like the European colonisers, their apparent state of higher civilisation is said to naturally entail their successful selection against the barbaric humans. Indeed, as the protagonist informs us, 'the word *A-Vril* was synonymous with civilisation; and *Vril-ya*, signifying "The Civilised Nations," was the common name by which the communities employing the uses of *vril* distinguished themselves from such of the *Ana* [humankind] as were yet in a

[1] Bulwer-Lytton 1871, 15–17.
[2] Claeys 2017, 279.
[3] An unusual legacy of the novella is the popular British gravy paste Bovril, renamed in honour of Bulwer-Lytton's creatures: 'Bo-*vril*', which later sold itself during the Boer Wars as key to the war effort. Kingstone and Lister 2018, 251–252. The enormous success of the novel also led to what has been called the first ever science fiction convention: the 'Vril-Ya Bazaar and Fete' of March 1891, which was held at the Royal Albert Hall.
[4] Bulwer-Lytton 1871, 59. In this notion of a substance so powerful as to effectively render war obsolete by virtue of annihilation, one is struck by Bulwer-Lytton's prescience of the advent of nuclear weapons.
[5] Ibid., 120.

state of barbarism.'[6] The novel ends with the protagonist, humanity's diplomat, returning to the surface, warning of the *Vril*'s lust for humanity's destruction, of the Coming Race.[7]

I open with Bulwer-Lytton's curious story for it encapsulates the subject of the following thesis: that is, the profound impact of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection on the international thought of the latter half of the long nineteenth century. Like all speculative fiction, Bulwer-Lytton's tale reveals more about his own society than any future imaginary,[8] and in his fantastical, paranoid retelling of the colonial encounter clothed in the language of evolutionary science—with the 'civilised' European alienated and recast in the traditional place of the 'savage', a world inverted and turned upside down—the author was reckoning with the profound shock that Darwin's theory had forced onto the world, a shock which catalysed questions not only of 'man's place in nature'[9] but also of societies' relations with one another.

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[6] Ibid., 60–61 emphasis mine. As here, throughout the thesis I use 'humankind' and its derivatives rather than the gendered 'mankind', except in quotation.

[7] Although Bulwer-Lytton would likely have been unaware of it, Darwin himself mooted such a superhuman organism, and had 'speculated about the possible existence of "a being infinitely more sagacious than man" who had "foresight" and who, "during thousands and thousands of years," was able "to select all the variations which tended towards certain ends." In parenthesis, he made sure to note that this creature should not be confused with God: "(not an omniscient creator)"… The "wise and perceptive Being" mentioned by Darwin in his 1840s notes and 1850s correspondence played "a dramatic role" leading to the publication of *On the Origin of Species*. But in the published tome, Darwin's imaginary being was nowhere to be found.' Such a hypothetically evolutionarily perfect organism was later refashioned in evolutionary theory as the 'Darwinian demon', a theoretical creature used to model experimental evolutions. Canales 2020, 45–46 and ch. 9.

[8] Indeed, the story was followed the very next year by Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), which also tackles the theme of a perfectly evolved being, albeit a mechanical artificial intelligence rather than one naturally evolved. In Darwin's shadow, such advanced creatures—and their alienating effect on 'civilised' humans, who are suddenly flipped into a condition of 'savagery'—could be found across Victorian speculative literature. The Eldritch gods of H.P. Lovecraft's *oeuvre* are one such example, as are the Martians in H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1896), which restages the colonial encounter with extra-terrestrials—one that ends, as with many colonial encounters, with disease as the eradicative agent (but, inversely, it is the 'lower' Earthlings that come out on top). Indeed, Wells's inspiration was the catastrophic effect on the indigenous peoples of the Europeans' arrival into Tasmania, to be discussed in chapter two. The spectre of degeneration (discussed in chapter five) also hangs over the darkest moment of the novel, when the few survivors of the Martian attack retreat to the sewers, with 'the risk… that the humans "will go savage", degenerate into a kind of large rat.' Lindqvist 1997, 79. Wells's Darwinian influence can be most clearly seen in his piece 'On Extinction' (1893). For another characteristic example of this inverting effect of Darwin's theory (but temporally), see also E. Kay Robinson's discussion of 'The Man of the Future—that mysterious being who will look back across a dim gulf of time upon imperfect humanity of the nineteenth century with just such kindly and half-incredulous scorn as we now condescend to bestow upon our own club-wielding ape-like ancestor.' Kay 1883, 759. In some senses, the protagonist of *The Coming Race* is *doubly* alienated, for he is not only viewed as inferior as an inhabitant of the human race, but is actually taken to be a member of the tribes of the *Vril*'s own subterranean world: 'No one suspected that I had come from the upper world, and I was but regarded as one of some inferior and barbarous tribe whom [they at least] entertained as a guest.' Bulwer-Lytton 1871, 107.

[9] To use T.H. Huxley's term.

This thesis—which sits at the disciplinary intersection of International Relations, intellectual history, and the history of science[10]—unpacks this Darwinian moment in international thought between c.1859–1914.

Fig. 1. 'Human;—was it human?':
John Martin, *Pandemonium* (c.1825)[11]

[10] On the burgeoning subfield of 'Historical International Relations' more broadly, see: Carvalho, Costa Lopez, and Leira 2021.

[11] The winged creatures in this mezzotint engraving by the popular Romantic artist John Martin may have been one of Bulwer-Lytton's inspirations for the winged *Vril*. His work is referenced in the novel when the architecture of the *Vril*'s city is described: 'All these public edifices have a uniform character of massiveness and solidity. They reminded me of the architectural pictures of Martin.' Bulwer-Lytton 1871, 111. The series from which this engraving comes were highly popular illustrations for an edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Image from: Wikimedia Commons.

Has anybody seen Charles Darwin?

In its impetus, this thesis is driven by a very simple observation: that Charles Darwin appears strikingly absent from almost all accounts of the history of international thought, and even in scholarship which focusses directly on the nineteenth century. Its *raison d'être* is thus, in the first place, one of recovery.

The role of a 'canon' of great thinkers in disciplinary International Relations (IR) has in recent years drawn introspection within an increasingly sophisticated subfield of 'international intellectual history'.[12] There, a revisionist turn has emphasised the need for reflection on the process by which historical authors have merited inclusion (and exclusion) into the canonical panoply of international thought. Some scholars, influenced by the 'Cambridge School' approach dominant in intellectual history, have mounted a contextualist reappraisal of the traditional canon as constructed by ahistorical rationalists and naïve early English School historiography.[13] Other, more critical scholars have instead rightly highlighted the gendered, racialised, and Eurocentric nature of IR's canon, calling not for a more thoroughly 'historical Hobbes' but rather for the inclusion of erased historical women, minority, queer, and non-Western theorists into the canon.[14] Others still have questioned the merits and role of a 'canon' of international theory altogether.[15]

This thesis seeks a different approach, arguing neither for a renewed statement of contextualisation nor a more positionality-sensitive canon (although both estimable goals). Rather, I would contest that the canon has instead been too narrowly conceived, thereby lacking even obviously significant theoretical moments which projects of recontextualising prior 'greats' and reinserting marginalised groups both fail to address. Central amongst such 'forgotten moments' is the Darwinian moment in late nineteenth-century international thought, as shaped by the world-historical figure of Charles Darwin himself.

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[12] On this subfield's emergence, see: Bell 2001; Armitage 2004. For the classic statement on the role of a canon in international theory, see: Bull 1966.

[13] Armitage 2012.

[14] On gender, see especially: Owens and Rietzler 2021. On race: Vitalis 2015. Vitalis is one of the few to provide significant attention to the role of Darwinian theories in early IR theory. For a good outline of Eurocentrism in international theories, see: Hobson 2012a.

[15] Keene 2017.

The significance of this formative period on IR's pre-disciplinary history has recently been noted by scholars. A prior disciplinary myopia—perpetuated by the double-bind of a 'Westphalian straitjacket'[16] which overemphasised the 1648 peace settlements as the 'majestic portal'[17] through which modernity stepped,[18] and a hegemonic realism which enshrined war and its resolution as the primary drivers of international change[19]—has been partly dislodged. Buzan and Lawson's now-classic statement on the significance of the 'global transformation' of the long nineteenth century in the making of modern international society (rather than the traditional 'benchmark dates'[20]) has been well-heeded and remains a beacon for encouraging further research into the period.[21]

In terms of the intellectual history of the period, others still have correctly highlighted its international thought as highly significant. As Lucian Ashworth has perceptively recognised: 'while it is common to trace the origins of International Relations (IR) back to 1919, after the First World War IR was in fact heavily influenced by the developments in international thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries… Many of the categories and ideas that were to play themselves out in debates after 1919 were products of the late Victorian and Edwardian worlds.'[22] Not least among such 'categories and ideas' were Darwinian ones.

And yet most recent[23] IR textbooks and 'introductions' to international thought rarely dwell on Darwinism for more than a moment. Ashworth himself pays a passing mention to Darwinian ideas, noting their significance within 'the *broader context* of the scientific trends of the nineteenth century',[24] with a noted recognition of their influence on the rise of early geopolitics and its image of 'states, as quasi-organisms… locked in a conflict that was seen as resembling Darwin's survival of the fittest.'[25] Yet he then

[16] Buzan and Little 2001, 24.
[17] Gross 1948, 28.
[18] The revisionist literature on Westphalia is now considerable, but for two classics see: Teschke 2003; Osiander 2001.
[19] Buzan and Lawson 2014.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Buzan and Lawson 2015. Previously, the period was doubtless skirted over due to its apparent deviation from the conventional narrative of an expanding system of sovereign states, instead being viewed as an aberrant 'Age of Empire' (to use Hobsbawm's phrase) in an otherwise linear story of sovereignty's triumphal enthronement as the *Grundnorm* of international order.
[22] Ashworth 2014, 95–6.
[23] An older historical work (i.e. one closer to the nineteenth century) which fares much better, is: Russell 1936 ch. xii.
[24] Ashworth 2014, 97 emphasis mine.
[25] Ibid.

immediately discounts the influence of Darwinism as ambiguous, since, he argues, many at the time drew more from older, Lamarckian (teleological) evolutionism and less from Darwinian (random) natural selection.

Other overviews differ in their variable focus. Hall and Hill's edited volume on *British International Thinkers from Hobbes to Naimer* (2009), for instance, bears no mention of Darwin(ism) at all besides one passing footnote from Duncan Bell, who simply calls evolutionary international theories 'politically indeterminate'.[26] This is despite the volume's explicit aim to 'explore the work of British thinkers hitherto and unduly neglected.'[27] Recent canonical overviews are similarly almost entirely lacking in mentions, with neither Darwin nor any Darwinians granted inclusion as canonical authors (even in especially capacious lists).[28] More 'critical' historical overviews admittedly fare better, such as those which analyse the influence of racial science on the emergence of IR and its theories,[29] which are consequently forced to confront the Darwinian influence.

Perhaps the most sustained attention (at least in pure wordcount) of such overviews is Torbjørn Knutsen's *A History of International Relations Theory* (1992), which comparatively grants 'Darwin's revolution' an entire sub-section of its own in a scene-setting intermezzo (alongside nationalism, industrialism, and imperialism).[30] Edward Keene's *International Political Thought* (2005) is another notable exception, which not only grants more time to Darwin than others[31] (although, like Ashworth, again the focus is only on geopolitics) but also tantalisingly notes a profound interpretive suggestion:

> [That] it is difficult to exaggerate the implications for social and political thought of this change… The application of Darwinian science to human affairs helped to *demolish much of the ethical and progressive dimension that the concept of civilization had given to the structure of international order*. It became much harder to see international politics in terms of a benevolent process leading towards this end goal, and the international system—much like Darwin's view of the natural world—became an arena of competition with no *telos* whatsoever.[32]

[26] Hall and Hill 2009, 201.
[27] Ibid., 4.
[28] See, for some examples: Brown, Nardin, and Rengger 2002; Jahn 2006; Bliddal, Sylvest, and Wilson 2013; Lebow, Schouten, and Suganami 2016.
[29] Such as: Hobson 2012b; Vitalis 2015.
[30] Knutsen 1997, 176–183.
[31] Keene 2005, 181–183.
[32] Ibid., 181 emphasis mine.

Yet this astute observation—which I follow up here as the backbone of this thesis's revisionist account of the late nineteenth century—is followed only by a page-long discussion of Herbert Spencer and Friedrich Ratzel.

More directly, substantive engagements with Darwinism are rare and, to date, nowhere has Darwin himself been properly explored as a theorist of the international. Most analyses of Darwinism's influence on international theory have been insubstantial and episodic—such as in Gregory Claeys's strong yet fleeting engagements[33]—with only D.P. Crook's *Darwinism, War, and History* (1998) offering a book-length consideration of Darwinian theories of conflict (and to which most scholarship tips a hat to in footnotes when Darwin's name does appear). Yet Crook's focus is largely on a *pacific* tradition of 'peace biology', with himself seeking a revisionist case for a peaceable side of Darwinism, thereby placing much more emphasis on socialist and anarchist receptions of natural selection. Another rare and recent exception can be seen in Bentley Allan's account of changing 'cosmologies of international order', which includes Darwinian influences on British colonial development policy as one case study of his argument.[34] Yet Allan's is less an intellectual history than it is a more meta-theoretical intervention, and its focus remains entirely on the imperial core.

Instead, where the long nineteenth century's international intellectual history *has* been a locus of serious historical interest, the focus has remained on an orthodox narrative of the period as largely defined by the liberal idea of 'civilisation'. Most significant here is the scholarship of Duncan Bell, who has been engaged in a sustained investigation into Victorian conceptions of international order with a particular emphasis on the connections between British liberalism, empire, and nationalism.[35] More recently, Bell has pursued the utopian theme of the period—much too as Claeys has followed—which does at least acknowledge the broad impact of the natural sciences on nineteenth-century thought.[36]

Yet the main direct confrontation of Bell's with Darwinism is to be found in a chapter of the edited volume *Human Beings in International Relations* (2015). There, despite

[33] Claeys 2000; Claeys 2019.
[34] Allan 2018 ch. 4.
[35] Bell 2007a; Bell 2007b; Bell 2016. Bell's work here also builds on the scholarship of Uday Singh Mehta, especially: Mehta 1999.
[36] Bell 2020.

recognising the importance of Darwinism in the history of international thought, conceding '[that] during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries biology played a pivotal role in shaping visions of self and (international) society',[37] again Bell's interest is more contemporary than historical. Instead, he (rightly) attacks the increasing attraction of an ideal-typified 'Universal Darwinism'[38] in the contemporary social sciences—that is, a biological equivalent to the physicists' pursuit of a 'theory of everything'—and considers the normative, methodological, and empirical poverties thereof, including IR's attempt at 'biologizing the international'.[39] Thus, Darwin(ism) does appear on occasion—for how could it not?—and yet we find little sustained, historical consideration in Bell's work, despite some more prominence his most recent volume.[40] The focus remains on the hegemony of British liberalism (despite Bell's recognition of its incoherence as a philosophical doctrine[41]) as a framework through which to explain the period's international thought—thus we typically find 'Bagehot the liberal', but not 'Bagehot the Darwinian'.

A variation on a similar theme can be seen in Jennifer Pitts's impressive work on nineteenth-century liberal imperialism.[42] Elsewhere, studies of the period are more legalistic in focus, but still focussed on the idea of 'civilisation' and its connection to colonialism, as for instance in the landmark scholarship of Anthony Anghie or in Pitts's other work.[43] Similarly, *longue durée* conceptual historical work on international order leaves Darwinism on the side-lines, as in Brett Bowden's *The Empire of Civilization* (2009). His discussion of the Darwinian moment in Britain is very brief,[44] despite its radical implications. Crucially—and oddly, considering the invocation of 'evolution' in the book's subtitle, *The Evolution of an Imperial Idea*—one finds but one passing reference to Darwin himself.[45]

[37] Bell 2015, 113.
[38] Ibid., 114.
[39] Ibid., 119.
[40] Bell 2020.
[41] Bell 2014.
[42] Pitts 2006.
[43] Pitts 2018; Anghie 2005.
[44] Bowden 2009, 63–64.
[45] Ibid., 57–58.

Darwinism in IR today

This ignorance of Darwin and Darwinism is important not only for historical reasons (to be outlined shortly), but also because of its contemporaneity. It is clear that Darwin continues to be present and relevant within contemporary IR.

The spectre of 'Universal Darwinism' is the most obvious presence. We find today many explicit advocates for re-grounding realist theory,[46] the discipline as a whole,[47] or even social science itself,[48] on evolutionary foundations. Others offer evolutionary explanations for specific phenomena, such as war[49] and cooperation.[50] Such projects are predicated on establishing clear blue water between evolutionary theory and its assumed historical connection with eugenics and racial authoritarianism. Whilst my own inclinations are strongly against such proposals—the social world is *not* like the natural world, and it is desirable neither analytically nor normatively to pretend otherwise—even those sympathetic to such proposals ought to know the murky history of evolutionary international thought before they begin to raise its flag. Before contemplating remaking the field in Darwin's image, we ought surely to properly understand him, and in thoroughly historical, not caricatured, terms.

More impressionistically, implicit evolutionism also pervades the field as an important feature of our conceptual vocabulary—as in the English School's idea of the 'evolution of international society'[51] and evolutionary notions in functionalist historical sociology.[52] Darwinism's percolation into IR is clearly deep.[53]

This topic also impels us more broadly towards rethinking the influence of *science* on contemporary IR theory, in particular its role as a criterion of theoretical rigour which has long defined the American social scientific approach to the subject.[54] Whilst the 'process of scientization of the discipline'[55] is familiar to any student of the subject, it is less well understood when one widens the lens beyond the parochialism of a pre- and

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[46] Thayer 2014.
[47] Johnson 2015; Thompson 2001.
[48] Barkow 2005.
[49] Rosen 2009; Keeley 1996; LeBlanc and Register 2013.
[50] Axelrod 1984.
[51] Watson 1992.
[52] Spruyt 1996.
[53] For a recent example, a March 2020 talk at the LSE on 'The Evolution of War and Diplomacy' called for the application of 'the evolutionary idea of tipping points to the pre-history and history of diplomacy. War has evolved as we have—it is inherent in our cultural DNA.' Coker and Neumann 2020.
[54] Bull 1966.
[55] Barkin 2009, 237.

post-Waltz demarcation. Whilst ideas of 'science' are today reasonably stable in IR,[56] as structured around twentieth-century philosophy of science (Popperian, Lakatosian, and Kuhnian), this has not always been so. It was in the nineteenth century when intelligibly contemporary (yet fluid) ideas of science began to emerge at the same time as inquiries into similarly intelligibly modern 'international relations'. The radical historicisation of 'science' can thus, I believe, help us be reflexive about its ideological role in IR and the social sciences. Just as 'science' possessed a potent legitimating appeal to those theorists to be surveyed here, so too does its orbit ensnare modern theorists. With historical awareness, greater reflexivity can be deployed when clothing our theory in such legitimating scientific garb.

Why absent?

What then explains this strange absence in the history of international thought? Why is Darwin 'missing presumed irrelevant'? Where are the Darwinians? Three broad reasons stand out.

First, and doubtless the central factor, is Darwin's widely perceived status as a strictly 'scientific' thinker, rather than an individual engaged with unambiguously 'political' questions. The Darwinian moment is therefore largely 'boxed off' as a purely scientific episode, one that may have incidental relevance to histories of international thought (as evinced above, with momentary references) but one that few see any intellectual desire to fully reopen.

Second, there is further hesitation to 'open the box' on normative grounds. After the horrors of the twentieth century, it is widely assumed that we simply know what is in the box: namely, the seeds of eugenics, fascism, and Nazism.[57] Darwin thus often leaps out of the nineteenth century altogether to take form as Adolf Hitler, thereby bracketing off the almost hundred years of Darwinian theory prior to the 1930s. Even the more sophisticated interpreter who at least cites the nineteenth century itself—giving Darwin an alibi in the actual 1800s—assumes that 'Darwinism' was simply a *façade* for the new

[56] Jackson 2016; Elman and Elman 2003.

[57] For but one example, see: Pichot 2009. Sven Lindqvist's classic is another such argument, in: Lindqvist 1997. Indeed, when embarking on this research project, when mentioning 'Darwinism' more than one replied: 'So you're researching Nazism?'. The Darwinism-Nazism connection is true, but not the only part of the story.

imperialism. 'Social Darwinism' thus usually acts as a synonym for 'European imperialism'[58] or, even more broadly, 'racism'. It is a Potemkin ideology. Indeed, the reason above compounds this normative hesitation, with the presumed gap between 'the scientific' and 'the political' colouring the view of the Darwinians themselves, who are often implicitly assumed to be mere crude ideologues—certainly not sophisticated theorists worthy of sustained and serious scholarly analysis.

The third reason for Darwin's absence pertains to IR specifically, and that is, once again, its disciplinary tunnel vision. As mentioned above, this pertains in part to IR's general oversight of this historical period until recently. It also pertains to the lack of a *certain kind* of historical curiosity. I am referring here to the genre of 'critical disciplinary history' exemplified in the work of Brian Schmidt, John Hobson, Robert Vitalis,[59] and the Women and the History of International Thought project.[60] This is scholarship which disrupts IR's traditionally rather emollient self-conception and recentres issues of exploitation—of race, colonialism, empire, and gender—into the story of the discipline's development. Indeed, it is not surprising that it is these works that are the most attentive to Darwin's influence. Yet such histories remain still relatively few and recent. Whilst this thesis is not a work in this vein—being closer to intellectual history than critical disciplinary history (with the focus less on early IR institutions and academe)—it does share its revisionist spirit.

Why Darwin?

The obvious question other than 'where is Darwin?' is 'why Darwin?'. The reader may simply ask: so what? Who cares if Darwin is missing? And what happens if we 'add Darwin back in' to the picture?

The full answer to this (in order to not frontload the introduction and also because the thesis's two halves tell a broadly chronological story) will be unpacked in an interlude which sits in between Parts I and II—the 'Darwin' and 'Darwinism' halves of the thesis. Yet it is worth briefly stating here the main claims of the thesis.

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[58] On which, see: Crook 1999. This assumption is fully unpacked in chapter five on the colonial periphery.
[59] Schmidt 1998; Hobson 2012b; Vitalis 2015.
[60] Owens and Rietzler 2021.

Darwin, theorist

The first move of the thesis is to reinterpret Charles Darwin himself as a thinker both created by and engaged with international politics. This is clear in the body of his scientific writings, which were produced in the first place through travel and encounter, and which also invoke and engage with themes of war (transposed into nature as the 'struggle for existence') and intersocietal difference (in the central discussion of the 'civilised' and the 'savage'), which are foregrounded respectively in his two major texts: the *Origin of Species* and the *Descent of Man*, to be analysed in chapter two.

Darwin's two discourses

Yet Darwin's expression of the theory of evolution by natural selection, as we shall see, straddled two basic ways of thinking about intersocietal difference.

On the one hand was what we might call a 'civilisational' mode of thought, i.e. one rooted in that classic nineteenth-century liberal framework of theorising intersocietal difference in moral-cultural, bifurcating terms: of the 'civilised' and the 'savage' (and, intermediately, the 'semi-civilised' or 'barbarian'),[61] famously crystallised in the final years of the century into the so-called 'standard of civilisation'.[62] This civilisational idea exists in Darwin's work, too: in the *Descent of Man* most prominently, and also the *Voyage of the Beagle*, i.e. in those works dealing with human beings. Whilst scientifically innovating, Darwin was less so politically, and he can be seen drawing on the dominant British liberal framework of the time.

Yet latent in Darwin's idea of evolution by natural selection—most clearly in the *Origin of Species*, where the issue of human evolution is *not* broached—was a radically new way of thinking, one which would undermine this liberal vision of civilisation when chemically activated by later Darwinians. Prior to Darwin, political theorists (such as the early modern contractarians and the stadial Whig historiographers of the Enlightenment) had sharply divided the concepts of 'nature' and 'civil society', with the latter emerging out of the former. The condition of being 'civilised' was thus the condition of being

[61] To avoid cluttering up the text, I do not always put such frequently used historical terms as 'savage' and 'civilised' in inverted commas. This lack of qualification is obviously not a normative endorsement. I also use the British spelling of 'civilised' except in citation, where 'civilized' is used.
[62] Gong 1984; Obregón 2012.

socialised *out of* nature, with 'savagery' a form of static naturalness. Hobbes is the classic example here—nature, he famously argues, is a brutish condition, and we escape it *through* the construction of the state.

By contrast, the dynamite of Darwin's theory was that it understood 'nature', i.e. the struggle for existence, as omnipresent—not as a separate or distinct sphere, but as existence itself. The conflicts of nature do not go away with the establishment of modern societies, Darwinians would come to argue, because nature precisely *is* conflict, with the treat of extinction always there. Inchoate in Darwin, then, was a profoundly radical new way of thinking about international politics. Even if the man himself only half-accepted its implications, others promptly took it up.

'Darwinian internationalism'

Thus, in the second half the thesis, I explore how Darwin's ideas were taken up by a range of individuals and used to think about international politics. In the sharply uneven-yet-combined late nineteenth-century context—of an intra-European multipolar states-system and extra-European practices of imperialism—these Darwinians were both prompted by and sought answers to a range of novel questions. Domestically, what is the role of survival in unifying the nation? Internationally, are these nations themselves in a struggle for existence? Imperially, should some races 'naturally' govern others?

I show how there came to exist a highly distinctive and powerful way of thinking about international politics: what I term 'Darwinian internationalism', which I define by its four main concepts of evolutionism, national selectionism, organicism, and naturalism (to be fully outlined in the interlude). Briefly defined, Darwinian internationalists thus broadly saw international relations, as in nature, as defined by the law of evolution by natural selection, with international space reconfigured as a geographic space of evolutionary development via irrepressible and permanent existential struggle between state-organisms.

Global receptions

In the three tales of reception which make up Part II of the thesis, I show how that this distinctive Darwinian internationalism had a truly global influence and diversity of expression. It was, crucially, not merely or only a *façade* for European imperialism

(although of course it played this role at times) but was actually a highly flexible vision of international relations taken up by actors across the entire topography of international social space: in the core, semi-periphery, and periphery. We will thus meet British, Chinese, Japanese, Latin American, and South African Darwinian internationalists, all of whom shared the same basic framework for thinking about international relations, but adapted for their own immediate political requirements.

I shall begin in the core, where we will follow the very first receptions of Darwin's theory in his native Britain, and track the transformation of two key themes of Victorian international theory: 'savagery', and war (i.e. the two themes of the *Descent* and the *Origin* respectively). We will explore a much-forgotten debate on the connection of 'primitive' to 'savage' human beings, grapple with the Darwinian martialism of Walter Bagehot and others, as well as look at the co-influence of Darwinism and ideas about empire. Thereafter, I move to the idea of the 'closure of the world' (and its expression in the field of geopolitics) which gripped the imperial core in the late century, and the pressure this placed on European states—even the largest and most powerful of which began to fear for their mortal existence, as encapsulated in the visions of two major European statesmen: Lord Salisbury's prophecy of the 'living and dying nations', and Theodore Roosevelt's exploration of the 'biological analogy' of the state as a living organism.

In the semi-periphery, we will explore the fascinating story of Darwinism's reception in China and Japan—those exemplars of the category of 'barbarian' or 'semi-civilised' states. We shall see how, in these societies, so-called 'social' Darwinism actually arrived first (introduced by Yan Fu in China and Edward Sylvester Morse in Japan) before only later being 'made scientific': the mirror image of the European reception. This arrival came at the perfect time, for these precarious states utilised Darwinian internationalism to understand and articulate their dangerous international situation and to remedy it, too. We will also briefly visit Latin America, to see the influence of Darwin on the project of moving the 'semi-civilised' republics from a position of awkward liminality into one of European parity, on the basis of a Darwinised notion of blood purity.

In the periphery, we turn lastly to South Africa, picking up once more the story of Britain's Darwinian moment through one of its colonial occupations. In this period, South Africa was seen as a tumultuous peripheral region, an arena of a constant racial 'struggle for existence', as theorised most prominently by Cecil Rhodes. Accordingly, I

track discourses around 'wars of extinction' against the theorised 'doomed savage' peoples of colonial lands, with a focus on the Anglo-Zulu and Boer Wars. The latter brings us to the spectre of 'degeneration' which haunted the colonisers and led to a form of eugenic 'Darwinian isolationism' which emphasised the struggle for existence at home over the struggle abroad. In a similar vein, we shall see how others aimed to use Darwinism *against itself*, as in the arguments of anti-imperial liberals such as Ramsden Balmforth, who tried show that empire in South Africa undermined the very precepts of Darwinism. We shall close by considering perhaps the most interesting group of thinkers, in the form of an anti-colonial 'Afro-Darwinism' espoused by some black African leaders (such as Richard Akinwande Savage), who utilised Darwinism (as in China and Japan) to articulate both their polity's precariousness and the means of escaping it.

In both the semi-periphery and periphery, then, Darwinian internationalism became for many local populations a 'weapon of the weak': a means both to theoretically explain their weakness, and to prescribe solutions to it. In the core meanwhile, contrary to common impression, Darwinism was used less by the Europeans as a confident acclamation of their power and more often as an expression of *paranoia*—the 'strong' being less concerned with declaring and celebrating their strength and more with obsessing over the ever-present possibility of their decline, degeneration, and extinction, as in Bulwer-Lytton's ominous prophecy of the *Vril*'s destruction of human civilisation.

The distinctions of the period—between the 'civilised', 'barbarian', and 'savage'—were thus profoundly disrupted by this broadly accessible and sometimes bizarrely egalitarian account of international relations. Whereas the attainment of 'civilised' status required an adherence to alien moral-cultural precepts, the vision of Darwinian survival merely required the accumulation of an ample might that was theoretically open to any nation or race.

The standard of nature

This observed holism leads to the final main argument of the thesis, which concerns the interpretive effects of 'bringing Darwinism back in' to the history of international

thought. Following Hedley Bull, I therefore connect the recovery of these Darwinian 'theorists of the period' to broader ideas about international order.[63]

I argue that once we 'reopen the box' and place the Darwinians back into the picture, the existing picture of late nineteenth-century international thought politics looks quite myopic. This period was *not* simply one of the 'standard of civilisation' conceived in liberal, moral terms, but was also defined by a competing and widely influential Darwinian 'standard of nature', whereby one's success or failure in international politics was judged against the selective logic of the struggle for existence. Whether the greatest of empires or the smallest of tribes, those who failed this trial of nature were said not merely to be socially ostracised from international society (as with the civilisational standard), but materially eliminated from the arena of political life altogether.

What this thesis is not

These, then, are the main claims of the thesis. Yet it is also important at the start to define the negative: to explain what this thesis is *not* aiming to do.

One is that this thesis is a work of international intellectual history, and not causal social science. I am seeking to unearth an historical way of thinking, not to advance any claims of sequence. I am neither seeking to argue that the Darwinian ideology *caused* the First World War, nor that the Darwinian ideology *caused* European high imperialism, as if such notions made sense anyway.

Another thing to note is the demarcation of 'Darwinian internationalism' as I understand it. Again, this is outlined in full in the thesis's interlude, but it is important to be clear that absent from my account are those radical reception of Darwin's theory, i.e. Darwinism's influence on the international theory of socialists, anarchists, Marxists, etc. The reason is that these theorists did not expound a distinctive 'Darwinian' view of international relations, but rather used Darwinism to support their own existing theoretical worldviews—thus 'the struggle for existence' becomes a new way to express 'class struggle'. These were 'thin-centred'[64] Darwinisms, rather than the real thing.[65]

[63] Bull 1977.
[64] To borrow the term used by Cas Mudde to characterise 'populism' as a narrative technique which can be easily affixed to other, more substantive ideological frameworks. Mudde 2004, 544.
[65] On these more radical receptions, I would point the reader to D.P. Crook's study: Crook 1994.

Thesis structure

These arguments will unfurl over the course of the thesis, which proceeds as follows.

In the chapter to follow, my methodological approach will be outlined, where I tackle the problems in organising the temporal and spatial frames of the thesis and how to go about tracing Darwin's influence in international thought. The structure of the empirics of the thesis proceeds according to this methodology and follows first a contextualist analysis of a single author (Part I), before tracking a global reception history across three 'contexts of position' in late nineteenth-century international social space (Part II).

Part I, 'Darwin', thus consists of one chapter focussed on a reinterpretation of Charles Darwin as an international theorist through a close exegesis of his scientific writings and surrounding context. The chapter picks apart the conceptual 'raw material' of Darwinian internationalism rooted in a detailed discussion of Darwin's own texts.

An interlude sits in between Parts I and II and acts as a pivot in moving from Darwin to his reception in global international thought. There, I define 'Darwinian internationalism' and establish in full the main interpretive arguments of the thesis.

Part II, 'Darwinian Internationalisms', forms the largest part of the thesis. There, as outlined above, I explore Darwin's receptions in international theory across the breadth of late nineteenth-century international social space in three chapters on the core, semi-periphery, and periphery. The reader will meet an ecumenical cast of both theorists and practitioners[66] of international relations influenced by Darwin. Under the label of 'international theorists', I thus include a broader range of individuals beyond what we may narrowly conceive today as those engaged in philosophical discourse (as evinced in the opening of the thesis with Bulwer-Lytton, a novelist). This is precisely because of the porousness of the period which, as Duncan Bell captures:

> …was an age of grand (and grandiose) theorising. It was also an age in which intellectual generalists thrived, and the crossing of what in the twentieth century many would come to regard as sturdy disciplinary walls was the norm. It is very hard to separate "the political" (or "political theory") from other domains of nineteenth-century thought—it was embedded in, and shaped by, political economy, theology,

[66] This distinction between 'thought' and 'practice' is strictly speaking quite un-Skinnerian, which emphasises speech-acts as just as 'practical' as, say, assassinating a president. I am being heuristic here: by 'political thought' as opposed to 'political practice', I simply mean a common-sensical distinction between utterances by those abstract theoreticians of politics in a more general sense versus those in possession of actual political power.

> jurisprudence, the emerging social sciences, especially anthropology, literature, and the writing of history.[67]

Naturally, global intellectual history is always limited by practical constraints. Totality and granularity are almost impossible to maintain simultaneously; hence one observes the tendency of global historical work to expand to boggling size,[68] like Borges's perfectly exact map of the empire.[69] I therefore cannot include every single instance of Darwinism in international theory across the entire globe, precisely because its influence was so broad. Encyclopedism is not my goal. Rather, my 'case selection' in Part II follows a spatial logic of positionality, locating Darwinism in the positional configurations indicative of nineteenth-century international relations. In doing so, I am guided by the question: '*What did Darwinian internationalism look like in different contexts, and how was it used to articulate different international positionalities?*' The geographical chapters in Part II focus on a main case study for each positional site of reception (Britain, China/Japan, and South Africa), with some brief diversions here and there (e.g. to the Americas).

Closing remarks

Alongside introducing the broad contours of the thesis, I have hopefully established here the basic rationale for revisiting the 'Darwinian moment' in nineteenth-century international thought. Let me now outline the methodological tools that will be used to organise the real work of the thesis to come, before turning swiftly to Darwin himself.

[67] Bell 2007b, 3–4.
[68] Most notable being Jürgen Osterhammel's titanic account of the nineteenth century, the scope of which dwarfs the humble horizons of the lowly PhD thesis. Osterhammel 2015.
[69] In the (more pithily sized) 'On Exactitude in Science' (1946).

CHAPTER I.
On Method

Clearly, this thesis is above all a work of intellectual history. But what kind of intellectual history? Dealing as it does with various framings—the close analysis of a single author *and* their influence on a global scale—some reflection on methodology is worthwhile.

In this chapter, I discuss the options and argue for a syncretic combination of methodological frameworks: namely, a combination of Cambridge School-style contextualism and global reception history, which structures the thesis into Parts I and II on 'Darwin' and 'Darwinian internationalisms' respectively. I also close the chapter with some further justification for the general choice of case selection in the second half of the thesis.

Traditions or contextualism?

The two most prominent methods available in international intellectual history are arguably tradition-making and Skinnerian contextualism.

Traditions of thought have a notable pedigree in IR, which is a discipline with a 'traditions tradition'[1]—a tendency which began with the early English School and maintained over the years by numerous scholars constructing a panoply of traditions. So why do I not join this chorus and speak of a 'Darwinian tradition of thought'?

For one, studies of traditions of thought usually take the plural form, with the construction of a number of traditions (usually three, following Martin Wight's original triad) intended for the purpose of shedding light on the differences between them. Here, whilst I do foreground the idea of Darwinism's distinctiveness and make use of comparison (e.g. with liberalism), the thesis does not take the classic tradition-making format of putting thinkers in labelled boxes.

Whilst there are certainly pedagogical advantages to such an approach[2] in terms of its clarifying role in 'allow[ing] for the treatment of patterns of thought and practice

[1] Jeffery 2005.
[2] Indeed, Wight's original purpose of his 'three traditions' was precisely for delivering lectures.

both within and across time',[3] it is precisely this perennialist impulse to construct transtemporal conversations of the type originally criticised by Quentin Skinner[4] that has elicited strong critiques of tradition-making in recent years. As scholars associated with the 'historiographical turn'[5] have argued, IR's use of such traditions appears insubstantially historicist when compared to the rise of Cambridge School contextualism since the 1970s.[6] As Duncan Bell puts it: 'traditions are usually constructed around a canon of renowned thinkers, which serves simultaneously as a reservoir of arguments, an index of historical continuity, and a powerful source of intellectual authority'.[7] Thus, such a notion as a reified 'Kantian tradition' linked across epochs is not only inherently ahistorical,[8] but is driven by an impetus to furnish IR's pre-disciplinary history with a lacking prestige (in the same way as 1648 and the Westphalian myth has 'given the discipline of IR a sense of theoretical direction, thematic unity and historical legitimacy').[9]

Traditions therefore often obscure more than they reveal. To avoid the baggage associated with the term, I prefer to speak of Darwinian internationalism as an 'idiom'—a loose but distinctive current of discourse fixed around certain recurring motifs—rather than the internal and transtemporal coherence implied by the term 'tradition'.

If not traditions, then, surely I ought to embrace Skinner's contextualism, the most prominent alternative approach? There has certainly been strong research within international intellectual history in a Skinnerian mode, such as Richard Tuck's *Rights of War and Peace* (1999) or David Armitage's *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (2013). Yet such work has its orbit fixed around that troublesome canon of 'great thinkers' or 'ideological innovators' (to use Skinner's term), whose pathbreaking linguistic moves are set in contrast to a surrounding milieu of 'minor texts'.[10] In Tuck, for instance, we find the usual protagonists of Hobbes, Grotius, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant; Armitage meanwhile grants Locke a quarter of his book. Indeed, the fixation on the early modern period by such contextualists evinces the attachment to a certain notion of canon.

[3] Nabulsi 1999, 79.
[4] Skinner 1969.
[5] Bell 2001.
[6] Brett 2002.
[7] Bell 2014, 686.
[8] Bartelson 1996.
[9] Teschke 2003, 2.
[10] Tully 1988.

But what would such a canon of international theory even look like in *the nineteenth century*? Who are the great thinkers? Mill on empire? Marx on capitalism, surely. Beyond that, the rationale becomes tricky. Indeed, canonical approaches struggle particularly with this specific period wherein, as Bell recognises, 'much of the most influential and interesting political thinking was articulated… in registers and formats that often escape the eye of historians of political theory, who have tended to focus on canonical figures.'[11] Such is evident in this thesis, which looks at a motley crew of scientists, journalists, statesmen, colonial administrators, translators, novelists, and more besides.

Even more fundamentally, it is not so obvious that a 'canon' actually exists for international intellectual historians. As Keene argues: 'Skinner's contextualism begins with and from a reasonably well-defined canon of great thinkers and classic works, such that when he talks about the reinterpretation of classic texts, there would be a reasonable shared understanding of what these were.'[12] *International* intellectual history, however, does not share this luxury, and 'a reshuffling of the political theory pack'[13] does not cut the mustard. Martin Wight famously identified this problem: that 'international theory is marked, not only by paucity but also by intellectual and moral poverty',[14] and thereby lacks the obvious canon necessary for applying an orthodox Skinnerian method, which relies on a clear 'major/minor text' distinction to disentangle the manipulation of ideological language. Bull and Wight instead opted for eclecticism—Meinecke and Treitschke take the place of Hobbes and Kant, and political theorists are replaced (as in this thesis) by a more 'haphazard bunch'[15] of historians, utopians, international lawyers, diplomats, and leaders of states. We cannot just 'add contextualism and stir'.[16]

In my project, the difficulty of a canonical approach would seem to be solved by focussing on Darwin recast as a 'great thinker' with a surrounding context. However, I work the wrong way round by *starting* with Darwin and thereafter tracking his influence, rather than offering a backwards-looking intellectual history where Darwin becomes an ideological innovator *à la* Machiavelli or Hobbes. Indeed, as I argue, Darwin does not even appear such a thing. A 'major' theorist in a scientific sense, certainly, but less so as

[11] Bell 2007, 3–4.
[12] Keene 2017, 345.
[13] Keene 2014b, 398.
[14] Wight 1960, 38.
[15] Keene 2017, 346.
[16] Ibid., 342.

a political thinker—for where natural selection was a radical scientific innovation, Darwin's political arguments sat atop a pre-existing ideological context of mid-century liberalism. It was only later Darwinians who made the innovating moves when applying his ideas to international theory.

Instead of one author in her context or a clear tradition of thought contrasted with others, my focus is instead again on what I more loosely call an 'idiom'—a characteristic mode of expression over time by multiple authors, a discernible pattern of thought involving invocations of certain common conceptual landmarks. Such idioms often find their source at individual authors (here, Darwin), but they soon, like Darwin, lose agency over the use of their conceptual innovations. *Reception* is thus the central feature of this study, not intentionality.

The challenge of the global

Another aspect of this thesis which undermines the Skinnerian option is its spatial breadth. The ascendancy of global history since the 1990s has opened contextualism to criticisms on this new front, where it is castigated for its parochialism. From one direction this arrives as a critique of its methodological nationalism, and on the other of its Eurocentrism.[17] The former takes umbrage with Skinner's demands for uncovering the intentionality of texts—which requires close attention to the manipulation of existing linguistic conventions—which overly privilege what are essentially 'national' (or even sub-national) linguistic boundaries and thereby negate global dynamics of intellectual history. The latter critique instead takes aim at the traditional foci of the Cambridge School. That is, as Pocock himself recognises, 'that it has dealt exclusively with the "political thought" generated in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, transmitted to medieval and modern Europe, and taken up in the Euro-colonized Americas and a world (or "globe") subjected to European or "western" domination. This is obviously true, and calls for reformation.'[18]

How soluble are these criticisms? An obvious response to the second charge of Eurocentrism is an assertion of methodological neutrality—that, yes, the choice of

[17] Both criticisms as applied to 'national history' more broadly are discussed in: Conrad 2016.
[18] Pocock 2019, 1.

focussing on the European story reflected the backgrounds of the School's original scholars, but that this is nonetheless a *choice* and that contextualist methods are easily transportable to contexts anew.[19] Of course, as Pocock again recognises, '"political thought" in a society distant from the European may be different in deep-seated ways from that we have learned to study, and that the meanings of the basic terms we shall apply to learning it may require restatement so drastic that we will find it hard to comprehend them.'[20] Absent such evidence, the Cambridge School can plausibly be said to adapt easily to shake off the charge of Eurocentrism.

The critique of methodological nationalism is somewhat harder to refute as it implicates some deeper commitments of Skinner's approach. If one is to seek a global scope, as indeed I do, how can a traditional contextualist method work on this scale, beyond and between the boundaries of linguistic communities? So many of the dynamics I am interested in concern not the intentional manipulation of language within one locale, but rather mistranslation, misunderstanding, and even silences across them.

Of course, as Moyn and Sartori recognise, intellectual historians have in part 'stayed relatively free of the lures of national history in the first place. Early modernists had long been aware of a transnational "republic of letters," and modernists were often most interested in what Karl Mannheim called the "free-floating" intellectual, among whose other traits was to address larger communities or even travel between them.'[21] Skinner's work is full of such individuals, united as a scholarly community by a common Latin language and humanist education. Yet they are also individuals (especially Hobbes and Machiavelli) engaged with creating the theoretical architecture of the modern state;[22] they are agents of absolutists rather than committed cosmopolitans.

[19] Indeed, the *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* series has now moved to publishing non-Western texts ready for contextualist analysis.
[20] Pocock 2019, 2.
[21] Moyn and Sartori 2013, 3–4.
[22] Skinner 2009.

Fig. 2. Darwin's globality:
Map of the *Beagle*'s 1831–6 voyage[23]

Such critiques are particularly pertinent to this thesis, which aims to be global in its outlook. A narrowly linguistic 'English' reception story of Darwin in the international thought of Victorian Britain,[24] or in any other national context, is of course the most natural approach. Indeed, since the emergence of Richard Hofstadter's landmark study *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944), a 'Darwin reception' cottage industry has sprung up in the history of science which basically follows this national model.[25] Charles Darwin appears almost as a character in a children's travel book series, appearing here, there, and everywhere, with passport duly stamped—'Darwin in America', 'Darwin in Mexico', 'Darwin in Germany', 'Darwin in Egypt'…

The unerring fascination with this format is understandable, not only because of Darwinism's enormous significance *qua* itself in the history of biology (the spread of

[23] Chart from: FitzRoy 1839, vol. 2: Proceedings of the Second Expedition, 1831–36, Under the Command of Captain Robert Fitz-Roy, R.N. Appendix: 'Chart: Principal tracks of H.M.S. Beagle 1831-6'. Details from this chart reappear in each of the following chapters, providing a visual anchor to Darwin's actual physical presence (or non-presence, in the case of the East) across the whole span of the globe.
[24] This is precisely what I did in an earlier version of this research, in: Butcher 2020.
[25] For an excellent overview of which, see: Glick 2010. From a vast literature, some superlative examples of the genre are: Pusey 1983; Levine and Novoa 2012; Elshakry 2013.

which is inherently worth investigating), but also because the theme of reception (and, adjacently, translation) acts as a powerful dye for revealing patterns, dynamics, and processes of cultural exchange—of the purportedly 'universal' meeting the highly particular. Unlike other science, the social nature of Darwinian biology further enhances such textures of reception. Newton's third law looks fairly similar regardless of where it is transposed; Darwinian evolution, by contrast, appears as slippery and wobbly as a plate of jelly, thrown this way and that by local idiosyncrasies and contingencies. In this way, these reception histories anticipate many of the central themes of global (intellectual) history.

Nevertheless, these Darwin reception histories have not been without critique, many similar to those of contextualism. One issue is the form such works take. Besides critiques of their national focus,[26] these histories have also been indicted for their Eurocentric sins, characterising as they do local populations as mere 'recipients' in the simplest sense of the word. As Kijima and Hoquet put it: 'The vocabulary of "reception" suggests an Aristotelian dualism between matter and form, or passivity and activity, with a passive recipient "receiving" the impression of the active component: speaking of "reception" suggests that [a locale] is a sort of wax while *Darwinism* is a form of seal. This presentation is clearly flawed, since "Darwinism" is not an unchanging immaterial essence that may affect several kinds of inert substrates. The local context is not only distorting the original conceptual framework… [but] clearly impacts on the original formulations.'[27] More recent reception studies have thereby rightly jettisoned such questionable language as a 'pure' or 'proper' Darwinism and instead placed a greater focus on the recipients themselves as active agents in their own right.

Receptions and positional contexts

However, I do not wish to abandon a contextualist mindset (if not method) altogether, but rather adapt it for the task of analysing such an idiom over time and space in a canon-less context. Thus, we need to solve the twin requirements or both *reception* and *globality*.

[26] Giovanni Landucci took perhaps the most extreme micro-historical frame in his study of Darwinism in a single Italian city. Landucci 1977.
[27] Kijima and Hoquet 2013, 27. This issue of passivity is also discussed in: Glick 2010, 698.

Here, Claire Vergerio appears to offer a satisfying methodological silver bullet: 'an alternative form of "serial contextualism", focused on the reception of an author rather than of a concept, and anchored in that author's original context of writing',[28] thus combining a Skinnerian synchronic reading of an author's texts with a diachronic analysis of 'the impact of that author's move by tracing the reception of her text over time.'[29] Where Vergerio takes Gentili as her locus,[30] mine is Darwin.

However, Vergerio's primary focus of reception is temporal (Gentili over the *longue durée*) rather than spatial, as with my desire to focus on global spread in a shorter scale of time. This requirement for globality can be fixed by structuring Part II of the thesis *vis-à-vis* distinct positionalities, guided by the question of how Darwinism was utilised to articulate differing polities' place in the world.

Linguistic constraints are the major obstacle here. For example, I sadly do not read Chinese and thus cannot claim to meet the full credentials of a Skinnerian account when it comes to a granular command of the language. Hence in the chapter on China, I explore linguistic manipulation by explicitly foregrounding the problem of translatability through the figure of Yan Fu, Darwinism's Chinese translator. I also naturally rely more on secondary literature in this chapter. Nevertheless, a global reception history—a kind of spatialised Vergerian 'serial contextualism'—seems the best way to think about the thesis's broad methodological approach. Darwin will be analysed in his own context, unpacking the core concepts of the idiom at its source, before then tracing its spread across the globe in three positional contexts. Echoing the reception histories, through this approach I aim to examine both the 'particular'—to see how flexible Darwinism was for many different kinds of societies—as well as the 'universal': to also see how Darwinism also cut across these distinctions in its vision of all polities in the same struggle for existence.

It is however worth more fully elaborating on the choice of cases in Part II of the thesis and to explain what exactly I mean by 'positional contexts'. The categories used in Part II—of core, semi-periphery, and periphery—whilst widely used in both history and

[28] Vergerio 2019, 114.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Vergerio 2017.

the social sciences,[31] do need some justification to avoid the accusation that they are an external imposition on peoples who did not understand themselves in such terms. There has of course been substantive historical-sociological inquiry in recent years on the problem of how to describe international social space, with many (such as Edward Keene and Tristen Naylor)[32] drawing on Weber, Bourdieu, and other social theorists in order to properly describe international social space in terms of both agency (which entities are capable of acting) and position (the relations between these actors).[33] Providing such descriptions is complex and difficult, particularly so in the nineteenth century—a period which, whilst inchoate with the future template of the territorial nation-state, was nevertheless populated by a polyphony of diverse polity forms, from the complex legal structures of empires and their various dependents[34] to an array of 'semi-sovereigns'[35] of varyingly indeterminate status.[36]

In contrast to these more complex approaches, my use of 'core/semi-periphery/periphery' might seem naïve. This framing is also prone to a major criticism, and that is that it is an external imposition—that the historical actors in question may not have thought of themselves in such terms. Did the Chinese, for instance, see themselves as 'semi-peripheral' polities? Why not be thoroughly historical and instead use the concepts employed by the actors themselves, rather than these 'meta-historical' concepts?

My defence against this charge is, first, that these are the categories of the historian; they are external theoretical tools used heuristically from a distance to make legible certain shared features of the polities concerned. A thorough historicisation of the status concepts used in the period would be a thesis all of its own, and enter too far into the realm of historical sociology rather than intellectual history. Second, however, I *do*

[31] Most notably in the world-systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, but also in the history of empire. For an overview of the former, see: Wallerstein 2004.
[32] Keene 2014; Naylor 2018. The recent 'hierarchy' literature is also important here, on which see: Zarakol 2017. Many of these theorists draw on the 'relational' approach outlined in: Jackson and Nexon 1999.
[33] Of course, these two questions are interlinked and co-constitutive. The ability to name or ascribe agency or membership is, after all, an intersubjective social phenomenon that involves (on a continuing basis) the interests of pre-existing powerful members in that given society. Even if a polity were to unilaterally acclaim its agency and membership, as is the case in declarations of independence, it does so in reference to prevailing social norms and political vocabularies. On declarations of independence, see: Armitage 2008. Recognition of such states is similarly socially governed, on which see: Fabry 2010.
[34] Benton 2009.
[35] Learoyd 2017.
[36] Diplomatic recognition and treaty-making have been two strategies for cataloguing this complex system. Singer and Small 1966; Keene 2007.

believe that these concepts have historical validity—they *do* actually remain a useful and accurate way to describe the topography of late nineteenth-century international social space, a space which was indeed organised in broadly tripartite terms. It also essentially maps onto that other triadic category which *was* used by the actors in question: that of the 'civilised/semi-civilised/savage'.[37]

The 'core' as a description of metropolitan Britain in the late nineteenth century appears reasonably uncontroversial. Most Britons at the time conceived of themselves in such hub-and-spoke terms, and even saw themselves at the centre of the world.[38] Imperial, global, and international historians similarly frequently invoke the term 'imperial core', alongside its dyadic inverse: the 'colonial periphery',[39] which is the term used in the third chapter of Part II. This commonly used framework of 'core and periphery' is of course challengeable, including by arguing (as post-colonialists might) that it suggests an empirically false and normatively worrisome unidirectionality: of the 'active' core and the 'passive' periphery.[40] The reason for using these terms is that they remain descriptively useful and accurate. There was indeed a pattern of super- and subordination between such politics, and this fact remains utterly central to understanding the ways in which this relationship informed the intellectual history of these respective peoples.

The middle category of the 'semi-periphery' (which encompasses China, Japan, and South America) might seem trickier. Nevertheless, there are characteristics that unite such diverse polities. Compared to the periphery, they were not wholly destroyed as legal entities and absorbed by the European powers yet were nevertheless imposed with common unjust measures and institutions such as extraterritoriality, unequal treaties, and unilateral military interventions. This condition strongly informed the shape of Darwinism in such countries which, as we will see, was often embraced precisely *vis-à-vis* this liminality. Indeed, as much international legal scholarship has emphasised (such as that of Arnulf Becker Lorca or Liliana Obregón),[41] the lens of the 'semi-periphery' or the

[37] The reason that I do not use this 'civilised/semi-civilised/savage' triad as my framing, rather than 'core/semi-periphery/periphery', is that I am interested precisely in how Darwinian internationalism *undermined* the standard of civilisation.
[38] Darwin 2009.
[39] On the dichotomising impulses in the category of imperialism and of the co-implication of 'core/periphery', 'internal/external', etc., see: Wolfe 1997, 389.
[40] For a recent take on this problem, see: Gopal 2019. See also the discussion in: Hopkins 2020, 203.
[41] Becker Lorca 2015; Obregón 2006.

'semi-civilised' is utterly essential to understanding how such polities saw themselves both within and against international society and its institutions.

I therefore use this tripartite distinction to organise the 'positional contexts' in Part II, which aim to show how Darwinism could be used in different places to articulate different strategies, all motivated by the same question of how to *survive* in an increasingly precarious international context.

Of course, these cases that I use are not comprehensive, and much is necessarily left out. The European context—traditionally the main focus of studies of so-called 'social Darwinism'—is less totalising than in other treatments,[42] and is confined largely to Britain. There is also the basic question of how representative the cases I use are, e.g. how in the case of Victorian Britain (as I highlight) many of the receptions in *British* international thought were peculiar to that society. The Arabic world is perhaps the most prominently and sadly absent context.[43] Yet, together, the cases I use provide a solid foundation for exploring the travel and influence of Darwinian internationalism across the very different spaces of the late nineteenth century.

Closing remarks

In sum then, a syncretic, global contextualist approach, one focussed on a reception analysis of Darwin in a series of 'positional contexts', is the best way to think about the methodology of the thesis. In this way, the structure of the thesis is actually that of a 'tree of life': from its root-source (Darwin), we shall see how the filaments of Darwinism diversified as it spread and 'evolved' over time and space, with each chapter of Part II following one main root-line of the phylogeny.

Let us therefore get on with the real bulk of the thesis, starting with the root: Darwin himself.

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[42] On which, I would direct the reader to: Hawkins 1997.

[43] A superb overview of the Arabic reception story can be found in: Elshakry 2013.

PART I

Darwin

CHAPTER II.

Darwin, Theorist

'We see the dawn of higher race,
The dawn of beauty from the mind,
We see the triumph of the kind,
We see the ape go from thy face.

We hail thee, "Dawn Man", mixed thy rays,
Three-fourths a man, a fraction brute,
For through thine eye a mind doth shoot,
While round thy mouth a simian stays.'[1]
— from Digain Williams, *Darwin* (1922)

In this first empirical chapter, I tackle Darwin himself, recast as an international political theorist. I begin with some ground-clearing *vis-à-vis* the enterprise of science, which I characterise (following numerous philosophers and historians of science) as an historically rooted cultural product, and a deeply political one too, rather than an objective, neutral claim to knowledge. I then approach Darwin's corpus through this contextual, political lens.

In its origins, I argue that Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection—incubated on the famous voyage of the *H.M.S. Beagle*—was itself the product of an internationalising world, catalysed above all by Darwin's encounter with the native peoples of Tierra del Fuegia. In its content, I focus on two central elements in Darwin's writings which directly concern the sphere of the international: namely, the idea of war, as transposed into nature through the competitive 'struggle for existence', which is at the heart of the *Origin of Species* (1859); and the distinction between the 'savage' and 'civilised', which is placed centre-stage in Darwin's later work on the evolution of the human moral faculties, particularly in the *Descent of Man* (1871).

Anticipating the remainder of the thesis, I close the chapter with some musings on reception. There, I shall argue both that Darwin was in many ways less 'Darwinian' than later recipients (in terms of his clinging to the liberal idea of civilisation in contravention to the naturalism inert in his own theory), but also that the 'perversion' of

[1] Williams 1922, 21–22.

Darwin's theory has been overstated too, and that the gap between 'Darwin' and 'Social Darwinism' is not as wide as many have supposed—as a close reading of his work attests.

Science, culture, politics

All are familiar with 'Charles Darwin the scientist'. As the architect of one of the greatest scientific theories ever conceived, Darwin's status is rivalled only by other watershed figures in the development of the natural sciences, such as Newton and Einstein (who presented similarly quasi-axiomatic grand theories). Like the Copernican usurpation of heliocentrism, Darwin's theory of evolution disrupted the fundamentals by which the historical agents at the time navigated their world, serving as 'one of those episodes in which a new scientific theory symbolises a wholesale change in cultural values.'[2] *Unlike* Copernicus, Newton, or Einstein, however, Darwin's theory took not planets, particles, or forces as its locus of explanation, but biological life: human beings included.

Darwinian evolution therefore raised not just scientific questions, but profound metaphysical and political questions, too—questions of 'man's place in nature'.[3] These were questions that Darwin himself was engaged with. A myopic categorisation of Darwin as a 'scientist' (and the notion of neutral objectivity which this implies) renders this political dimension of his work opaque. We should therefore strive to revive 'Charles Darwin the theorist'. Towards this aim, we must first reorient ourselves away from boundary-drawing impulses, to resist obsessions with strict categorisation (ironically itself a kind of Victorian naturalist mindset).[4] No doubt the ignorance of Darwin's centrality to international thought is due in part to this contemporary impulse to bracket 'science' as a special mode of intellectual endeavour.

Yet, prior to the enthroning of science as a separate project, it was seen as part of a holistic process of intellectual inquiry; scientific concerns were a part of 'natural philosophy' which sat comfortably alongside metaphysics, theology, and poetry. In the nineteenth century, 'that the natural and moral sciences were seen to be inextricably

[2] Bowler 1984, 1. On the idea of a 'Darwinian revolution', see: Hale 2015. On the uniqueness of Darwin as a 'great man' in the history of science, see the counterfactual discussion of 'a world without Darwin' in: Bowler 2013.
[3] Huxley's term again, but see also: Young 1985, ch.6.
[4] Think of the compartments of neatly named insects in the glass cases of natural history museums, the modern museum itself a product of the nineteenth century, as discussed in: Osterhammel 2015, 11–14.

linked throughout this period is telling, as is the observation that they spoke to the kind of political economy, and thus the kind of society, that should be implemented.'[5] The sciences were accordingly much less 'academicised' and demarcated from the rest of society. Indeed, the evolutionary debate was performed on a very public stage: 'the nineteenth-century debate on "man's place in nature" ranged broadly and deeply. It engaged the reading public at every level… New ideas were not fragmented into academic disciplines but were viewed as part of a common set of themes for a common culture.'[6] The intellectual world of the nineteenth century was thus holistic and popular; it was the world of the polymath (or, cynically, the *dilettante*)[7] and the public intellectual.

Darwin was no different. Hailing from a family of remarkable pedigree—the 'Darwin-Wedgwoods'—the young Darwin was a man of Radical stock.[8] During Charles's childhood, 'politics had been a significant topic of discussion in the Darwin household'[9] and, as his notebooks attest, he became an avid consumer of political thought and current affairs (as would be expected of a middle-class gentleman of his day). Indeed, the London Library has recently published their records of Darwin's borrowings for leisure during the crucial period of evolutionary theory's creation in the 1840s–50s.[10] These reveal Darwin's broad reading appetite, including works of politics and history. Amongst more scientific texts, we find, for instance: Strickland's *Lives of the Queens of England*; Scott's *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*; the essays of Montaigne; Hallam's *Constitutional History of England*; Macauley's historical essays; Pitt the Younger's correspondence; and Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico*. Travelogues and travel memoirs were another frequent object of Darwin's attention, revealing his international outlook: Drury's Madagascar; Mitchell's Eastern Africa; Dieffenbach's New Zealand; Raymond's Pyrenees; John Saris's Japan; Martin's St Kilda; Kohl's Austria; Ulloa's South America; and Laing's Norway feature amongst others.

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[5] Hale 2014, 16.
[6] Young 1985, Abstract [unnumbered].
[7] Again, see: Bell 2007, 3.
[8] 'Radical' in the sense of the 'classical radicalism' of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which in Britain was espoused by the Radical group of the parliamentary Whigs. For instance, Darwin's father, the poet Erasmus Darwin, held particularly radical views for the time, including slavery abolitionism, advocacy for women's education, and republicanism.
[9] Hale 2014, 34.
[10] Charles Darwin's reading list revealed 2021.

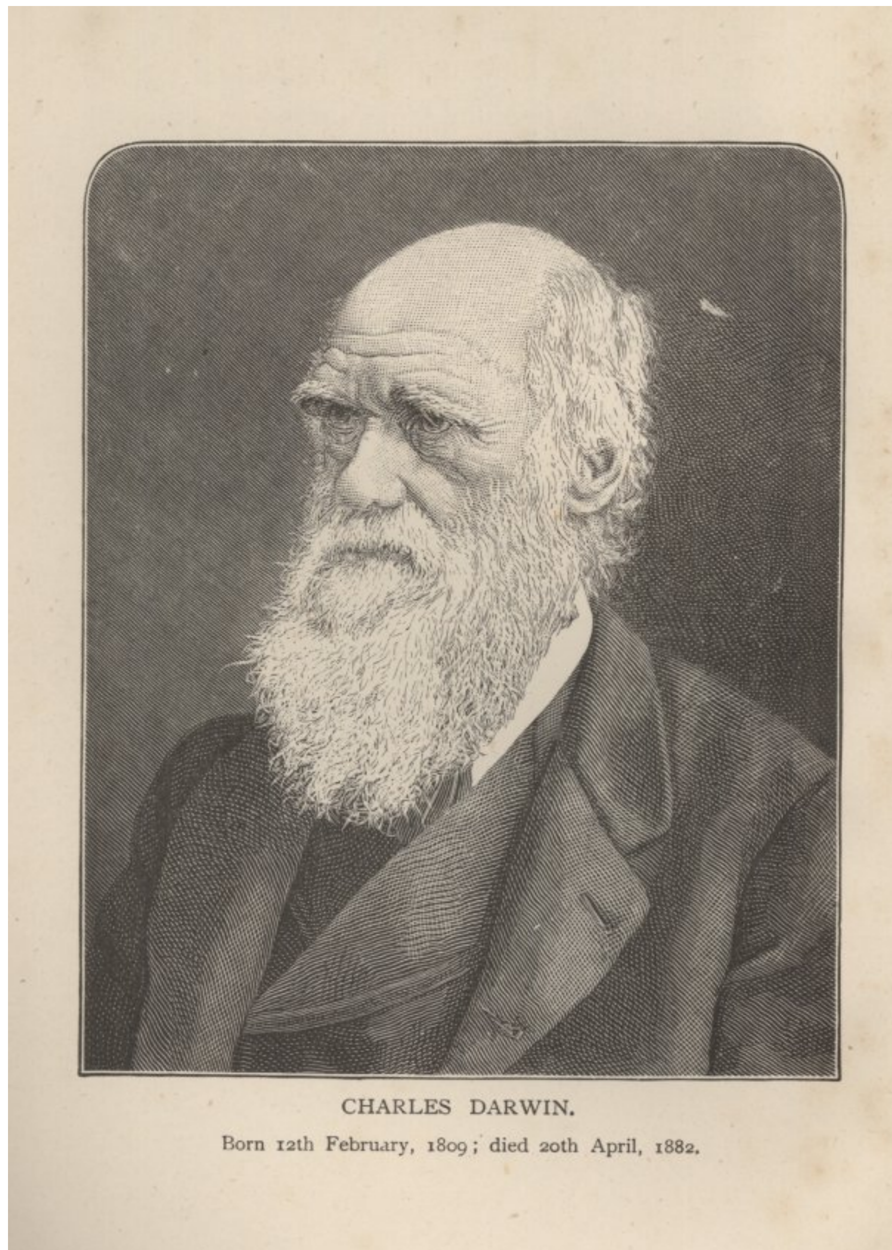

Fig. 3. The man himself:
Portrait of the elder Darwin[11]

The rationale to rethink Darwin in political terms is therefore biographically obvious. Darwin's writings cannot be read simply as works of 'science'. Such is evident in much contemporary miscomprehension, for 'even sensitive historians of science, recognizing

[11] Image from the frontmatter in: Darwin 1890.

the *Descent*'s racial and class doctrines of progress, have labelled it "*deviationist*", for departing from the scientific purity of the *Origin of Species*.'[12] Rather than such notions of 'deviation' or 'impurity', we ought to adopt a perspective which recognises science not as some separated sphere of activity unobstructed by the messy business of social life, but 'to see science as just one aspect of broader social and cultural assumptions.'[13] To be clear, I am not here taking a 'hard constructionist' position that makes no distinction at all between 'science' and 'society',[14] but adopting the softer constructionist view that scientists are ineradicably influenced by (and go on to influence) the social, political, economic, intellectual, and cultural contexts within which they are situated: that the 'scientific process does not stand apart from the culture it inhabits. The questions scientists ask about the world, and the interpretations they place on their data, are often shaped by cultural attitudes, needs and possibilities.'[15] This fact is historicist as much as sociological, and we need also to see that 'science happened in history and has influenced historical events increasingly.'[16]

In my approach, then, I follow historians of science[17] who approach Darwinism not merely 'contextually' in the thin sense of just adding some cultural or biographical context to Darwin's theory, but politically: 'to show that the history of evolutionary theory has been deeply political from its inception and that the arguments about the evolution of cooperation and competition—on both sides—have been especially so.'[18] This approach sits within so-termed 'externalist' understandings of Darwin's theory, i.e. those who argue that it was a theory constructed from *the outside*,[19] with its origins being '[not] in the objective nature of his approach... [but] that Darwinism must represent an

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[12] Moore and Desmond 2004, lvi.
[13] Hale 2014, 23.
[14] The exemplar being Bruno Latour's earlier work, as in the classic: Latour and Woolgar 1986.
[15] Malik 2000, 9. Here, I am reminded of the idea of the 'wood wide web', the fungal network which connects trees together, and the problem of interpreting its mechanisms in political terms. As Merlin Sheldrake puts it: 'How best to think about shared mycorrhizal networks then? … Socialism in the soil? Deregulated markets of late capitalism, with fungi jostling on the trading floor of a forest stock exchange? Or maybe it's fungal feudalism, with mycorrhizal overlords presiding over the lives of their plant labourers for their own ultimate benefit. All are problematic.' Sheldrake 2020, 190–191. More broadly, see: Levidow 1986.
[16] Young 1985, 23.
[17] Archetypal of this approach are: Adrian Desmond, James Moore, Piers J. Hale, Robert Young, David Oldroyd, Mark Borello, Thomas Dixon, and Lee Dugatkin.
[18] Hale 2014, 6.
[19] On the 'internalist/externalist' divide, see: Bowler 1984 ch. 6. On the relationship of this divide to the history of reception, see: Glick 2010, 694.

extension of the social philosophy prevalent at the time'.[20] Necessarily, I therefore do not stride too fully into more strictly 'scientific' debates,[21] but rather explore the politics of Darwinian evolutionism in intent, origin, and consequence.

The struggle for explanation

However, it is worth having *some* knowledge of the scientific context of Darwin's work. What was Darwin aiming to do, in scientific terms? For readers unfamiliar with the history of biology, some scene-setting is worthwhile.

Prior to the Enlightenment, the dominant paradigm for hundreds of years in Western biological thought can be described by a single, powerful idea: the 'great chain of being'.[22] This idea, stretching back to Aristotle and reinforced in Judeo-Christian scripture, conceived of biological life essentially as a ladder.[23] The order of creation could be understood as a series of rungs, ascending in complexity from the 'lowest' to the 'highest' life-forms—from plants all the way up to humans (Christian thinkers then added God at the top, and monarchical absolutists the King just below).

The main feature of such ladders was that they were fixed, static, unchanging. *Natura non facit saltus*: 'nature makes no leaps'.[24] This fixity was thought to exist not only in terms of the position of the rungs *vis-à-vis* each other (hence attempts to find the 'proper place' for each species), but also in terms of the fecundity of life itself: this was

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[20] Bowler 1984, 22.

[21] As, for example, the debate over Darwin's account of heredity, now out of favour following the 'modern synthesis' of Darwinian natural selection and Mendelian inheritance.

[22] Lovejoy 1936.

[23] Archibald 2014 ch. 1.

[24] Hence Macbeth's desire to become King—his 'vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself'—is met with punishment for its transgression against the order of things.

'a ready-made universe to which nothing could be added. Perhaps even more important to mankind's peace of mind, nothing could be subtracted from it. All the creatures God had once created still remained in his creation and could not disappear from it.'[25] This was the so-called 'Principle of Plenitude': the notion that 'all legitimate possibilities are eventually realised.'[26]

This explained why it was believed that the apparent 'disappearance' of a certain animal or plant from a local area was of no real meaning. Either there was a mistake, and the species was still tucked away in some unseen, hidden corner, or, even if it had disappeared from its immediate surroundings, the species still existed elsewhere in God's infinitely rich creation. The discovery of new forms of life in the vast, apparently Arcadian spaces of the New World only compounded such beliefs.

As Thomas Moynihan puts it, the idea of extinction thus had to be *discovered*.[27] This 'discovery' can be traced from the late eighteenth century onwards, when the 'great chain' began to be challenged, most significantly by the French biologist Georges Cuvier, who argued that recently discovered fossils of mammoths and mastodons were *not* the same species as modern elephants. Instead, Cuvier controversially argued, these were remnants of extinct animals—the evidence of a great catastrophe which he argued had recurred over and over in previous epochs. This became known as the 'catastrophist' view in geology.

Cuvier thus inaugurated a revolution in geological thinking, and a radical epistemic shift in Western thought:

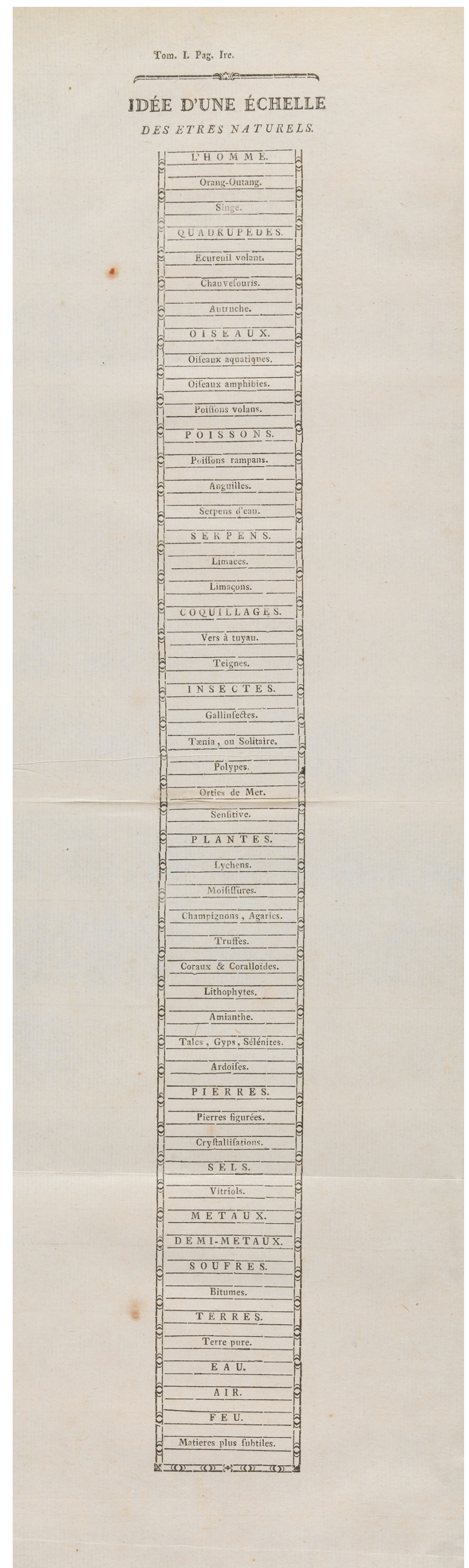

Fig. 4. An archetypal ladder: Charles Bonnet's *échelle* (1745)

[25] Lindqvist 1997, 97.
[26] Moynihan 2020, 36.
[27] Ibid., 7.

from the pre-modern static theological creationism defined by the great chain of being to the evolutionary transmutationism of the nineteenth century.[28] The Biblical story of the Earth's age (encapsulated most infamously in Ussher's dating of creation to midday October 23rd 4004 B.C.) was accordingly displaced by a much longer geological history.

After Cuvier, the shadow of extinction fell across early nineteenth-century biology, influencing the ideas of Buffon and others.[29] Most important was its influence on Charles Lyell, who (alongside Robert Chambers[30]) was a central figure in Darwin's story. In his 1832 work, the *Principles of Geology* (which Darwin took with him on his voyage across the world), Lyell countered Cuvier's catastrophist account of extinction with an opposite theory: 'uniformitarianism'. Instead of sudden, violent shocks as the cause of ancient extinctions (of which there appeared to be little geological evidence), Lyell argued that slow, gradual processes of environmental change must be the cause of an animal's disappearance.

By the time of Darwin, the central puzzle nevertheless remained: how did creatures disappear? Neither Cuvier's catastrophism nor Lyell's gradualism really solved the question. Cuvier failed above all because, whilst recognising the existence of ancient species, he still refused to slay the real sacred cow: the belief that species were *unchanging*. For Cuvier, species were static up to the point of their eradication by 'catastrophe'. Lyell glimpsed at the answer, as did Lamarck with his notion of transmutation through hereditary adaptations of will (the giraffe's neck being long as a result of its stretching over generations to the fruits in treetops).

Darwin's genius was to take Cuvier's idea of species destruction not as some rare event, but rather as *the* force of biological change itself: to perennialise extinction as the *mechanism* of evolution. This also provided a significant improvement on earlier attempts (e.g. Lamarckism) to explain development *within* individual species through adaptation. As Darwin showed, species look the way they do not because of willed change, but because of accidental adaptations which confer selective advantages in the competition for life, thereby increasing their chance of passing these adaptations on.

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[28] This draws on Foucault's argument in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* as utilised in: Bowler 1984.

[29] This period also coincided with the rise of racial polygenism, which we will return to in chapter five.

[30] Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* catalysed a wide, popular debate on progressive evolutionism which was an important 'run-up' to Darwin's reception. As Bowler argues: 'only within this new vision of an evolving *physical* universe did it become possible to imagine that living things might also be subject to natural change.' Bowler 1984, 4.

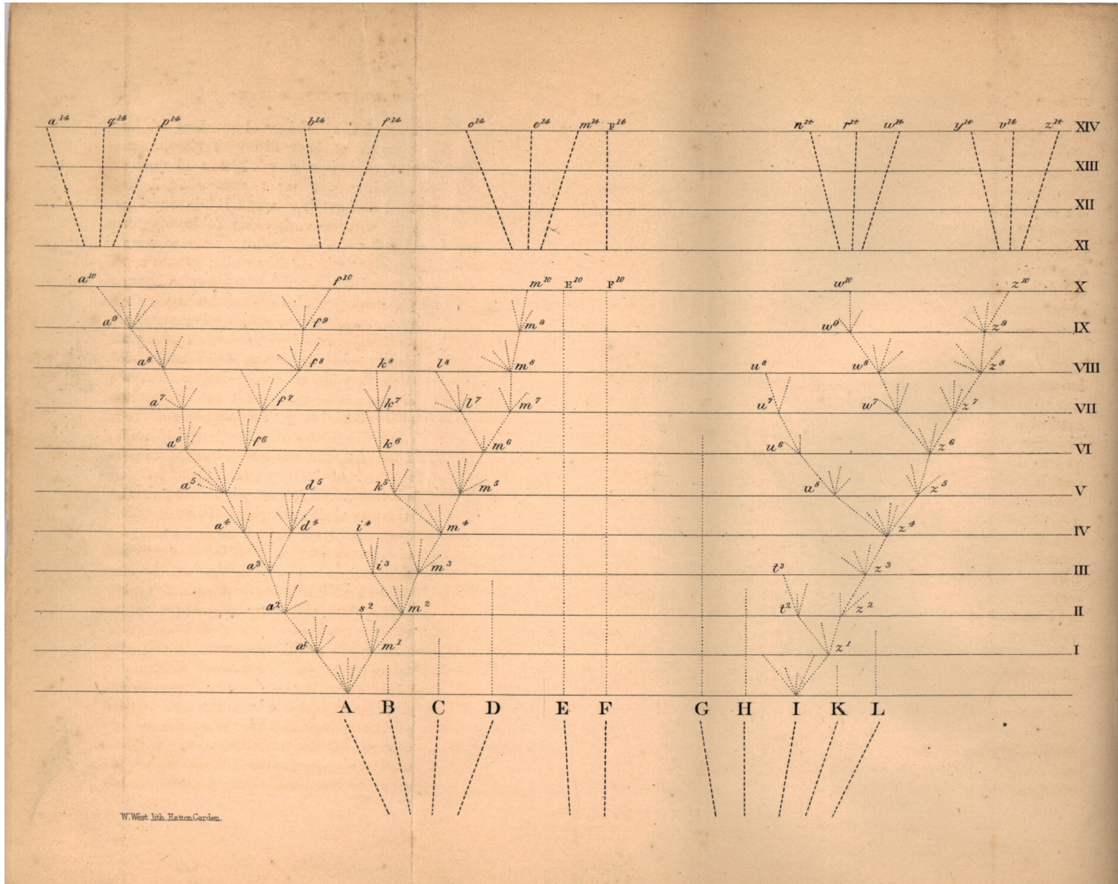

Fig. 5. The branching of life:
From the *Origin of Species* (1859)[31]

From Darwin, then, that old idea of *natura non facit saltus* took on a whole new meaning. It meant not that the 'rungs' of the ladder could not move in their places, but rather that species emerged gradually over time. Nature indeed 'made no leaps', for it was a tree and not a ladder. This was a Kuhnian 'paradigm shift' *par excellence.*

How, then, did Darwin come across this 'discovery'? The answer lies in globality.

[31] Image in: Darwin 1859. This is the only illustration in the entire book and appears as a foldout image in the first edition between pages 116–7. It is a profound image in its geometric perfection, showing the process of evolution through generations (the branching vertical lines) across great spans of geological time (the horizontal lines). Thus, as Darwin puts it, the 'great Tree of Life… fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever branching and beautiful ramifications.' For more on Darwin's trees, see the excellent treatment in: Archibald 2014.

The Fuegian encounter

> 'The western nations of Europe… now so immeasurably surpass their former savage progenitors [they] stand at the summit of civilisation.'[32]
> — Charles Darwin (1871)

Fundamentally, the creation of Darwin's revolutionary theory was only possible due to the 'shrinking of the world' which defined the long nineteenth century.[33] It was a product of 'the international',[34] of the unfurling of the 'great map of mankind'.[35] As Peter Bowler argues, 'it was inevitable that the eighteenth-century passion for natural history should be extended to the study of man' in the nineteenth century: 'As travellers went around the world they encountered new races of men, some living under conditions so primitive that there was a temptation to question their true humanity.'[36]

Such was true for Darwin on the 1831–6 voyage of the *H.M.S. Beagle*, a five-year adventure to far-flung lands which served as the crucible for his theory.[37] The voyage circumnavigated the length and breadth of the globe, departing from Plymouth to South America (with stops in Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, the Falklands, Valparaiso, Callao Lima, and, of course, the Galapagos Islands) and then across the Pacific through to Australasia (stopping in New Zealand, Sydney, Tasmania, and St George's Island) before coming up via Mauritius to Cape Town and finally swinging back up to Britain via another stop at Bahia and Cape Verde.

By far the most important episode in this lengthy voyage was the encounter with the native peoples of Tierra del Fuego, at the tip of South America—'the uttermost part of the earth'[38]—which sparked Darwin's obsession with human origins. This Fuegian encounter was far more crucial than, for instance, Galapagos finches.[39] Its significance is made obvious from the very first line of the *Origin of Species*: 'When on board H.M.S.

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[32] Darwin 1871, vol. 1, 178. Throughout, I cite from the first editions of Darwin's works, except where otherwise stated.
[33] Buzan and Lawson 2015; Harvey 1989.
[34] Or what Glenda Sluga refers to as 'objective internationalism'. Sluga 2013.
[35] Marshall 1982.
[36] Bowler 1984, 91.
[37] 1831 was the second voyage of the ship, preceded by the 1826–30 voyage. For a brief summary of the events of this first journey and the circumstances which led to Darwin's attendance on the second, see: Bridges 1949, 29–31. For the original account of 1826, see: King 1839, vol. 1: Proceedings of the First Expedition, 1826–1830, Under the Command of Captain P. Parker King, R.N., F.R.S.
[38] Bridges 1949.
[39] For a full account of the encounter, see: Desmond and Moore 1992 ch. 10.

"Beagle", as naturalist [*sic*], I was much struck with certain facts in the distribution of the inhabitants of South America.'[40]

Fig. 6. 'The uttermost part of the earth':
Map of Tierra del Fuego[41]

As he fixed his eyes on the Fuegians in 'this savage land',[42] Darwin was taken aback. The Fuegians were incomprehensibly strange—an undistilled savagery.[43] 'Viewing such men,' he recorded in his diary, 'one can hardly make oneself believe they are fellow-creatures, and inhabitants of the same world.'[44] They were 'the most abject and miserable creatures I anywhere beheld.'[45] Immediately, the distinction between 'savage' and 'civilised' forms of humankind were sowed in Darwin's mind: 'It was without exception the most curious

[40] Darwin 1859, 1.
[41] Image from: FitzRoy 1839, vol. 2: Proceedings of the Second Expedition, 1831–36, Under the Command of Captain Robert Fitz-Roy, R.N.
[42] Darwin 1839, vol. 3: Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836, 227.
[43] They were, however, not untouched by the Europeans, contrary to common assumption. On earlier encounters, see: McEwan, Borrero, and Prieto 1997 ch. 6.
[44] Darwin 1839, vol. 3: Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836, 235.
[45] Ibid.

and interesting spectacle I ever beheld: I could not have believed how wide was the difference between savage and civilized man. It is greater than between a wild and domesticated animal.'[46] This revelation of the capacity for humanity's mutability would be extended to the animal kingdom: to use the cliché, this was Darwin's 'eureka moment'.

In the specifics of difference, Darwin fixated on one particular aspect of the Fuegian people, in typical bourgeois style. As Piers Hale recounts: 'what ultimately seems to have become the determining factor in Darwin's mind in explaining the Fuegian's pitiful condition… was the fact that they also appeared to lack even the vaguest notion of *private property*.'[47] It was ultimately 'the perfect equality among the individuals composing these tribes', Darwin argued, that 'must for a long time retard their civilization.'[48]

Regardless of the mooted reason for their condition, the stark difference between the Fuegians and the Europeans was for Darwin *the* exemplar which proved the power of evolution. So too did Darwin's own account of the sheer 'savagery' of the Fuegians become an exemplar for others—as we shall see in the following chapter, they appear again and again in the writings of Darwinians as an empirical 'ur-savage', a perfect axiom in their theories.

[46] Ibid., vol. 3: Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836, 228.
[47] Hale 2014, 35–6 emphasis mine. Darwin attempted to foist many bourgeois ideas about property upon the Fuegians, as in his translation of the word '*yammerschooner*!' (often shouted by the natives whilst pointing at items) as 'give me!'. However, 'it is obvious from the record that "give me" was a complex composite that did not fall neatly into British political economy, formal or informal. A composite of trade and gift, sometimes to be reciprocated, at other times not, it was all interwoven with a terrible insistence that the sailors came to define as outright theft.' McEwan, Borrero, and Prieto 1997, 167.
[48] Darwin 1839, vol. 3: Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836, 242.

Fig. 7. The moment of encounter:
Conrad Martens, *Portrait Cove, Beagle Channel* (1834)[49]

The *Origin* of the struggle for existence

> 'It is remarkable how Darwin rediscovers, among the beasts and plants, the society of England with its division of labour, competition, opening up of new markets, "inventions" and Malthusian "struggle for existence". It is Hobbes' *bellum omnium contra omnes* and is reminiscent of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, in which civil society figures as an "intellectual animal kingdom", whereas, in Darwin, the animal kingdom figures as civil society.'[50]
> — Karl Marx (1862)

Out of this journey came one of the most significant books ever published: 1859's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. Without hyperbole, the *Origin of Species* ushered in 'what might not inaccurately be described as the most significant development in the history of Western thought.'[51]

[49] Image reproduced in: Donald and Munro 2009, 9.
[50] Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels, 18 June 1862.
[51] Hale 2014, 13.

Adorning the title of the third chapter was Darwin's central idea, which would spark the whole Darwinian idiom: 'the Struggle for Existence'.[52] There, Darwin espouses his theory of evolution by painting a bleak picture of the natural world, proselytising 'the truth of the universal struggle for life.'[53] 'We forget,' he acclaims, 'that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey.'[54] This was a dark, Malthusian world of destruction and death—as he famously put it, it was 'the doctrine of Malthus, applied to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms'.[55]

Beyond Malthus's influence, Darwin's vision of existential struggle in nature also drew on the metaphor of international war. Indeed, a crucial influence on Darwin's account was Charles Lyell's (via Augustin de Candolle) description of 'all the plants of a given country… [as] *at war* with one another',[56] which Darwin himself notes gets us only some part of the way to a characterisation of the struggle: '"Even the energetic language of Decandolle does not convey the warring of the species." The intensity of the struggle was something new.'[57]

This endless, intense destruction was not merely a fact of life but a productive process too, one pregnant with the creative possibility of species-generation and one that also acts a constant guarantor of ecological stability: 'Lighten any check, mitigate the destruction ever so little, and the numbers of the species will almost instantaneously increase to any amount. The face of Nature may be compared to a yielding surface, with ten thousand sharp wedges packed close together and driven inwards by incessant blows.'[58] Indeed, as Patrick Brantlinger notes: '*The Origin of Species* could well have been

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[52] Not to be confused with 'the survival of the fittest,' a phrase actually coined by Herbert Spencer and only later used by Darwin.
[53] Darwin 1859, 62.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 5. Darwin's use of Malthus has elicited reams of scholarship that I shan't wade into. Nevertheless, Piers Hale is certainly right in pointing out that Darwin's repeated invocation of Malthus was likely politically motivated, and 'was a clear attempt to dissociate evolution from radicalism', in particular from unpopular Godwinian and Rousseauian notions of humanity's natural peaceability, 'and to signal to his readers that *Origin* was on the right side of the fence politically.' Hale 2014, 48. A similar impact of Malthus's principle can be seen in Karl Marx's work, which 'saw capitalism's need for endless expansion as producing a Malthusian struggle for survival between an ever-dwindling group of monopolies.' Wolfe 1997, 389.
[56] Lyell 1991, vol. 2, 131 emphasis mine.
[57] Hale 2014, 38.
[58] Darwin 1859, 66–67.

entitled *The Origin and Extinction of Species*, because, as Darwin frequently insists, "extinction and natural selection go hand in hand".'[59] The Tree of Life is also a Tree of Death.

There is however a strong normative element here, for it is clear that Darwin is quite compelled by the relentless scythe of extinction: 'No one can have marvelled more than I have done at the extinction of species', he writes: 'I was filled with astonishment.'[60] His is not simply a cool, 'objective' account of nature's sad reality. His choice of terminology is indicative here: 'Nature "selects" qualities that enable "fit" individuals and species to survive; what nature rejects is, to use a verb that recurs throughout both the *Origin* and *Descent* "exterminated". Darwin often uses this term when another, more neutral term such as *supplanted* or *superseded* would have been more accurate.'[61]

Of course, Darwin relents in his promise that 'I use the term Struggle for Existence in a large and metaphorical sense',[62] yet its power is obvious. Linguistically, its spread became wide quickly: in German, becoming *der Kampf ums Dasein*,[63] or Alphonse Daudet's *struggleforlifeur*. As Beer argues, 'the unused, or uncontrolled, elements in metaphors such as "the struggle for existence" take on a life of their own. They surpass their status in the text and generate further ideas and ideologies.'[64] Here is the spark of *reception*.

This generative capacity was further driven by a central problem in the *Origin*: that human beings were missing. For fear of political and religious reprisal, Darwin insisted late before publication (on advice from Charles Lyell himself) to remove all references to human beings.[65] Only one enigmatic sentence is afforded to the scandalous issue in the book's conclusion: 'Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history.'[66] This left the question of humankind in contention, suggesting implicitly that humans operated by the same fierce competitive logic as the rest of the natural world. Only later would

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[59] Brantlinger 2003, 169.
[60] Darwin 1859, 318.
[61] Brantlinger 2003, 169.
[62] Darwin 1859, 62.
[63] A phrase first introduced by Darwin's German translator Heinrich Georg Bronn, a translation Darwin found objectionable. Kutschera 2009.
[64] Beer 1983, 9.
[65] Indeed, the *Origin* was itself already a compressed version of Darwin's much broader writing project on evolution: what he called his 'big book', abandoned in favour of a punchier format for the reading public.
[66] Darwin 1859, 488.

Darwin dare approach the 'human question' directly, arguing that there *was* something distinctive about human beings compared to the rest of the animal kingdom.

But, for readers of the *Origin*, the implication was clear: man was in line with nature. Darwin had 'inadvertently invited others to speculate on the question, and many arrived at conclusions quite different to those he had in mind.'[67] In leaving humanity absent, Darwin could not control the consequences of the book. This was symbolised most clearly in the famous debate at the Oxford University Museum on 30 June 1860, in which Samuel Wilberforce (the Bishop of Oxford) and T.H. Huxley ('Darwin's bulldog') dramatically clashed over humanity's supposed descent 'from apes'.[68]

Further fundamental questions were unclear. Was 'savage' man (such as the Fuegians) different from 'civilised' man, in terms of their adherence to the natural struggle? Were some human groups 'more evolved' than others? Where was altruism, compassion, and selflessness?[69] The *Origin*'s silence was deafening. As Piers Hale humorously puts it: 'pigeons were all well and good… but people were more interested in the light that Darwin's work might throw on "the origin of man and his history".'[70] In Darwin's most famous statement of evolution, then, a 'natural' morality was absent ('civilised' man apparently included). Indeed, 'once he had made the decision to exclude man from the book, Darwin could see no opening for moral restraint in nature at all, nor, it seems, among the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego.'[71]

In sum, then, Darwin's 'struggle for existence' theorised perennial war as not only natural, but productive. Darwin's vision of virtuous conflict is expressed in distilled form at the very end of the *Origin*, in the famous synopsis of the theory:

> Thus, *from the war of nature*, from famine and death, *the most exalted object* which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, *directly follows*. There is grandeur in this view of life… from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are, being evolved.[72]

The *Origin*'s conception of nature as brutal and competitive—man implicitly included—had consequences for thinking about the international, as we shall see. Of course,

[67] Hale 2014, 66.
[68] The debate also kickstarted the now classic debate over science and religion's 'incompatibility'. For the original statements of the 'conflict theory', see: White 1877; Draper 1879.
[69] This is a classic question in evolutionary theory around the matter of 'group selection'.
[70] Hale 2014, 68.
[71] Ibid., 47–8.
[72] Darwin 1859, 490 emphasis mine.

international theories all presuppose a certain idea(l) of human nature. For realists, it is the power- or security-seeking rational individual. For liberals, an optimistic vision of cooperative beings. Constructivists opt for a malleable social canvas. For Darwinians, it is humanity's struggle for existence which defines it. This vision of 'conflict-as-virtue'—as not only descriptively ineradicable, but prescriptively productive—thus contained the seeds of Darwinian internationalism. War was naturalised because nature *was* war.

Throwing light: the *Descent*

Yet, as above, humanity's place in this battlefield was left undiscussed by Darwin. That is, until 1871 and the publication of *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, which 'remains Darwin's greatest unread book'.[73] It was also his most political: 'what is beyond dispute is that when Darwin wrote *Descent* he was well aware that he was entering an arena that was as much about politics as it was about natural history.'[74] Reading the *Descent* as a work of political thought requires little effort on the part of the reader; indeed, more effort is to be exerted reading it as a work of science.[75] The reception of the work similarly attests to its dubious scientific credentials, with it having exerted 'a greater impact on popular culture than on science.'[76]

Indeed, the work was intended 'not primarily [as] a book about "human evolution" as we think of it today',[77] but rather as an attempt to address the fundamental contestation that had emerged over the interpretation of evolution in the decade since the *Origin*: 'Radicals had embraced evolution as grounds for collectivism and social change; Darwin was taken to be advocating for competitive individualism. The politics of evolution were thus hotly contested.'[78] The *Descent* thereby acted as Darwin's definitive

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[73] Desmond and Moore 2004, lv.

[74] Hale 2014, 342. For a reflection on the *Descent*'s science in light of contemporary knowledge, see: DeSilva 2021.

[75] At least, for its first third. As readers discover and as its title implies, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* is very much two distinct books (and was first published in two volumes). The first part deals with human evolution and the development of humankind's moral and mental faculties, and the second presents Darwin's theory of 'sexual selection' to explain differences in sex across species. Darwin makes little effort to connect the two. It seems to make more sense to affix the first part of the *Descent* with Darwin's third major book, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), which similarly deals with Darwin's move to the issue of the human emotional and moral faculties. His theory of sexual selection I will return to in chapter five.

[76] Desmond and Moore 2004, li.

[77] Ibid., xiii.

[78] Hale 2014, 11.

take on these political questions, and was written as a rejoinder to readings of the *Origin* as a justification for rampant capitalism, aiming to show instead 'that man had evolved to hold exactly the sort of progressive Whig politics he held dear and that he shared with those most pre-eminent liberals of his day,'[79] being 'thoroughly determined to counter the views of humankind that were being put forward by the Manchester political economists.'[80]

Certainly, at a first glance Darwin appears to present in the book a broadly optimistic account of human development—one where, as he puts it, 'man has risen, though by slow and interrupted steps, from a lowly condition to the highest standard as yet attained by him in knowledge, morals, and religion.'[81] Exploring this development, the structure of the *Descent* tracks the similarities and differences between humankind and the 'lower' animals: their capacities for emotions; language; sense of beauty; religion; morality, and sociability, i.e. what Darwin calls 'the mental powers'.[82] He concludes that human and non-human animals are vastly differently *capable* yet nonetheless share a basic *capability*: that 'the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, is certainly one of degree and not of kind.'[83]

However, he follows this Whiggish vision of progressive development with musings on 'the development of the intellectual and moral faculties during primeval and civilised times',[84] exploring the differences between races and genders 'in ways that are somewhat stomach-churning'[85] to modern readers. It is Darwin's preoccupation in particular with the distinction between the 'savage' and the 'civilised'—the Englishman-Fuegian encounter writ large—which displays Darwin's central concern with social difference and 'gives Darwin's fullest account of war and human instincts… borrow[ing] more frankly than the *Origin* from current social theory (the anthropology of Maine and Lubbock, the social psychology of Spencer, Galton, W.R. Greg and Bagehot).'[86]

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[79] Ibid., 19.
[80] Ibid., 342.
[81] Darwin 1871, vol. 1, 184.
[82] Again, explored further in: Darwin 1872.
[83] Darwin 1871, vol. 1, 105.
[84] Darwin 1871, vol. 1 ch. 5.
[85] Stevenson and Haberman 2004, 204.
[86] Crook 1994, 21.

Darwin presents stark distinctions between the 'savage' and the 'civilised',[87] even if he concedes that 'all civilised nations were once barbarous.'[88] Most broadly, the 'savage' is seen as subject to the same brutal law of natural selection as the 'lower' animals: 'We can see that, in the rudest state of society, the individuals who were the most sagacious, who invented and used the best weapons or traps, and who were best able to defend themselves, would rear the greatest number of offspring. The tribes which included the largest number of men thus endowed would increase in number and supplant other tribes… All that we know about savages… shew [*sic*] that from the remotest times successful tribes have supplanted other tribes.'[89] Yet, there is a static perennialism to the savages' entrapment in a condition of nature, who even are 'seen as *lacking a sense of history* and hence possessing no meaningful past of their own'.[90] Thus, 'Darwin suggests that the gulf between savages and civilised humans is almost unbridgeable',[91] with 'savages' trapped in a geological deep time and subject to the laws of nature.

By contrast, natural selection is seen as relaxed in 'civilised' nations: 'with savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated… We civilised men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment.'[92] Furthermore, he argues, 'civilised' nations fight against natural selection through military conscription, where the healthy die in wars and the weak stay at home.[93] Modern nations are thus permitted to exist in historical time, and in some areas beyond the bounds of nature.

Nevertheless, the logic of natural selection is still, at base, in operation—especially so *between* 'civilised' states. Here, Darwin reproduces the classic domestic/international

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[87] James Moore usefully draws out Darwin's distinctions by compiling a table of the semantic Self/Othering that he engages in. Moore 1986, 48.
[88] Darwin 1871, vol. 1, 180.
[89] Ibid., vol. 1, 159–160.
[90] Schmitt 2004, 56 emphasis mine. See also: Schmitt 2009. The Fuegians' lack of historical awareness is remarked on by others on the *Beagle*: 'Captain Fitz Roy could never ascertain that the Fuegians have any distinct belief in a future life.' Darwin 1871, 214.
[91] Brantlinger 2003, 165.
[92] Darwin 1871, vol. 1, 168. An obviously Radical argument, *contra* readings of Darwin as a proto-eugenicist.
[93] 'In every country in which a large standing army is kept up, the finest young men are taken by the conscription or are enlisted. They are thus exposed to early death during war, are often tempted into vice, and are prevented from marrying during the prime of life. On the other hand the shorter and feebler men, with poor constitutions, are left at home, and consequently have a much better chance of marrying and propagating their kind.' This passage first occurs in the second edition, at: Darwin 1874, 134. This idea is returned to at length in chapter five.

distinction much interrogated within IR. Indeed, he muses on why some civilised nations 'win out' over others, arguing (drawing on Galton) that: 'The remarkable success of the English as colonists over other European nations… has been ascribed to their "daring and persistent energy".'[94] Crucially, when the 'civilised' and the 'savage' meet, Darwin contends that natural selection acts as the arbiter of difference, and not just through apparently 'natural' causes:

> When civilised nations come into contact with barbarians the struggle is short, except where a deadly climate gives its aid to the native race. Of the causes which lead to the victory of civilised nations, some are plain and some very obscure. We can see that the cultivation of the land will be fatal in many ways to savages, for they cannot, or will not, change their habits. New diseases and vices are highly destructive… [But] *the grade of civilisation* seems a most important element in the success of nations which come in competition. A few centuries ago Europe feared the inroads of Eastern barbarians; now, any such fear would be ridiculous. It is a more curious fact, that savages did not formerly waste away, as Mr. Bagehot has remarked, before the classical nations, as they now do before modern civilised nations; had they done so, the old moralists would have mused over the event; but there is no lament in any writer of that period over the perishing barbarians.[95]

The unity of Darwinism emerges in this passage: the 'Struggle for Existence' and the distinction between 'savagery' to 'civilisation' encompassed through the Self-Other encounter. It contains much of what would come to be interpreted as apparent 'perversions' of Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, yet here it is present in Darwin himself.

Ultimately, he argues, the 'savage' is a doomed being: 'At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, *the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races*. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes… will no doubt be exterminated. The break will then be rendered wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilised state, as we may hope, than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as at present between the negro or Australian and the gorilla.'[96] This idea of the 'inevitable extermination of savages' is an exemplar of what Patrick Brantlinger has termed an 'extinction discourse',[97] which prophesised the

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[94] Darwin 1871, vol. 1, 179.
[95] Ibid., vol. 1, 238–239 emphasis mine.
[96] Ibid., vol. 1, 201 emphasis mine.
[97] Brantlinger 2003. In European thought, Brantlinger counts three general causes of the 'inevitable destruction' of natives: violence/war/genocide; disease; and savage customs such as 'nomadism, warfare, superstition, infanticide, human sacrifice, cannibalism. Savagery, in short, was frequently treated as self-extinguishing.' Brantlinger places most emphasis on this third idea of 'auto-genocide or racial suicide', which he notes reinforced the first two categories by enshrining 'the belief that savagery was vanishing of its own accord… [which] mitigated guilt and sometimes excused or even encouraged violence toward those deemed savage'.

apparent inevitability of native peoples' destruction.[98] It would become a central aspect of the Darwinian vision.[99]

The Tasmanian encounter

Much of this discourse can be traced back to the story of the Tasmanians. In 1836, Darwin visited the island of Tasmania (or 'Van Diemen's Land') during the *Beagle*'s voyage and arrived in the midst of disturbing events. At the turn of the century, there were thousands of native Tasmanians living on the island. In 1803, however, the British decided to colonise the island, with disastrous results. By the end of these first three decades of colonisation, only a few hundred native Tasmanians were left alive, the others dead through a mixture of disease, private war, and the prostitution of Tasmanian women. Just prior to Darwin's arrival, however, a Methodist preacher by the name of George Augustus Robinson had convinced two hundred of the remaining natives to surrender themselves to his promised protection on the nearby Flinders Island (in the Furneaux group to the north-east of Tasmania). There, his attempts to 'civilise' the natives through the introduction of Christianity and capitalism had fledgling 'success', but occurred alongside the decline of the natives, who died in rapidly increasingly numbers.

Darwin arrived amidst this chaos and made stark commentary upon it in his journal: 'All the aborigines have been removed to an island in Bass's Straits, so that Van Diemen's Land enjoys the great advantage of being free from a native population', he begins. 'This most cruel step seems to have been quite unavoidable, as the only means of stopping a fearful succession of robberies, burnings, and murders, committed by the blacks; but which sooner or later must have ended in their utter destruction. I fear there is no doubt that this train of evil and its consequences, originated in the infamous conduct of some of our countrymen. Thirty years is a short period, in which to have banished the last aboriginal from his native island,—and that island nearly as large as Ireland. I do not

Ibid., 2–3. Throughout this thesis, as per my focus on *international* thought, I tend to focus more on the first two categories, of warfare and disease, which occur precisely due to interaction between peoples.

[98] Besides Brantlinger, see also: Lindqvist 1997. On Darwin's own specific contribution, see also: Barta 2005.

[99] We will return to this idea in later chapters, especially in chapter five.

know a more striking instance of the comparative rate of increase of a civilized over a savage people.'[100] Sven Lindqvist gloomily completes the story:

> Six months later, half of them were dead. When that half in its turn was again halved, the remaining forty-five left the island and moved to a slum outside the capital, Hobart Town, where they quickly died from alcoholism. When Darwin's *The Origin of Species* came out in 1859, there were only nine Tasmanian women left, all too old to have children. The last Tasmanian man, William Ianney [*sic* Lanne], died in 1869. His skull was stolen even before his funeral, and afterward the body was dug up from the grave and the remains of his skeleton were taken. The last Tasmanian was Truganina [*sic* Truganini], the woman who saved Robinson's life. She died in 1876, a few years after Darwin's *The Descent of Man* came out.[101]

Fig. 8. Van Diemen's Land:
Detail of the map of the *Beagle*'s voyage[102]

Where the Fuegians were Darwin's ur-savage in terms of their apparent cultural aberrance, the Tasmanians thus became the exemplar of the imagined 'extinct savage'. Despite the obvious fact that their destruction was due to deliberate choices by the

[100] Darwin 1845, 533.
[101] Lindqvist 1997, 119–120. At least, this was the story believed at the time; aboriginal Tasmanians *do* still exist today.
[102] Detail from full chart in: FitzRoy 1839, vol. 2: Proceedings of the Second Expedition, 1831–36, Under the Command of Captain Robert Fitz-Roy, R.N. Appendix: 'Chart: Principal tracks of H.M.S. Beagle 1831-6'.

British, nevertheless they became evidence for Darwin's maxim of doomed fate and a central part of the psyche of the colonisers.[103]

In this maxim of 'savage destruction', it is important to emphasise that Darwin was not offering simply some sombre descriptive analysis; as with the struggle for existence, there is a normative aspect, too. The *Descent* also contains a striking aesthetic repulsion at so-called 'savage' peoples, with Darwin often speaking of the 'savage' as a wild animal,[104] referenced in the same breath as animalia: that '*the savage and the dog* have often found water at a low level'.[105] Yet the proposition asserted by Darwin is even more regressive: that savages were even *below* the animals. For instance, in commenting on their culture, we read that:

> Judging from the hideous ornaments and the equally hideous music admired by most savages, it might be urged that their æsthetic [*sic*] faculty was not so highly developed as in certain animals, for instance, in birds. Obviously no animal would be capable of admiring such scenes as the heavens at night, a beautiful landscape, or refined music; but such high tastes, depending as they do on culture and complex associations, are not enjoyed by barbarians or by uneducated persons.[106]

Animals thus receive more aesthetic intelligence than other human beings. This theme is consistent throughout the account of his theory of 'sexual selection' which occupies the second half of the *Descent*, in which he argues for ornamentation in nature (such as the plumage of birds) as a form of 'secondary beauty' which goes beyond the mere instrumental need of survival. There, 'in his description of birds, Darwin regards their songs, courtship rituals brilliant displays of colour and exaggerated physical features with reverence and a little humour. Yet when presented with similar behaviours among savages, his disapproval is obvious.'[107]

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[103] As seen, for instance, and as noted in the introduction, in the influence on Wells's *The War of the Worlds*. The image of the 'self-extinct savage' is not confined solely to the 'invasion literature' of the late nineteenth century, but can be seen in contemporary sci-fi. One example is Dan Simmons's classic space opera *Hyperion* (1989), the first narrative section of which recounts a Catholic priest's attempt to locate a mythical lost tribe beyond the eponymous planet's 'fire forests'. On the urgency of the mission, perhaps parodically from Simmons, the priest notes: 'But how long will the Bikura culture last before they're absorbed into modern colonial society, or, more likely, are simply wiped out by circumstances?' Simmons 2001, 27.

[104] As in the *Journal of Researches*: 'Men, whose very signs and expressions are less intelligible to us than those of the domesticated animals; men, who do not possess the instinct of those animals, nor yet appear to boast of human reason, or at least of arts consequent on that reason. I do not believe it is possible to describe or paint the difference between savage and civilized man. It is the difference between a wild and tame animal: and part of the interest in beholding a savage, is the same which would lead every one to desire to see the lion in his desert, the tiger tearing his prey in the jungle, the rhinoceros on the wide plain, or the hippopotamus wallowing in the mud of some African river.' In: Darwin 1839, vol. 3: Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836, 605–606.

[105] Again in the second edition: Darwin 1874, 77 emphasis mine.

[106] Darwin 1871, vol. 1, 64.

[107] Sideris 2001, 373.

This infatuated and elevated description of natural forms is a common feature of Darwin's language. Diana Donald has examined this tendency *vis-à-vis* Darwin's disinterest (even dislike) with the visual arts, which he held in parallel with a deep feeling for 'natural' beauty—as exemplified in 1862's *On the Various Contrivances by which Orchids are Fertilised*, where he personifies and 'casts his orchids in the role of resourceful, sensitive, quasi-animate beings, whose movements in response to stimuli, tender, labile organs and viscid secretions defy comparison with mere machines.'[108] Other human beings do not receive such commendatory characterisation.

The most incredible example in this regard is Darwin's claim, again in the *Descent*, that he would be prouder to call himself a descendant of a monkey than he would be related to these other human beings: 'He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins.'[109] As he puts it:

> The main conclusion arrived at in this work, namely that man is descended from some lowly-organised form, will, I regret to think, be highly distasteful to many persons. But there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians… For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper; or from that old baboon, who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practises infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions.[110]

As Sideris argues, Darwin's gross disgust at 'savages' is potentially explained by their uncanniness: 'Their "hideousness" emerges when that inferior instinct is combined with mental faculties higher than those possessed by animals.'[111] It is this paradox—'savages as simultaneously advanced and retrograde'[112]—which leads Darwin to romantically anthropomorphise animals at the same time as dehumanising his fellow human beings.

[108] Donald and Munro 2009, 13.
[109] Darwin 1871, vol. 2, 404.
[110] Ibid., vol. 2, 404–405.
[111] Sideris 2001, 373.
[112] Ibid., 384.

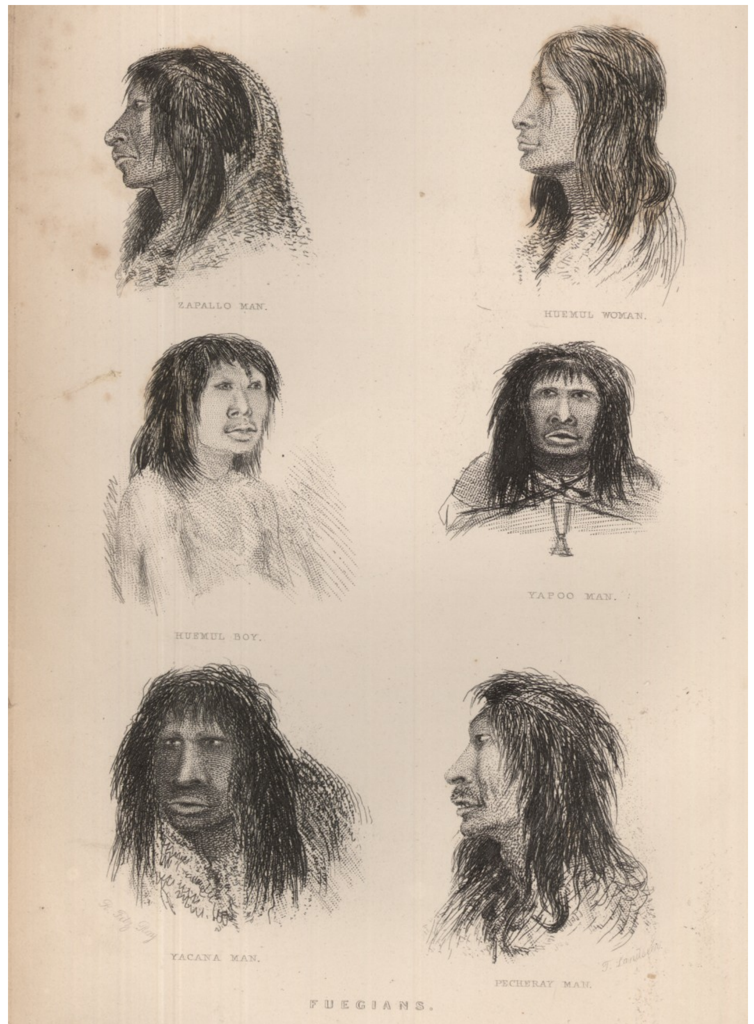

Fig. 9. 'Hideous ornaments, hideous music':
Visual depictions of Fuegian peoples, as witnessed from the *Beagle*[113]

Darwin versus Darwin

These two previous ideas—of the 'inevitable destruction' of so-called 'savages' in contact with European powers and the aesthetic disgust at such 'savages'—reveals something of a tension in Darwin's own work.

[113] Image in: FitzRoy 1839, vol. 2: Proceedings of the Second Expedition, 1831–36, Under the Command of Captain Robert Fitz-Roy, R.N.

This first idea sees the man himself embracing what would become the Darwinian internationalist idea of selective struggle: the 'savages' are said to perish at the hands of the Europeans simply because of the effect of cold facts like disease, climate, and military superiority. This idea of judgeless international selection (encompassing the mightiest of European empires as much as the 'lowliest savage') we shall soon see formed a core aspect of the Darwinian view of international relations.

Yet the characterisation of the Fuegians and 'savages' more generally also reveals Darwin's own clinging to a certain liberal model of thinking about 'civilisation' in moral-cultural terms, which was typical mid-century. Here, he sometimes verges on rejecting the core tenet of his own theory: namely, that any species that survives today is proof *qua* itself of its superior adaptability. After all, that so-called 'savages' have flourished in their own environment over centuries is proof of their evolutionary fitness in just the same way as the Europeans' survival is (even if *in collision* the former is supposedly destroyed by the latter).

Indeed, by the aesthetic logic of natural theology, it is this adaptation—of 'a perfect fitness of form to function'[114]—that Darwin typically invokes in accounts of natural beauty, as in the *Origin* where 'he enthused over the mathematical economy of the cells of a honeycomb or the efficiency of a woodpecker's strong beak and long tongue as often-cited examples of "all those exquisite adaptations of one part of the organisation to another part, and to the conditions of life" which together made up "the beautiful and harmonious diversity of nature".'[115] In the *Descent*, however, Darwin cannot help but find aesthetic fault with 'savages' on moral grounds. They are to be hated (and their destruction welcomed) because they are culturally aberrant from their European comparators.

On the international axis then, Darwin accepts Darwinian internationalist logic; on the domestic axis, the older idea of moral civilisation still governs his thinking. We might thus contrast the Darwin of the *Origin* from the Darwin of the *Descent*.

[114] Donald and Munro 2009, 15.
[115] Ibid.

Darwin versus Darwinism

In light of this, it is worth briefly dwelling on the central question which informs Part II of the thesis and that will promptly be explored more fully: namely, was Darwin himself at fault for the ways in which his work was apparently misperceived? Certainly, he found it curious how dramatically (he thought) his arguments had been misread. In 1860 (the year after the *Origin*'s publication), for instance, he wrote to Charles Lyell to note his amusement 'that I have proved "might is right," & therefore that Napoleon is right & every cheating Tradesman is also right[!]'[116] He also certainly did not conceive of himself as establishing any kind of political project—as we shall see later in the thesis, invitations from others for Darwin to comment on issues of politics were often met with coyness.

What, then, were Darwin's intentions beyond scientific explanation? On this, the historians Adrian Desmond and James Moore have been keen to emphasise Darwin's more benevolent intentions. They argue somewhat controversially[117] that the impetus for Darwin's theory was not purely scientific, but rather that 'we find a *moral* passion firing his evolutionary work'[118] catalysed by Darwin's abhorrence of slavery and belief in the unity of humankind.

This argument that 'Darwin' and 'Darwinism' are wholly distinct—like communism and 'actually-existing communism'—is not very compelling. Whilst it is true that Darwin would not have endorsed all the harsher invocations of his theory, the raw elements of these interpretations *are* to be found in his work, as we have explored in this chapter: a virtuous account of conflict; and an aesthetic revulsion at savage peoples completely out of step with such supposed 'unity of humankind' intentions. Darwin was instead, I would contend, trying to balance the novel holism of his scientific theory and its political consequences with pre-existing Victorian civilisational prejudices.

In many cases, the impulse to separate Darwin and Darwinism is animated by the desire discussed at the opening of this chapter: to demarcate the objective, unblemished 'scientific' endeavour from the impurities of politics, to maintain 'that Darwinism is pure science, unadulterated by ideology.'[119] Actually reading Darwin inoculates against this

[116] Charles Darwin to Charles Lyell, 4 May 1860. On why Darwin was 'amused' at this notion, see: Hale 2014, 49.
[117] Esterson 2013.
[118] Desmond and Moore 2009, xviii.
[119] Moore 1986, 45.

unconvincing prelapsarianism. Indeed, strangely, Moore himself argued exactly such in 1986, highlighting Darwin's use of the ideas of post-*Origin* social evolutionists such as Lubbock, Maine, McLennon, and Tyler, 'whose views were developed more or less independently of [Darwin's] own.'[120] Perhaps therefore 'it is worthwhile to be reminded *just how much of a Social Darwinist Darwin was*.'[121] Throughout the following chapters, comparisons of Darwin and Darwinians will serve to reinforce this argument—that, ultimately, it is in Darwin's work itself that so-called 'Social Darwinism' is to be found and, indeed, the wellspring of a whole new idiom of international relations.

[120] Ibid., 48.

[121] Ibid. Moore is unequivocal on this: 'I maintain—no, I insist—that "Social Darwinism" is redundant, for Darwinism *is* "social".' Ibid., 64. This is again the reason for my omitting of the 'social' and reference just to 'Darwinism'.

INTERLUDE

Enter the Darwinians

Before we turn to the Darwinians, however, it is worth first sketching what exactly I mean by 'Darwinian internationalism' and what makes it a distinctive way of thinking about international relations. It is also worth outlining in full what actually happens when we 'bring Darwin(ism) back in'[1] to the history of international thought. In this interlude—which serves as a segue, fulcrum, or pivot between Darwin and the Darwinians—I therefore want to tackle issues of definition and outline the main interpretive conclusions of the thesis that will emerge out of the empirics to follow in Part II.

I shall define Darwinian internationalism by its four main motifs: evolutionism, national selectionism, organicism, and naturalism. From this, I will move to mount the main argument of this thesis, which is that reinserting this distinctive Darwinian internationalism into the history of late nineteenth-century international thought alters our existing understanding of the period. Through Darwinism, I argue, an alternative narrative of late nineteenth-century international order is found—one which dislocates the dominant notion of the period as wholly defined by the 'standard of civilisation', instead showing how deeply infused the period also was with a competing 'standard of nature' which both prophesised and produced the condition of ineliminable existential conflict. The nineteenth century's international thought thus looks very different indeed once the Darwinians are placed back into the picture.

Demarcations and definitions

The first aim of this thesis is to reinsert Charles Darwin as a figure into the history of international thought, which I have just done. Yet I cannot begin and end with Darwin. Precisely because of his enormous influence and the wide spread of the Darwinian idiom, I secondarily also seek in this thesis to excavate the broad current of international thought inspired by Darwin's writings. This is what I refer to as 'Darwinian internationalism',

[1] This phrasing invokes the classic: Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985.

which (as we shall see in Part II) housed a large cast of characters across the temporal and spatial length and breadth of the late nineteenth century. When one reads and compares such theorists, there is clearly some basic commonality of thought in play. But what is it? What makes it distinctive? In other words, what is my object of study?

There are numerous problems of demarcation that are specific to Darwinism. For one, Darwinism in its 'political' (rather than scientific) guise took on a dizzyingly diverse range of forms and was used to articulate entirely contradictory political positions in different parts of the world. That flexibility is precisely one of the key arguments of the thesis. Yet this ought not be a bar to entry for a working definition—after all, such is possible with even that most capacious of doctrines and Darwinism's main competitor, liberalism.[2]

Unlike liberalism, however—which is defined by its associated concept, *à la social*ism or *anarch*ism—any analysis of *Darwin*ism also immediately raises questions of reception. As with Marxism[3] or Christianity, Darwinism has long been the subject of reflection on the fidelity of later thinkers to its original prophet (as we have just discussed, i.e. whether 'Darwin' and 'Darwinism' should be considered distinct). Unlike Marxism, however, Darwinian internationalism's core text—Darwin's body of writings—was not an exercise in explicit political theory but rather, as we just saw, of politically-muddled natural science.[4] There was no *Darwinist Manifesto* with an enumerated dogma, and already in the distance between scientific concepts and the politicisation of those concepts, a 'reception gap' has opened up.

As such, and as we shall see, there was a much looser usage of 'Darwinian' ideas in the realm of political theory and a much greater scope for misreception, misunderstanding, and manipulation. Many theorists drew on *parts* of Darwinism (e.g. the evolutionary process) whilst rejecting others (e.g. natural selection).[5] Others still explicitly cited Darwin in relation to adjacent yet distinct theorists or concepts—most

[2] Bell 2014.
[3] According to Engels, Marx himself had infamously proclaimed: 'I am not a Marxist.' Engels to Conrad Schmidt in Berlin, 5 August 1890 1975.
[4] Indeed, there are entirely separate issues when it comes to the history of the *scientific* reception of Darwinism. For an overview, see: Bowler 1984.
[5] As indeed many scientists did, who largely ignored or outright rejected the mechanism of natural selection in the late nineteenth century. This is now known as the 'eclipse of Darwinism' prior to the integration of Darwinian evolution with Mendelian genetics (known as the 'modern synthesis'). This was first described in: Huxley 1942, 22–28. See also: Kuhn 1996, 171–172.

frequently with the equivalence of Darwin with the teleological evolutionism of Lamarck or the political evolutionism of Spencer or Huxley (both in themselves distinctive, the latter explicitly critiquing the former).[6] As Thomas Glick recognises, 'the majority of persons referring to themselves as "Darwinians" in the nineteenth century could probably not have been able to present a lucid account of what that term meant.'[7] Accordingly, as Elizabeth Edwards puts it, 'a broad popular espousal of "Darwinism"… might [thus] be described as "Darwinistic" rather than strictly Darwinian.'[8]

The sheer depth of Darwinism's influence is therefore something of a cursed chalice: on the one hand, my claim for its significance seems obvious; on the other, it provides difficulties of demarcation. The fact that Darwinism seeped so deeply into the cultural milieu provides barriers for identifying which family resemblances can be properly categorised as distinctly 'Darwinian'. Whilst many cases are obvious (i.e. those at least explicitly citing the man himself or Darwinian concepts), others are impressionistic and allude to more general notions (e.g. of harsh interstate competition rather than the 'struggle for existence' specifically).[9]

This problem is a fundamental feature of the age. As Gillian Beer adeptly recognises, just as today we live in 'a post-Freudian age' wherein 'it is impossible, in our culture, to live a life which is not charged with Freudian assumptions, patterns for apprehending experience, ways of perceiving relationships, even if we have not read a word of Freud, even—to take the case to its extreme—if we have no Freudian terms in either our active or passive vocabulary… [we are] unable to create a world cleansed of the Freudian',[10] so too for the late nineteenth century:

> This was the nature also of Darwin's influence on the generations which succeeded him. Everyone found themselves living in a Darwinian world in which old assumptions had ceased to *be* assumptions, could be at best beliefs, or myths, or, at worst, detritus of the past. So the question of who had read Darwin, or whether a writer had read Darwin, becomes only a fraction of the answer.[11]

What, then, can possibly count as a 'true', 'pure', or 'proper' Darwinian view?

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[6] For but one example, C.O. Ovington refers to 'recent times, since the evolution theory has become, chiefly owing to the labours of Herbert Spencer, Darwin, and Huxley, a part of established science.' Ovington 1900, 414.

[7] Glick 2010, 701.

[8] Donald and Munro 2009, 167.

[9] Throughout Part II, I will explicitly note when such ambiguous cases are present, and the reader can judge the success of my interpretation.

[10] Beer 1983, 3.

[11] Ibid.

Darwinism's four motifs

Despite such definitional problems, Darwinian internationalism *can* be summarised. The most helpful way to do so is to distil it as a bundle of basic, core concepts which emerge out of Darwin's own work and repeat as motifs throughout the arguments of the authors unpacked in the second half of the thesis.[12] At its most general, Darwinian internationalism can be seen as the sum of the following four distinctive basic concepts as applied to the realm of international relations:

1. Evolutionary historicism (**evolutionism**)
2. Existential struggle as the mechanism of selection (**national selectionism**)
3. Likening of state or cultural grouping to an organism (**organicism**)
4. Emphasis on the primacy of nature (**naturalism**)

To boil it down to a single sentence, Darwinian internationalism can thus be summarised as the view that: '*International relations, as in nature, develops over time according to the law of natural selection, whereby states are like organisms in the struggle for existence*'.

This was a profoundly distinctive vision of international relations. As above, some drew more on some of these concepts than others—thus we find Bagehot stressing evolutionism or Theodore Roosevelt emphasising organicism—yet some configuration of the four exists across the span of the authors to be discussed.

Those who did reject these concepts whilst invoking Darwinism I do not count among the group of 'Darwinian internationalists'—thus radical recipients are not included (for example, Kropotkinites who rejected the existence of modern states altogether, or Marxian Darwinians, who really were just using the selectionist motif to emphasise class struggle rather than interstate struggle). Nor are included those who emphasised *domestic* struggles for existence over the international, as we shall see in chapter five in the case of eugenicist 'Darwinian isolationists'.

This also helps to explain why I have opted for the term 'Darwinian internationalism' (amongst other options) to describe the theorists with which this thesis is concerned. After all, it might appear an odd choice—these thinkers were not 'internationalists' in the positive, political sense of advocating or practicing cooperation

[12] My working definition here is thus somewhat 'Freedenite' in its emphasis on conceptual definition, following Michael Freeden's work on ideology. See especially: Freeden 1996.

beyond the level of the nation-state (*à la* liberal or socialist internationalists), but were rather articulating the very opposite idea, of survival against foreign enemies.

I use the term 'Darwinian internationalist' for two reasons. The first is practical—as outlined above, to distinguish this group of thinkers as a clearly demarcated group of *international* theorists, i.e. of individuals articulating a distinctive theory of international politics. In this sense, the term is used in the sense of 'international-*ist*', rather than 'internationalist'. The second reason is more substantive. Whilst these theorists were not cosmopolitans by any stretch, they were nevertheless not unambiguous statists or nationalists. Whilst the 'social organism' *was* usually the state, Darwinian internationalists also had affinities for wider cultural groupings and with concepts like 'greater nations', races, peoples, or civilisational blocs, like 'the Anglo-Saxon people', 'the empire', or 'the Yellows'. As we shall see throughout the thesis, nation-states often become symbols of a greater struggle between these broader, '*inter*-national' groupings in a vision of a kind of racial, regionalist *Geopolitik*.

Whilst deeply interlinked, as these are the terms I use throughout the thesis, let us consider each of these four motifs in turn.

Evolutionism

The first distinctive Darwinian internationalist motif drew on the central feature of Darwin's theory: its evolutionism.[13]

Philosophies of history are a foundational yet underappreciated aspect of International Relations theories. As MacKay and LaRoche have argued, *all* theories of IR affirm some implicit notion of history (however unacknowledged) ranging widely across

[13] Whilst he popularised it, Darwin by no means invented the idea of evolution, nor indeed did he even use the term 'evolution' in the first edition of the *Origin of Species*—this was precisely to distance himself from Lamarck's version of the idea. This is in part why some historians of science have rejected the whole idea of a 'Darwinian revolution', as in: Bowler 1988. (For a rejection of the rejection, see: Hale 2015.) Historians of science have instead emphasised that 'evolution' was not invented *ex nihilo*, neither by Darwin nor Lamarck nor any other individual. Rather, the 'evolution of evolution' occurred over centuries. Precursors of Darwin's ideas typically cited include W.C. Wells, Charles Naudin, Georges-Louis Leclerc, and Alfred Russel Wallace, as in one of the earliest overviews: Osborn 1913, 221–250. Many here seek to reconcile 'great man' history with a virtuous image of science as a cumulative endeavour. The effect of Darwin on the idea of evolution was, nevertheless, hugely significant: it was 'to establish, as a natural *law*, what had ranked as an *hypothesis* or *theory*… "Before and after Darwin" will always be the *ante et post urbem conditam* of biological history. Before Darwin, the theory; after Darwin, the factors.' Ibid., 5 emphasis mine.

the historiographical landscape.[14] An evolutionary philosophy of history in international theory—the view of history as a linear process, often in the sense of directional development or improvement—is one such important vision of the historical past and anticipated future.[15] From Darwin came the most intensely realised version of this idea in that great age of historical progressivism.

Of course, the idea of evolution had played an important role in pre-Darwinian European political thought.[16] Prior to the nineteenth century, both divine right and social contract theories were essentially *static* in their historicity—the contract with God being simply replaced with a contract with other social beings (from the vertical to the horizontal), but one contracted in an imagined 'state of nature'. Yet how humans escaped this 'natural' condition—and indeed whether it was historical or merely conjectural—remained contentious, especially following the discovery of supposedly 'primitive' human beings in the New World,[17] which suggested a greater scope for human development than theological orthodoxy supposed (thus raising the spectre of 'pre-Adamites' in the phrasing of La Peyrère). The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries settled this debate by rejecting the whole idea of a contract and positing instead a gradual historical process of

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[14] MacKay and LaRoche 2017. They typologise the various philosophies as viewing history variously as familiar, unfamiliar, linear, non-linear, or multi-linear. The authors however do not include Darwinian views in their excellent typology. Biological evolution is mentioned only very briefly (at 226) in the discussion of 'linear/unfamiliar' historicisms, *vis-à-vis* Emanuel Adler's ideas on 'cognitive evolution'.

[15] Indeed, deriving from the Latin *evolutio* ('to unroll'), the word 'evolution' in the English language was curiously first used from the sixteenth century onwards as a *military* term, imported as it was originally from the French *évolution* out of a translation of the writings of the Roman rhetorician Aelian. Here, it pertained to a sudden movement or change of position of a troop for tactical purposes (also used in a more figurative sense, now obsolete). In its basic origins, then, the idea was from the world of international relations. This dynamic sense of the term was, however, soon used more generally in the sense of 'a wheeling, twisting, or turning movement'. The linear, developmental sense of the word emerged from the late seventeenth century onwards. The term thereafter was exported into specialised terms in geometry and, of course, biology. Following Darwin, the term came to signify its more specific meaning of 'the theory of evolution'. On this etymology, see: Evolution n.d..

[16] In the non-European world, too, concepts of evolutionary change formed important parts of many cultures' pre-modern political theory. As we shall see in the case of Confucianism in China in chapter four, it is common in reception histories to focus on 'native' antecedents to the Darwinian idea. In the Islamic world, for instance, the commonly cited example is that of Ibn Khaldûn's pathbreaking *Muqaddimah* (1377), one of the earliest examples of sociological analysis. There, not only is a familiar theory of political change propounded—one of tribal selection according to the principle of *'asabiyya* ('social cohesion')—but it also contains a famous and enigmatic passage which appears to anticipate Darwin by a good five hundred years, to be found in: Khaldûn 1967, 75. As Elshakry shows throughout her study, the *Muqaddimah* therefore played an important role in the Arabic reception of Darwin's theory, serving as a native referent to welcome the new doctrine. Elshakry 2013. For an overview of pre-Darwinian evolutionisms in the Islamic world, see also: Malik, Ziermann, and Diogo 2018.

[17] Marshall 1982.

evolutionary development from 'uncivilised' to 'civilised', as canonically expressed by the Scottish Enlightenment's two Adams, Ferguson and Smith.[18]

The long nineteenth century represented the highpoint of such political evolutionism, ideal as it was for explicating a kind of Whiggish progressivism. As C.A. Bayly outlines:

> Historians and philosophers who lived in the nineteenth century tended to think that history was moved along by big spiritual and intellectual changes. They believed that God, or the Spirit of Reason, or the Urge for Liberation was moving in the world. Some of them believed in a European Christian "civilizing mission." Others thought *that races and civilizations moved up and down according to natural laws of competition, survival, and decline*.[19]

The influence of this evolutionism could thus be seen widely in the period, and not just in Darwinism and biology. We see it in Marxist historical materialism, with analogies between Marx and Darwin often mooted[20]—most famously by Engels himself at Marx's graveside in 1883[21]—not only for their shared evolutionism, but also for their joint stress on 'struggle' (of existence and of class) at the heart of evolutionary development. Many Marxists as such explicitly drew on this influence, including evolutionary science's language and imagery.

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[18] As Ferguson put it, the state of nature was ultimately a fiction for 'like the winds, that we come we know not whence, and blow whithersoever they list, the forces of society are derived from an obscure and distant origin; they arise, long before the date of philosophy, from the instincts, not the speculations, of men.' Ferguson 1996, 119.

[19] Bayly 2004, 5 emphasis mine. See also: Bevir 2017.

[20] On the influence of Darwinism on Marxism, see: Weikart 1999. For an early comparison of Darwin and Marx, see: Aveling 1893. As Claeys recognises: 'Viewed retrospectively, the most influential thinkers of the nineteenth century were Karl Marx (1818–83) and Charles Darwin (1809–82). Two of their central concepts, class struggle and evolution, both focused on the idea of "struggle", and clearly had some common origin, as Marx at least recognised.' Claeys 2000, 163.

[21] As Engels proclaimed: 'Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history.' Cited in: Oldroyd 1980, 233.

Figs. 10. and 11. One of Haeckel's many 'trees of life',
and Karl Kautsky's 'family tree of modern socialism'[22]

Yet it was the Darwinian internationalists, facing into the abyss of 'deep time', who most enthusiastically took up Darwin's idea of evolutionary change and applied it to international theory. Societal development was thereby said to occur on the level of grand evolutionary changes, with polities in a condition of constant change. One common way of expressing this idea was in that classic nineteenth-century obsession: the historical

[22] These images can be found respectively in: Haeckel 1897, vol. 2, 189; Kautsky 1896. The German version of Haeckel's diagram is originally from: Haeckel 1874. On the history of the visual depictions of evolution, see again: Archibald 2014. On the broader problems involved in such 'tree' symbolisms, see: Gould 1989. Haeckel's trees, as many historians of science have noted, are not really very 'Darwinian' as they often lean too heavily into a teleological genealogy. Benoît Dayrat interestingly makes the case for Goethe as their main inspiration, in: Dayrat 2003.

typology. Thus, we shall hear of numerous stadial theories of history—from a 'fighting age' to an 'industrial age' or from a 'primitive epoch' to a 'modern epoch'—which proceed according to evolutionary laws.

At the level of metaphor, another emphasis was on *dynamism*, with evolutionary development often associated with energy, movement, vitality, upward and forward motion; by contrast, those fated to evolutionary doom were associated with stagnancy, stasis, death, downward and backward motion.

National selectionism

Darwin's great invention *vis-à-vis* the concept of evolution was, however, its mechanism: natural selection.

Darwin's ingenious idea, as we have seen, was that the process of evolutionary change in the natural world operated not by will (as in Lamarckism) but by chance adaptation in a competitive context, whereby certain forms thrive and flourish when they convey a selective advantage in the struggle for existence. This was 'one general law, leading to the advancement of all organic beings, namely, multiply, vary, let the strongest live and the weakest die.'[23] Extinction was the cost of failure.

Darwinian internationalists seized upon this mechanism and applied it directly to the political world: what we might call '*national selectionism*'.[24] It is their most famous idea: that international relations also operated by a logic of selection, whereby states and other polities existed in an international, ineliminable struggle for existence. Those polities that failed in this competitive struggle were said to be eliminated from international social space altogether. Extinction thus hovered over every decision.

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[23] Darwin 1859, 244.

[24] Although 'national' here should be qualified, as the polities concerned were of course not always nation-states but also included races, empires, and so on. 'Polity selection' might be a more specific term, but it misses the 'natural/national selection' pun!

Figs. 12. and 13. 'Nature red in tooth and claw':
J.W. and Edward Whymper, 'Hunted Down' (1874),
George Bouverie Goddard, *The Struggle for Existence* (1879)[25]

Organicism

This notion of polities in a selective struggle for existence links to the third motif of Darwinian internationalism: the idea that polities were to be considered as organisms, known as organicism, which requires some more unpacking as it is not as present in Darwin himself, but was embraced by the Darwinians.

This way of thinking about polities has a rich yet overlooked history. It is a way of thinking that has been eclipsed by another notion: that of the *state as a 'person'*,[26] which is central to the modern understanding of international relations.[27] That is, when we

[25] The Whymper is based on a drawing by Joseph Wolf, in Daniel Giraud Elliot's *The Life and Habits of Wild Animals* (1874) and is reproduced in: Donald and Munro 2009, 94. The Goddard is also reproduced in: Ibid., 83.

[26] The history of the idea of state personhood is long and complex. Suffice to say here that its origins can be found in the broad shift from the theological to the modern, first emerging in the medieval period with the idea of corporate personality, before attaining a hegemonic status in the era of social contract theory. Allusions to this history are mentioned in: Wendt 2004, 289.

[27] Indeed, as Alex Wendt has noted: 'In a field in which almost everything is contested, this seems to be one thing on which almost all of us agree… in the modern world this is how most of us, most of the time, think about the state in world.' Ibid.

nonchalantly say that 'the United States entered the Second World War', we speak of the agency of states in the same sense as persons act. State personhood, under the hegemony of rationalism, has thereby provided a means to describing the intentionality of states: when they 'do something', it is a 'someone' doing it.[28] Or, to use the terminology of the English School, the metaphor of state personhood makes intelligible social interaction at the international level by scaling up from 'first-order' to 'second-order' societies; where individual persons in groups create domestic societies, so state persons in groups make international societies.[29] This idea is crucial to international legal order,[30] for the ascribing of agency (the ability to 'appear before the law') also allows us to account for questions of continuity and culpability. Thus, when State A signs a treaty with State B, the contract can be said to retain its validity long after the governments of said states are replaced, and indeed when entire state populations have died and been renewed. So too in the case of inheriting state debt.[31]

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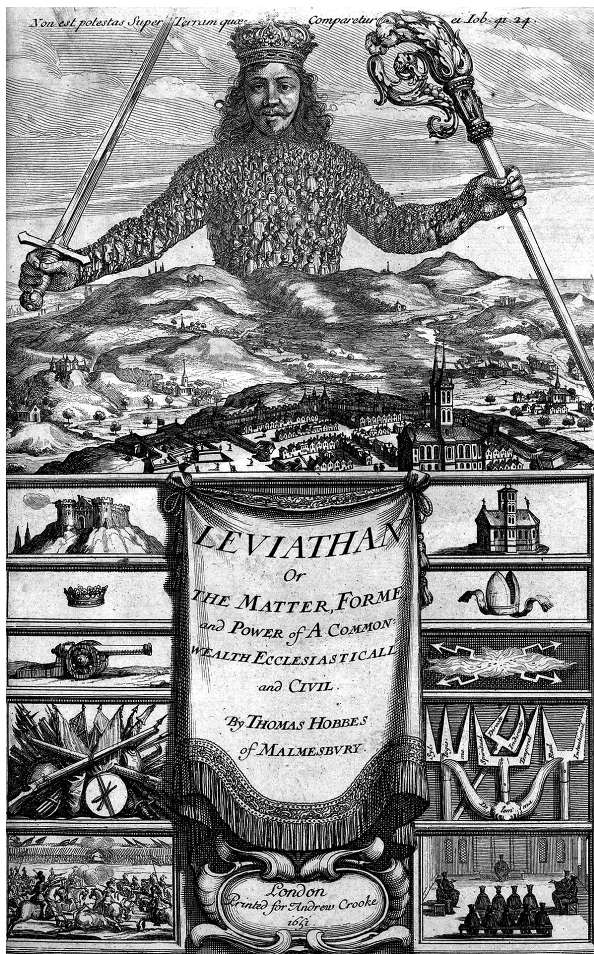
[28] Of course, much theoretical literature is dedicated to dissolving this crude anthropomorphism by disaggregating the state into its various parts, as in the recent introduction of emotions into the study of diplomacy. See, for instance: Hall 2015.

[29] Buzan 2014b, 15.

[30] On the history of which, see: Simons 2003. It was for this reason that the move in the interwar period towards individual persons (as well as non-state actors) as capable international legal agents was so fraught. On which, see: Wheatley 2017; Siegelberg 2020.

[31] As Quentin Skinner describes: 'Who becomes the debtor? We can hardly answer, in the manner of the populist theory, that the debt must be owed by the sovereign body of the people. If the debt is sufficiently large, the people will lack the means to pay for it. But nor does it make any better sense to suggest, in prevailing reductionist style, that the debt must be owed by the government that incurred it. Even if the government changes or falls, the debt will remain to be paid. By contrast, it seems a decisive reason for accepting the fictional theory of the state that it offers a coherent solution to this and several related puzzles. It does so by declaring that that the only person sufficiently enduring to be capable of owning and eventually repaying such debts must be the person of the state. As a *persona ficta*, the state is able to incur obligations that no government and no single generation of citizens could ever hope to discharge.' Skinner 2009, 364. Indeed, there is a normative impulse at work here, as Wendt acknowledges: 'if we want to have states then it is better they take the form of persons rather than something more amorphous, because this will help make their effects more politically accountable.' Wendt 2004, 316. For a philosophical discussion of this relationship of state personhood to state responsibility, see: Fleming 2020. The fiction of state personhood today therefore serves to reinforce the neoliberal maxim that 'debts ought to be repaid'. On which, see: Graeber 2012.



Figs. 14. and 15. National and international *persona fictae*:
Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) and Sebastian Münster's (1570) *Europa regina*[32]

Of course, the personhood in contention is always artificial. As Wendt puts it: 'States are not *really* persons, only "*as if*" ones. State personhood is a useful fiction, analogy, metaphor, or shorthand for something else. That something else, what state persons really are, is the behaviour and discourse of the individual human beings who make them up.'[33] The exemplar here is Hobbes's image of the state, which is theorised not as wholly

[32] Hobbes's frontispiece is, of course, one of the most commented upon images of all time, but for a good recent discussion see: Kristiansson and Tralau 2014. On Münster's image and similar iconographical works from the period, see: Weller 2021, 29–30. Images from: Wikimedia Commons.
[33] Wendt 2004, 289. On a theoretical level, as Wendt points out, states pass only one of three tests of true psychological personhood, according to a modern physicalist ontology: intentionality (which they possess, in a loose sense of being able to 'choose'); internal consciousness (which they lack); and, crucially, being an organism (which they are not).

mechanistic but half-alive, as akin to an automaton.[34] The representational figure of the Leviathan is thus figured as an 'Artificiall Man; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall, for whose protection it was intended; and in which, the *Sovereignty* is an Artificiall *Soul*, as giving life and motion to the whole body'.[35]

By contrast, organicism in international thought offers a much more 'radical sense in which states might be persons': that is, as actual 'forms of life'.[36] It distinguishes itself from the anthropomorphism of the personhood approach by fully bringing polities, nations, states, empires, etc. into the panoply of organisms which comprise the natural world. As Francis Coker defines it, organicism can be summarised as a family resemblance centred on an equivalence of the body-politic and the body-natural:

> Though these theories differ from one another… their common object is to show that the juristic and political character of the State can be truly interpreted only by logically associating it with the ideas of *animate nature*. Their thesis is that the State is essentially a natural organism in structure and members, in origin and development; or that it is a higher type of the general class of organic existences within which the animal and vegetable kingdoms form lower types; or that its genesis, nature, and evolution are determined by the laws of the psychic phase, in particular, of the highest type of animal organisms.[37]

This way of thinking is a specifically modern one. Whilst, as Kantorowicz recognised, medieval political theory[38] had consistently reckoned with this dichotomy of the body-natural and the body-politic *vis-à-vis* the individual figure of the King,[39] it was the emergence of a mass politic that allowed for a collectivism which took society *qua* itself

[34] On the role of automata in the history of ideas more broadly, see: Kang 2011.
[35] Hobbes 1996, 9. As Skinner highlights, the novelty of this vision ushered in a whole new way of thinking about statehood, with Hobbes 'the first major philosopher to organise a theory of government around *the person of the state*.' Skinner 1999, 2 emphasis mine. For a good discussion of Hobbes's image of the 'body politic', see also: Douglass 2014.
[36] Wendt 2004, 291.
[37] Coker 1910, 9 emphasis mine. Coker, it should be noted, includes the image of the state-as-person as a form of organicist thought. My point here is that they ought to be contrasted. Certainly a 'person' is an 'organism' in an obvious sense, and some personhood theorists used organic metaphors, typically of the state-person's 'bodily organs'. Yet the two are distinct: an individualist, artificially constructed, rationally willed state on the one hand (personhood); and a collective, evolutionarily derived, impulsive state on the other (organism). In other words, it is the difference between the social being and the natural being.
[38] Earlier versions of the organic metaphor can be seen in antiquity: 'whereas modern political theory characteristically employs the imagery of machinery or building-construction, ancient political theory typically thought in organic terms, preferring to speak of sharing (*methexis*) and rule (*arche*) rather than sovereignty or power (*bia*, *kratos*, *ananke*).' Cartledge 2000, 20. The idea of the 'city' and the 'soul' is famously expounded by Socrates in Book II of the *Republic*, on which see: Williams 1999. On Platonic organicism more broadly, see: Jones 1967; Coker 1910, 12. The organic metaphor can also be glimpsed as a metaphorical expression of universalism in natural law theory, as in the use of the organic metaphor to argue for the travelling right of beggars, discussed in: Brett 2011, 29–32.
[39] Kantorowicz 1997. Another use of the organic idea during this period can be seen in the moral panic over 'vagrants', whose apparent threat was often expressed in organic terms. Hayes 2020, 67–68.

(not the literal body of the king) as organic in form. It was thus during the *Sattelzeit*[40] that the image of the social organism took hold, and by the nineteenth century it was at its height. Cynically, this may appear the mere rise and fall of the in-vogue, as W.G. Runciman argues:

> The progress of social theory has often been diverted and sometimes retarded by the influence of mistaken analogies drawn from the most immediately fashionable of the sciences of nature. In the eighteenth century, it was bound to be tempting to think of society as a machine, and in the nineteenth as an organism. In the twentieth it is bound to be tempting to think of it as a communication network.[41]

Yet there was obviously a deeper material impetus to the new fashion. It was not by some coincidence that such an apparently 'mystical' theory arose in an age of enlightenment and mechanistic industrialism. Rather, as Cheah asserts, the central features of organicism were precisely 'formulated in reaction to the impact of industrial modernity and were therefore opposed to mechanism in a more concrete sense… the harmonious unity of parts and whole in the modern idea of organism appears as the displaced figuration of a desired solution to the vicissitudes of industrial society.'[42] The ascendancy of nationalism was one such vision, with its usurpation of the figure of singular authority (the king) for a collective one. As Friedrich Meinecke captured it, organic metaphors thus glimpsed an impending bourgeois modernity in the penumbra of the absolutist state:

> Modern man now entered the political organism with the intent of conquering it. It was nothing new for men with modern attitudes to occupy positions of central authority… But on the whole they had driven the state from the outside, as it were; guiding it as one would a machine. The reformers, on the contrary, wanted to possess the state, and infuse it with their blood.[43]

Pathological notions accompanied such visions, as for instance in Sieyès' description of the French nobility as 'genuinely a people apart… a false people that, not being able to exist by itself, since it has no functioning organs, attaches itself to a real nation like one of those parasitic forms of vegetation that live off the sap of the plants that they exhaust and desiccate'.[44] Eugenicists would similarly employ such ideas, as we shall see in chapter five. Indeed, organicism's tragic apotheosis came with its most literal and execrable form:

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[40] The term '*Sattelzeit*' used here refers to the *Begriffsgeschichte* historical school pioneered by Reinhart Koselleck. For overviews see: Koselleck 2004; Koselleck and Richter 2006; Richter 1995.
[41] Runciman 1983, 3. One wonders what the equivalent is for the twenty-first century—society as an algorithm or simulation?
[42] Cheah 2002, 16–17.
[43] Meinecke 1977, 45. This Meinecke quote is discussed in: Cheah 2002, 12.
[44] Sieyès 2003, 97. Citation from: Cheah 2002, 23.

the Nazi image of the *Volkskörper*, which proved ideal for theorising the Nazis' paranoid notions of Jewish parasitism[45] and which is to blame for the decline of this way of thinking about politics.[46] Indeed, the impulse to organicism was often both radical *and* conservative, for it impelled a society to be cognisant of its existence due to a delicate balance of historical-evolutionary forces, its moral duty being in the protection of this fragile entity. As such, organicism blossomed at times of great revolutionary upheaval from both radicals *and* conservatives; it can be found in both Sieyès *and* Burke,[47] the latter instead presenting revolutionary actors as those pathogenic to the natural state of being.

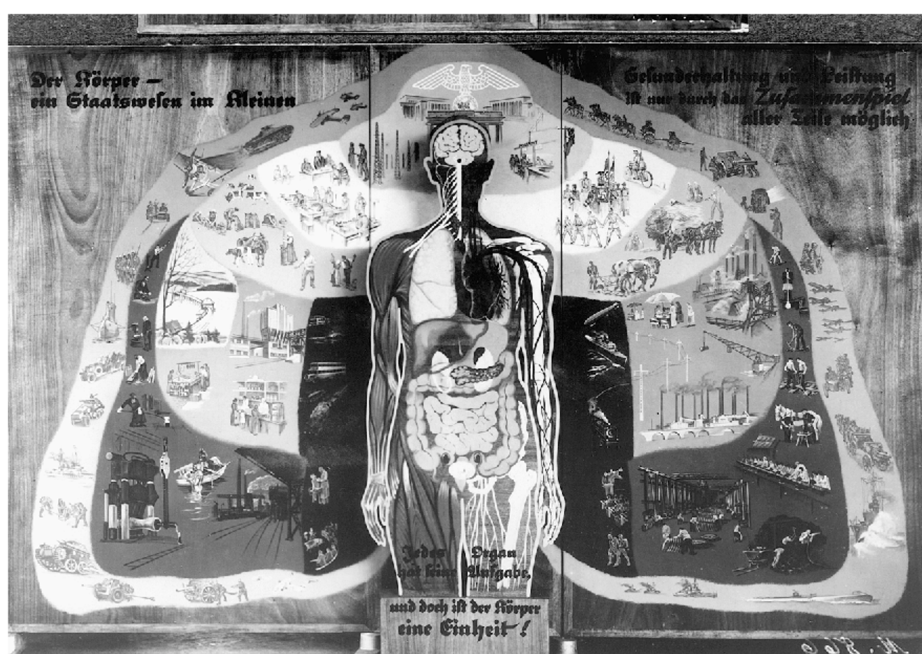

Fig. 16. The Nazi *Volkskörper* (1937)[48]

[45] Neumann 2009.
[46] Wendt 2004, 306.
[47] Burke consistently likened the English constitution to an organism: 'Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein… the whole, at one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenour of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression. Thus, by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state, in what we improve we are never wholly new; in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete.' Burke 2014, 35. As Walter Love argues, Burke's challenge was giving proper description of the amorphous organism concerned: 'A body so complex, so gradually formed, and meant to be perennial, was difficult to describe, and Burke was apt to speak of it as a "mysterious whole". One commentator has said that Burke spent his entire career "bringing to life" the "metaphor" of the body politic.' Love 1965, 185.
[48] Image from: Neumann 2009, 169. 'The body: a state in miniature. Its health and capacity are possibly only when all parts work together. Each organ has its special task, and yet the body is a single unit!' Translation mine.

Suffice to say then, organicism was no fringe notion but a vital mode of theorising statehood in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one espoused by a diverse crowd: Burkean conservatives, German legal historicists, Hegelian idealists, Comtean positivists, Durkheimians, and, of course, Darwinians, were just a few of its adherents.[49] In one sense, then, Darwin's theory could have been so easily transformed into a political doctrine upon arrival precisely because it emerged in a period so fertile with organicism.[50] Darwinism provided an appealingly empiricist variant of the idea—the British, for one, were never going to accept the metaphysical nonsense of continental idealism[51] and were long under the influence of a mechanistic utilitarianism.[52] Darwinian organicism, by contrast, could be seen as rooted in simple scientific fact.[53]

The Darwinians thus theorised the state and other social groupings (tribes, empires, and so on) as the same in form as the organisms of the natural world, with their attendant capacity for death and extinction. Thus, combined with the selectionist motif, Lord Salisbury could speak at the close of the nineteenth century of the real dichotomy of the age as between the 'living and dying nations':[54] a distinction of the corporal and mortal in contrast to traditional status-based social distinctions between nations (e.g. 'civilised and uncivilised' or 'great and lesser powers'). Combined with the evolutionist

[49] In Coker's study, for instance, which explicitly does *not* attempt 'an exhaustive canvas' (5), we find a well-staffed cast of characters in the organicist tent, including: Ahrens, Bluntschli, Comte, Eschenmaier, Fichte, Frantz, Fricker, Fouillée, Gerber, Gierke, Görres, Hegel, Held, Herder, Hertwig, Krause, Lasson, Leo, Lilienfeld, Mackenzie, M'Kechnie, Müller, Planta, Post, Preuss, Rohmer, Schäffle, Schelling, Schmitthenner, Spencer, Stahl, Stein, Stephen, Trendelenburg, Vollgraff, Vorländer, Waitz, Wangenheim, Welcker, Worms, Wundt, and Zacharia.

[50] The *scientific* doctrine of Darwinian evolution can also be interpreted as an organicist response to the inadequacies of prior mechanistic approaches to biology. On this, see: Phillips 1970, 421–428.

[51] The leading English idealist, Bernard Bosanquet, never got very far in Britain and remains a rather forgotten figure compared to his utilitarian contemporaries. Even that once Hegelian Marx was infected by 'the British way' through his embrace of Smithian political economy. Yet, some did recognise the essential compatibility of Hegelianism and Darwinism, such as: Ritchie 1893.

[52] Jeremy Bentham was characteristically strong in his criticism of woolly organicism, and was 'adamant that the human community amounts to no more than "the sum of the interests of the several individuals who compose it"… Since Bentham's scientistic bent led him to ridicule poetry as a silly pursuit, full of sentimentalism and vague generalities, he thought he had dispatched of the notion of the body politic by calling it a metaphor through which "poetry has invaded the domain of reason".' Levine 1995, 259.

[53] Their commitment to organicism even worked in reverse, with nature likened to political forms—thus D.G. Ritchie speaks of 'the cruel polity of the bees, the slave-holding propensities of certain species of ants have their analogues in human societies.' Ritchie 1889, 18.

[54] 'Living and Dying Nations': From Lord Salisbury's Speech to The Primrose League, May 4 1898. Salisbury's speech is fully unpacked later in the thesis.

motif, organicism also provided a means to explain how these social organisms had changed over time.

The Darwinians also transformed the organicist image of the state in new ways. For one, by combining organicism with evolutionism and selectionism, they explicitly emphasised inter-organism competition as the mechanism of an organism's development over time, thus emphasising the international axis of organicism. It was the relations *between* organisms that also determined the organism's *internal* development.[55] To use one of Ernst Haeckel's concepts, the idea of state-organisms thus provided a vibrant new means of narrating the 'ontogeny of states'—their emergence, development, and death over vast spans of time. The eugenicist Karl Pearson summarised this view: 'The first function [of science] is to show us what national life means, and how the nation is a vast organism subject as much to the great forces of evolution as any other gregarious type of life. There is a struggle of race against race and of nation against nation.'[56] International space was therefore refigured as the space of inter-organism struggle,[57] a kind of petri-dish composed of impulsive, expansive 'cell-states'[58] (to borrow another of Haeckel's terms).

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[55] This differed from the restraint offered by Johann Gottfried von Herder's image of nations as organic entities demarcated by language and united by a shared culture, which nevertheless allowed for a pacific internationalism. Indeed, animating Herderian nationalism was an anthropological spirit whereby the category of 'organism' was neutral and where the preservation of cultures acted almost as a project of biodiversity. As Levine outlines: 'Herder wanted his readers to consider a *Volk* in the same unprejudiced manner in which they would consider a biological organism, contemplating each nation "like any other natural phenomenon, [whose] causes and effects we would investigate freely, without any preconceived hypothesis".' Levine 1995, 244. As such, imperialism was an irrational doctrine, and there were no '*Favoritvolk*'. As Herder put it: 'I love my family more than myself; more than my family my fatherland; more than my fatherland humankind'. Herder 2002, xxxii.

[56] Pearson 1901, 34.

[57] Others had earlier conceived of an internationalised organicism in such agonistic terms, with a multiplicity of kinetic organic beings placed in a condition of competition. After all, as Coker puts it, organisms are '*animate* matter': part of this animation is internal, but its external expression is more obvious. Adam Müller's pre-Darwinian organicism, for instance, characterised the modern state 'with a particular phase of life, namely, that which is manifested in strife and rivalry. In the State life this is considered to appear most characteristically in war… For here stand out clearly the attributes of life: power and motion; the necessity of organisation and inter-connection of parts, of centralisation of direction and unity of action, of co-operation of mind, heart, and body; and, finally, contact with other, but similar, living objects.' It is the force of war which thus gives animation to the organism's parts. In Müller's phrasing: 'If there is to be one State at all there must be several States and a never-ceasing living intercourse between these states.' Translation in: Coker 1910, 17–18. Karl Friedrich Vollgraff similarly emphasised the conflictual side of organic forms. In his own taxonomy, the state is understood as being constructed out of four 'organisms': the *civil* organism; the *judicial* organism; the *financial* organism; and the *military* organism. The latter was the most crucial: 'It is to be likened to "the instinct of self-preservation of all bodily organs, since they all function and tend towards warding off the injurious from without and discarding foreign materials from the body."' Ibid., 94.

[58] Reynolds 2008, 123–152.

Naturalism

The fourth and final core conceptual motif of Darwinism knitted these three other motifs together. This was its emphasis on the primacy of nature over society: what we can call 'naturalism'.

At a rhetorical level, this was the so-called 'appeal to nature fallacy',[59] itself a variation on Hume's famous 'Is-Ought Problem'. That is, Darwinians consistently argued that what is 'natural' is also what is *correct*.[60] The struggle for existence between state-organisms was not some unfortunate fact that could (or ought) be avoided; it was an unignorable fact of the world, and therefore our political choices should be designed in adherence with it. This is the view that 'what is "fit" in evolutionary terms is also "right" in moral terms; the study of human evolution… as much a prescriptive enterprise as a descriptive one.'[61] This should be familiar to students of IR theory, for it is also a key feature of realism. Realists, like Darwinians, gesture to the world 'as it really is' to defend their prescriptive accounts of how states can best survive and scoff at naïve attempts 'to make the world over'[62] with utopian goals.[63]

Parallel to such appeals to nature was another rhetorical tool: an 'appeal to science', whereby Darwinians claimed their theories were legitimate because they were based in 'scientific fact'. This was particularly attractive in an age during which 'to attain legitimacy, an approach to any subject now had to be "scientific".'[64] The legitimating power of science accordingly became a feature of Darwinian rhetoric. Coupled with the appeal to nature, such appeals to science provided a basis for shielding assertions against

[59] This fallacy is often falsely conflated with G.E. Moore's '*naturalistic fallacy*', which addresses the more narrowly philosophical problem of using the ethical notion of 'the good' as if it nominally referred to an equivalent natural property (as in utilitarianism's conflation of the concept of 'good' with the quality of being 'pleasurable').
[60] An important outlier here, as we shall see, was T.H. Huxley.
[61] Hale 2014, 3. However, not *all* Darwinians were 'hard naturalists', equating *all social phenomena* in line with the natural world. Others demarcated between conditions of 'pure' nature and of the effect of nature's laws in (civilised) society, an idea we saw in Darwin himself. The leading American Darwinian, William Graham Sumner, for instance, explicitly distinguished between the 'struggle for existence' (the struggle between species in the natural world) and what he termed the 'competition for life' (the struggle between human individuals in the social world). Sumner 1885, 84.
[62] To invoke, as above, a phrase from William Graham Sumner.
[63] Donnelly 2008. Naturalisation is a frequent rhetorical strategy in biopolitics. During the Covid pandemic, for instance, the rendering of the virus as something 'natural', a 'fact of life' that society would have to adapt to, was commonly marshalled to support libertarian responses to the crisis. The same can be seen with the medicalisation of mental illness into 'chemical imbalances in the brain', thus obscuring its social causes.
[64] Claeys 2019, 3. On the rise of 'political *science*' in the nineteenth century more generally, see: Collini, Winch, and Burrow 1983.

ethical criticism—one could claim not only that their theories were reflections of an objective, unalterable reality, but that this reality had been revealed by the noble light of science. Again, the influence of positivism in contemporary IR makes this no alien notion. Later in the mid-twentieth century, such notions would be schematised in E.O. Wilson's field of 'sociobiology' and its offshoots (such as evolutionary psychology), which at its worst ascribes almost all social behaviour (both human and non-human) to underlying biological imperatives.

Yet the 'naturalism' of the Darwinians went much deeper than mere rhetoric. Their naturalistic worldview extended to a genuine philosophical belief in the primacy of nature over society. Indeed, there was no clear distinction, as there was in early modern contractarian theories, between 'nature' and 'society'; the former was omnipresent and omnipotent. The contrast with Hobbes sums it up: the artificial person of the state is, for Hobbes, the moment when we *leave* the conflictual world of 'nature'; for the Darwinians, the state is an organism precisely *because* our world is made of the ever-present 'natural' condition of constant conflict.

An illustration

These, then, are the four basic motifs of 'Darwinian internationalism'. Together, they created a very distinctive picture of international relations.

For an illustration of the novelty of this way of thinking as it would become, consider a vibrant example: the Polish writer Bolesław Prus' evocative 1884 short story 'The Mold of the Earth', which unites these four motifs in a distilled way. The protagonist of the tale is sat with a botanist observing 'a boulder grown over with mosses of molds [*sic*] that my learned companion had been studying for years… splotches of beige, grey, green, yellow, and red.'[65] Inquiring upon his friend's fascination with the substances, the botanist explains:

> "These splotches that you are looking at are not inanimate dirt, but collections of living things. Invisible to the naked eye, they are born, carry out movements that are imperceptible to us, mate, produce offspring, and finally die."
>
> "More remarkable, they form as it were societies that you see here in the form of the variously coloured spots; they cultivate the soil beneath them for succeeding generations; they grow, colonize empty areas, even wage struggles among them."

[65] Prus 1995, 100.

"This grey area, large as the palm of your hand, was no bigger than a penny two years ago. This tiny grizzled spot did not exist a year ago and derives from the great splotch that occupies the summit of the rock."

"These two, again, the yellow one and the reddish one, are fighting. The yellow one used to be very extensive, but slowly its neighbour is making inroads into it, and how many grey streaks, dots and clumps you see against the green backdrop…"

"That's a little as with people," I said.

"No," replied the botanist. "These societies lack language, arts, sciences, consciousness, feelings; in short, they lack souls and hearts, which we humans possess. Everything here happens blindly, mechanically, without sympathies or antipathies."[66]

Immediately thereafter, the piece takes on a darker tone, as the protagonist suddenly notices the boulder replaced with another curious spherical object:

I sensed around me a faint luminescence and an immense void. When I turned my head to the side, I saw something that looked like a faintly luminous schoolroom globe, the size of the boulder next to which we had been a moment before.

The globe slowly rotated, showing successive new areas. There was the Asian landmass with its little peninsula of Europe; there was Africa, the two Americas…

Looking more closely, I made out on the inhabited landmasses the same kinds of grey, grizzled, green, yellow, and red splotches as had been on the boulder. They comprised hosts of infinitesimal points, seemingly motionless but actually moving very lazily: an individual point might move at most by a two-minute arc in the course of an hour, and that not in a straight line but as it were oscillating about its own centre of motion.

The points came together, separated, vanished, came to the surface of the globe; but all these phenomena merited little attention. What was notable was the movements of entire splotches, which diminished or grew, showed up in new places, infiltrated or displaced one another.

Meanwhile the globe kept revolving, and seemed to me to have executed hundreds of thousands of rotations.

"Is that supposed to be the history of mankind?'" I asked the botanist, who stood beside me.

He nodded his head.

"All right—but where are the arts and knowledge?"

He gave a sad smile.

"Where is consciousness, love, hate, desire?"

"Ha! ha! ha!…," he laughed softly.

"In short—where are the human souls and hearts here?"

"Ha! ha! ha!"[67]

Here, then, we see all four motifs of Darwinian internationalism in a single, brief parable. Polities are refigured as organisms (splotches of mould) developing over aeons of

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 100–101. Prus's story also encapsulates the effect of Darwinism's emphasis on deep time on the imagination: 'rather than being a stage on which the human race had been placed to fulfil its divinely ordained destiny, [the natural world] was a place so ancient as to reduce human history to insignificance, a place where the constant struggle for survival was the condition of existence, for humans no less than for their animal kin.' Donald and Munro 2009, 21.

evolutionary history, with international space refigured as little more than a natural space of existential struggle, one with no place for 'arts and knowledge', nor 'love, hate, desire'—just struggle.

Is Prus's story parody or manifesto? At its close, it certainly seems that the author is not entirely comfortable with the brutish amorality of the botanist's *Weltanschauung*. However, implicit in the novella's patriotic setting—the discussion takes place next to the Temple of the Sibyl in Puławy, erected in 1801 by the 'enlightened princess' Izabela Czartoryska in honour of the late republic—is the evidence that this is a parable of Poland's fate in the Third Partition. It is a warning call from the latest victim of the scythe of evolutionary history.

What then, was the consequence of the emergence of this distinctive way of thinking about international relations? Where did Darwinism fit in the topography of the period's international thought? And how does 'bringing Darwinism back in' change our understanding of late nineteenth-century international order?

* * *

The emergence of global modernity

Before constructing any revisionist account of this period (c.1859–1914), it is worth establishing the orthodox picture of it: that is, materially, as a period marked by the emergence of global modernity; and, socially, of this modernity as one fragmented by forces of deep geopolitical unevenness, imperial hierarchy, and the ideology of 'civilisation'.

Let us unpack this. As Buzan and Lawson have argued,[68] the combined shocks of the long nineteenth century (in their triadic formulation: industrialisation, rational state-building, and ideologies of progress) transformed the basic structure of international order and led to the first truly *global* world. As Rosenberg summarises, 'it was the nineteenth century which saw the incorporation of nearly the whole of the earth into a single geopolitical system, thus inaugurating the era of *world* history.'[69]

[68] Buzan and Lawson 2015.
[69] Rosenberg 1994, 162.

This globality also heralded ruptures in quotidian experiences of spatiality.[70] As Emily Rosenberg recounts: 'Over the period from 1870 to 1945 the world became both a more familiar and a stranger place. Fast ships, railroads, telegraph lines, inexpensive publications, and film all reached into hinterlands and erased distance. The exchange of people and products accelerated, while the fascination with travelling around and describing foreign areas—long evident in human history—reached new heights.'[71] (As we shall see in the following chapter, it also inaugurated a period of paranoid claustrophobia.) In David Harvey's terminology, this was thus an era of 'time-space compression' whereby the everyday experience of the world was intensified through a sudden reconfiguration of distance.[72]

Central to this compression was the expansion of capitalism across the globe from its origins in north-western Europe,[73] which took on a dizzying velocity in the late nineteenth century, especially *vis-à-vis* the new imperialism.[74] As Marx and Engels famously recognised in the *Manifesto*:

> The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country… The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation.[75]

Yet where Marx prophesises a kind of bland uniformity, Western-centred globalisation was in fact highly variegated.[76] This was no flat globality, but a world of intra-European geopolitics and extra-European imperialism, undergirded by the spread of industrial

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[70] As so often narrated by global historians. See: Conrad 2016 ch. 6.
[71] Rosenberg 2012, 3. For a robust critique of the potential thinness of (liberal-inflected) global history, see: Bell 2013.
[72] Harvey 1989.
[73] Wood 2016. Historical debates over the 'true' origins of capitalism and the problem of primitive accumulation never cease. There is not space here to wade into this, but suffice to say I am broadly persuaded by Political Marxism's emphasis on the English enclosure process, whilst also noting the international context in which this transformation took place. On this, see: Anievas and Nişancıoğlu 2015.
[74] On the debates over the connection between capitalism and the new imperialism, see: Eckstein 1991.
[75] Marx and Engels 1998, 39.
[76] As Teschke summarises, this oversight in Marx's corpus is striking: 'Although there are multiple readings of Marx on international relations, it is uncontentious to state that they never afforded systematic attention to the problem of how to reconcile their temporally uni-linear conception of history with the spatial multi-linearity of dissimilar and interacting developmental trajectories of co-existing polities. In fact, the *Communist Manifesto* elided the problem wholesale by positing a transnationalising world-market as the mega-subject of capitalist modernity which would flatten all geopolitical heterogeneity.' Teschke 2014, 23.

capitalism.[77] It is therefore useful to think of this period dialectically, erring away from any emollient liberal image of interconnectivity and universality. For whilst interconnectivity was *de rigueur*, so too was the oldest political form in history: empire, which took on an intensity like never seen before in the closing decades of the century.

The imperialists not only took capitalism and war with them, but ideas too—be it liberalism,[78] socialism,[79] or indeed Darwinism: doctrines which supposedly rested on Enlightenment universalism, but which similarly collapsed into parochialism and exclusion when met with the realities of colonisation.[80] A world together was thus a world apart. In the vernacular of Justin Rosenberg (via Trotsky), the late nineteenth century therefore appears as the most extreme example of 'uneven and combined development'.[81] As Buzan and Lawson summarise:

> During the nineteenth century, development became both more intensely uneven (because of the gap opened up by the new mode of power) and more intensely combined (because imperialism, the extension of the market and improvements in physical interaction capacity saw the core establish its social order around the world). While uneven and combined development has been a long-standing feature of human history… the revolutions of modernity both intensified unevenness between polities and, for the first time, tied the world into a single structure.[82]

The standard of civilisation

Organising this unevenness was the social structure of late nineteenth-century international space, one accordingly arranged hierarchically.

Namely, this was a period (from the 1880s onwards) famously said to have been organised by the so-called 'standard of civilisation'. This notion has formed an utterly indispensable part of IR's common imaginary of the period—indeed, of the *entire* nineteenth century which, as David Kennedy notes, appears as an 'incredible shrinking nineteenth century',[83] a distorted circus mirror where the late-century colonial apologias

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[77] My description here draws on Ellen Wood's classic definition of capitalism as a social system characterised by the division of the 'political' and 'economic'. Wood 1981.
[78] Bell 2016; Pitts 2006; Mehta 1999.
[79] For instance, as Priyamvada Gopal has recently argued, there was a close interconnection of radical politics between core and periphery, but one that worked in *both directions* (as captured in her idea of 'reverse tutelage'). Gopal 2019.
[80] This idea is best articulated in: Mehta 1999.
[81] Rosenberg 2006.
[82] Buzan and Lawson 2015, 172.
[83] Kennedy 1996, 389. Kennedy, it ought to be noted, also includes Darwinism amongst the features of the late nineteenth century story: 'And so also in the history of ideas—building slowly to the revolutions of Darwinism

of Westlake, Lorimer, *et al.* are associated with the entire century from the Congress of Vienna onwards.[84]

What we might call 'civilisational languages' are a well-trodden terrain in the history of international thought. They conceive of societal difference in bifurcating terms, dividing the world into so-called 'civilised' and 'savage' (and sometimes intermediately 'semi-civilised' or 'barbarous') peoples, and 'used to distinguish those that belong to a particular society from those that do not'.[85] Such Manichaeisms have long governed relations between peoples. The Hellenic idea of 'Greeks' and 'barbarians',[86] the medieval division of 'Christendom' and 'heathens', the Islamic *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb*, and early modern notions of the boundaries of the 'commonwealth'[87] are but a few notable earlier iterations. Yet the linguistic arrival and spread of the term 'civilisation' in European languages (first in mid- to late-eighteenth century French[88]) marked a watershed.

Following the decline of natural law and the rise of legal positivism,[89] such a dualism is said to have crystallised into the classic 'standard of civilisation'[90] (coupled with a higher-order stratification of a great power status club).[91] Replacing the old *ius gentium*, this standard became a legal principle of exclusion and central to one's fortunes in international society. It policed who was 'in' and 'out' of the élite cadre of 'civilised' (i.e. European) states, also laying the intellectual foundations for the greatest tide of empire-building in human history.

The metric of 'civilisation' was essentially moral-cultural: 'civilised' states were those that looked like Europe (i.e. Christian nation-states with centralised governments) and the 'uncivilised' those aberrant to this template.[92] The former were accordingly

and legal positivism, from nature to history and custom, until the climax of romanticism, and the inauguration of the progress narrative, civilizations and cultures evolving to survive, in the years before 1914.' Ibid., 391.

[84] It is interesting that, compared to the comparably enormous literature on the 'Westphalian myth' in IR, the 'civilisation myth' has merited almost no attention. This is despite the fact that the legal 'memory of the nineteenth century, as of our nineteenth century disciplinary forbearers, is connected only very loosely to anything that happened or was thought between 1800 and 1900.' Kennedy 1996, 386. The Westphalian revisionists themselves—Osiander, Buzan and Lawson, etc.—all impel us to select the nineteenth century, rather than the seventeenth, as the real origin date of modernity. Yet they do not seriously contest much of the standard account.

[85] Gong 1984, 3.

[86] Keene 2005 ch. 1.

[87] Brett 2011.

[88] Bowden 2009, 26–30.

[89] Alexandrowicz 1967.

[90] Gong 1984; Obregón 2012.

[91] Keene 2014.

[92] The classic discussion of 'civilisation' as a moral condition remains: Elias 2000.

placed in a legally superordinate position to the latter. This domination ranged from formal imperial and colonial arrangements (in the periphery) to the use of legal instruments such as unequal treaties to reinforce asymmetrical relations (in the semi-periphery).

As we have seen, this civilisational mode of thought can be seen in Darwin's own work, most clearly in his abhorrence at the Fuegians' deviation from European moral norms. Yet, I seek to argue, in contravention to this civilisational way of thinking was another other feature of Darwin's work which *was* taken up by the Darwinians: its naturalism.

'Nature' has long been something of the tails-side of 'civilisation',[93] often cast in historicist terms. As discussed earlier, we see it in the language of the social contract, its sharp binary between a natural condition of being and civil society, or in the subsequent progressivist theories which placed the two on opposite ends of a linear spectrum of development. Indeed, in many ways *the* central idea and foundation-stone of International Relations as a discipline[94]—the idea of 'anarchy'—operates precisely on such a 'nature/civilisation' nexus, anarchy being a kind of 'state of nature' assumption,[95] with English School and constructivist notions of sociability arising out of an anarchical condition being notably contractarian in spirit. As Beate Jahn puts it:

> Mainstream International Relations theory, although it recognizes *cultural diversity* within humanity as one of the fundamental and defining problems of the international, nevertheless constructs the theory of International Relations on the basis of an apparent abstraction from that cultural diversity, namely the concept of *the state of nature*… The use of the concept of the state of nature, however, which presupposes a common, universal nature of human beings beneath their particular cultural identities, thus enables International Relations theory to make statements of general validity despite the cultural diversity of its subject matter.[96]

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[93] Across in disciplinary intellectual history, this dialectic of 'nature' and 'civilisation' has long been understood as central to changing conceptions of politics. For two strong examples, see: Brett 2011; Vyverberg 1989. As Pierre Charbonnier has recognised in his 'history of environmental political thought', it is one of the most capacious and elusive concepts: 'philosophy and the social sciences have discussed at length the impasses of the concept of nature, perhaps excessively.' Charbonnier 2021, 17.

[94] Donnelly 2015.

[95] Rolf 2014. Consider, for one example, Hegel's assertion that 'since the sovereignty of states is the principle governing their mutual relations, they exist to that extent *in a state of nature in relation to one another*'. Hegel 1991, 369 emphasis mine.

[96] Jahn 2016, xi emphasis mine. Yet, by virtue of its focus on the emergence of this split, Jahn's book contains no mentions of Darwin, beginning as it does with the Salamanca School's encounter with the native Amerindians and ending with the American and French Revolutions.

The standard of nature

What Darwinism did, and what made it such a radical intrusion in the history of international thought, was that it made this condition of nature *all-encompassing*, thereby erasing cultural diversity in the process.[97]

In contrast to gradated notions of 'civilisation', Darwinism's worldview was basically holistic—uniting as it did all species under the same laws of science (the law of natural selection) applied evenly to all. Internationally, it made the struggle for existence operate across the entire span of international social space, irrespective of one's 'civilisational' status (and indeed irrespective whether one 'believed' in it or not, *à la* realism), including 'civilised' Europeans against each other. It is for this reason, as we shall see in Part II, that Darwinian internationalism had such a wide and truly global reception—its holistic framework could be used to articulate *all* forms of international positionality, from the strongest European empire to the weakest, most apparently 'culturally aberrant' polity. The moral-cultural standard of civilisation was thus undermined by a new, existential criterion of polity success.

Indeed, Darwin's theory posed even deeper problems to the civilisational standard, for it implied that humankind was essentially the same everywhere (albeit acutely adapted to a particular environment). The monogenetic account of human descent only compounded this with its assertion that human beings came originally from the African continent. Therefore, how could the moralistic civilisational standard remain credible at all? Aporetic efforts to solve this conundrum never truly succeeded.

Some scholars have sought to argue that Darwinism represented the *logical extension* of the civilisational idea, pointing out the apparent dovetailing of evolutionist historicism with the developmental image of civilisation as the final state in a process of maturation.[98] Certainly, as we shall see, some Darwinians did seek to describe the

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[97] This therefore tests Will Bain's recent claim that *all* modern conceptions of international order owe a theological inheritance to what he calls 'constructed order' (as opposed to 'immanent order'). I would contend that Darwinism's vision of omnipresent nature, which he neglects, offered a genuinely secular conception of immanent order, one driven by purportedly objectively observable, but un-willed, mechanisms. See: Bain 2020.

[98] Consider, for one example, Marwa Elshakry's comment in her study of Darwin's influence in the Arabic world that 'nineteenth-century evolutionary discourse never strayed far from the anxieties of empire or from the conjoined fascination with the fate of "civilizations." This was the heyday of the civilizational discourse in imperial metropoles, of course, and many… associated empire with civilization and thence with a certain conception of historical time.' In: Elshakry 2013, 10. Another example is Albert Counson's 1923 assertion that 'Civilisation is inspired by a new philosophy of nature and of man. Its philosophy of nature is evolution. Its philosophy of man is perfectibility.' Cited in: Bowden 2009, 45. Bowden cites this quote as 'an unidentified citation' taken from Lucien Febvre's conceptual history of 'civilisation'. Bowden marshals the quote in support

'civilised' and the 'savage' in such terms of *progress*,[99] yet they often did so by painting savagery as an inescapable condition. Classically, 'civilisation' was seen as consisting in '*material development*, in the sense of economic and technological progress; and… a *moral dimension*, in the sense that a civilized society would be based on an educated and refined population, and good government based on fair and effective political, administrative and judicial systems'.[100] 'Savagery' was thus conceived as a condition of historical backwardness, and hierarchy an imposition of historical stewardship (as in J.S. Mill) to be maintained until savages 'caught up' to Europe (i.e. the 'white man's burden', or *mission civilisatrice*).

Yet most Darwinians radically transformed the idea of savagery away from this liberal, moral-cultural view, instead re-conceptualising 'savages' not as occupying an earlier stage in historical time, but an irredeemable ossified condition in 'deep time', which had burst into the Victorian imaginary.[101] 'Savages' were thus no longer merely *just* morally, culturally, or aesthetically aberrant, but represented a kind of ontological, inescapable inferiority. (The classic example to demonstrate this was Darwin's ur-savage, the Fuegians.) Through a scientisation of the 'grammar of difference',[102] Darwinism thereby cultivated the *Homo europeaus*[103]—the human animal which had ascended to a higher state of development. The appeal to science only compounded these notions, with the 'scientific' status of Darwinism serving as a kind of meta-category to further compound the difference between the 'enlightened' Europeans and the 'backwards'

of *a general claim* about the historicism of civilisation, yet it ought instead be seen as representing precisely the concept's *change* in the shadow of evolutionary science. As Febvre himself recognises (and which Bowden neglects to include), invoking Counson here was 'going a little ahead in time' from the eighteenth-century focus of that essay in order to acknowledge the later evolutionary influence from 'the fine work done by Henri Daudin on Lamarck and Cuvier'. Febvre 1973, 230. The quote derives from Counson's 1923 lecture '*Qu'est-ce que la civilisation?*' (at 263), where Counson goes on to discuss Darwin more directly: 'The scientific revolution advanced in parallel with the political and industrial revolutions: as Tocqueville and Chevalier would discover democracy and machinery, so Charles Darwin undertook a journey to the New World that was to be fertile into revelations.' Counson 1923, 282 translation mine.

[99] As Buzan and Lawson summarise: 'four "ideologies of progress"—liberalism, socialism, nationalism and "scientific" racism—came to dominate the ideational landscape of international society. These evolving[!] ideologies were, along with industrialism, closely linked to the "standard of civilisation", helping to define "barbarian" and "savage" outsiders.' Buzan 2014a, 580. For the full argument: Buzan and Lawson 2015 ch. 4. Whilst Darwinism is outlined under '"scientific" racism', their discussion is little more than a literature review.

[100] Keene 2002, 112 emphasis mine. See also: Bowden 2009, 16.

[101] Sera-Shriar 2018. On 'historical' versus 'natural time', see: Koselleck 2002; Thompson 1967.

[102] Cooper and Stoler 1997, 3.

[103] As above, a term borrowed from: Ibid. They do not use the term in relation to Darwinism, yet it serves as the perfect metaphor here. The original use of this term was by the French Darwinist, Vacher de Lapouge. Hawkins 1997, 193.

Other. Emerging from this was the attendant idea of the 'inevitable extinction of savages'.[104] (As we saw last chapter, the Tasmanians rather than the Fuegians were the model here.) Colonialism was thus not some benevolent liberal process of 'raising' the 'less developed' peoples of the globe, but merely intensified and quickened their unavoidable destruction.

From this, other scholars have seen Darwinism not as extending the civilisation idea, but as *amending* it—as in the view that Darwinism led to 'the transition from a view of civilization that predicated universality, unity and harmony, to one based on variation, selection, and culling',[105] or that Darwinism emphasised the material rather than the moral half of the idea of 'civilisation'. Ntina Tzouvala has similarly argued that the legal 'standard of civilisation' oscillated between a 'logic of improvement' and a 'logic of biology':

> On the one hand, the "logic of improvement" premised equal participation in international law subject to comprehensive internal reform in accordance with the imperatives of capitalist modernity. Within this register, the attributes of a civilised state were relatively fixed and easy to identify, if not necessarily to achieve… On the other hand, the "logic of biology" constantly negated such a possibility, perpetually confining non-Western political communities into a lesser position within the architecture of international law. In this register, legal, economic or cultural differences were attributed to unchangeable characteristics, and the gap between the West and "the rest" was impossible to bridge.[106]

But if cultural change became 'impossible', how can we say the civilisational standard even still existed? It is my contention that there was instead something deeply contradictory between these two logics: that the 'logic of biology' was actually the abolition of the 'logic of improvement', and the attempt to fuse them together was never coherent. Thus, when 'in *The Future of Science* (1893), Ernest Renan argues that force itself was the source of civilization… [that] conquest was "the violent intrusion of fresh elements which vivified and enlarged the ancient circle of life",'[107] he was grappling with these two contradictory visions of political order: the moral-cultural, and the existential.

Nature's war, war's nature

[104] Brantlinger 2003.
[105] Levine and Novoa 2012, x.
[106] Tzouvala 2020, 45.
[107] Harlow and Carter 2003, vol. 2: The Scramble for Africa, 88.

This existential vision can be seen most clearly in Darwinism's transformation of the category of war. In Darwin's wake, warfare became completely reconceptualised—not as an ephemeral, configurative military battle between two or more dynastic armies over a piece of territory, but a perennial totality, an unbounded ahistorical existential struggle of all nations and peoples. Foucault captured such a change in his genealogy of biopower at the end of *The Will to Knowledge* (1976), where he pays witness to the historical shift from wars of *individual sovereigns* to wars of *entire societies*:

> Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity.[108]

As Azar Gat attests, post-Napoleonic industrialising[109] Europe was marked by this transformation, where 'nineteenth-century military theory was dominated and given its distinctive character by the advent of *national, all-out war and its correlative strategy of destruction*.'[110] There were two reactions to this development: the 'Romantic' and the 'Rationalist' traditions, the latter of which 'emerged in the wake of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century… [and] looked to the exact and natural sciences as a model to be applied'[111] to military theory. Darwinism became an ideal register[112] through which such Rationalist conceptions of total destructive war could be theorised: from a 'struggle for territory' to a 'struggle for existence'.[113]

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[108] Foucault 1998, 137.
[109] Gat 2008 ch. 15.
[110] Gat 1992, vii. See also: Heuser 2010 ch. 5.
[111] Gat 1992, vii.
[112] Yet Darwin somewhat remains in the side-lines of Gat's narrative, occupying little discussion (at 79, 84 and 188).
[113] This was also an era in which war was normalised as a central feature of international social life. In Stephen Neff's periodisation, the nineteenth century thus appears as a 'third major period' in the history of war and its legal mediation, a period defined by positivism's image of war 'as a clash of rival national interests rather than a pursuit of heavenly ideas or (more mundanely) the rule of law. For war-makers, it was a *laissez-faire* era, with war so firmly ensconced as a routine feature of international life that it was unblushingly accorded the honourable status of an institution of international law.' Neff 2005, 4. The *conduct* of war—the *ius in bello*—continued to be legally theorised under the influence of what Neff terms the 'objective' or 'contractualist' branch of legal positivism, which conceived of war as an objective material clash of interests in the world and thus required legal clarity (vs. the 'subjective' view which conceived of war, in Hobbesian terms, from the perspective of the individual warring state, thus allowing for very little regulation). This 'gentlemanly' image of rule-governed war attained such a wide influence that 'the expression "law of war" (or more exactly, "the laws and customs of war") came to refer exclusively to the regulation of the *conduct* of hostilities.' By contrast, 'the idea of law governing the *resort* to war—the *jus ad bellum* to lawyers—shrivelled into virtual nothingness in the face of the positivist challenge.' Ibid., 163–164. Darwinism had a role to play here. As Diggelmann argues, there was a 'silent alliance' between Darwinism and the laws of war: 'the "symbiosis", which the *ius ad bellum* entered into with social Darwinism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.' Diggelmann 2017, 100. Darwinism, he claims, not only naturalised war but in doing so also helped to expand its scope of its legitimacy within legal theory: thus 'the *ius ad bellum* and social Darwinism boosted each other. The lawfulness of the war conformed

Yet this struggle was heralded by the Darwinian internationalists—as in Darwin's conception in the *Origin*, it was not only descriptively ineradicable, but prescriptively productive.[114] Such a notion has a pedigree in international thought, as captured by Martin Ceadel as 'militarism'[115] and refined in Nabulsi's idea of *martialism*: 'defined as the view that war is both the supreme instrument and the ultimate realization of all human endeavour… Martialists had a distinct conception of human nature, the state, liberty, and nationalism, and all these characteristics found their ultimate fulfilment in the unrestrained glorification of war.'[116] With the Darwinian internationalists came the most intense realisation of this tradition.[117]

As Holly Case has argued, the intellectual world of the nineteenth century was an 'Age of Questions', of temporally urgent political crises—the National Question, the Social Question, the Jewish Question, etc.—which demanded immediate answers. Bundled together, many strived for singular answers to the general European crisis, amongst which was '*the argument about force*… that *universal war* and *genocide*, the Final Solution, represent[ed] the fullest realization of the age of questions'.[118] Darwinian internationalism represented the apotheosis of this eschatological *fin de siècle*, and the abrogation of the civilisational idea, as tragically realised in the twin cataclysms that opened the twentieth century: total war and state-led racial extinctions. The 'longed-for/feared "universal war"'[119] was distinctly Darwinian.

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to the interpretation of the world according to social Darwinism, and ideas of social Darwinism allowed an understanding of the *ius ad bellum*, which was relatively free from legal restrictions.' Ibid., 102.

[114] This thus looks similar to what Jens Bartelson terms 'ontogenetic war', i.e. the Tillyan idea of war as the producer of order. Bartelson, it should be acknowledged, donates a not insubstantial amount of space to the discussion of Darwinian theories of universal war, which includes good discussions of Sumner and Le Bon. Bartelson 2017, 78–86.

[115] Ceadel 1987 ch. 3. Whilst he notes that militarism contained 'crude applications Darwinian, Hegelian, or Nietzschean thought' (4), little historical inquiry is given to 'vulgar Darwinism' (27).

[116] Nabulsi 1999, 81–82.

[117] Nabulsi *does* mention such a current of thought, acknowledging that a 'quasi-Darwinist approach, drawing analogies from the natural world, was extremely popular in mid to late nineteenth-century Europe'. (Discussed at 95–6 and 119–120.) Indeed, as Nabulsi reminds us, in the case of Britain: 'For some martialists with a Darwinist tinge, the Englishman's natural restlessness made him an obvious choice for the conquest of the world. Kidd identified this trait as responsible for the successful conquest and control of India by the English.' Nabulsi 1999, 119. Darwin directly cites this idea in the *Descent*: Darwin 1871, vol. 1, 179. Of course, Darwinism did not *only* foment traditions of war. Again, see: Crook 1994.

[118] Case 2018, 2. I am reminded here also of Umberto Eco's ninth sign of Ur-Fascism: 'There is no struggle for life but, rather, life is lived for struggle. Thus *pacifism is trafficking with the enemy*. It is bad because *life is permanent warfare*. This, however, brings about an Armageddon complex. Since enemies have to be defeated, there must be a final battle, after which the movement will have control of the world. But such a "final solution" implies a further era of peace, a Golden Age, which contradicts the principle of permanent war.' Eco 1995.

[119] Case 2018, 10.

This transformation of war helps us to see why the idea of late nineteenth-century international order as wholly about the 'standard of civilisation' misses a large part of the picture. Consider Edward Keene's characterisation that international order (like Tzouvala) in this period was Janus-faced and dualistic: where the *intra*-European experience was one structured by traditional 'Westphalian' principles of sovereign equality and toleration, colonial practices in the *extra*-European world were instead sculpted by the Grotian doctrine of divisible sovereignty around a legal standard of civilisation. The collapse of this dual order and the undoing of the civilisational standard, it is argued, arrived when the violence that characterised colonisation came to the Europeans' own backyard:

> The main problem of international order between 1914 and 1945, as civilised nations saw it, was not so much the backwardness of non-European peoples but rather *the rise of barbarous ideologies in European states*… The struggle on behalf of civilisation against Nazism represented the crowning moment of this intellectual transformation… Once that move had been made there was no going back to the old theoretical apparatus of nineteenth-century international law, and the "reconstruction" of international order after 1945 was in that respect a genuinely original project.[120]

To be sure, Keene's narrative is a much subtler story of the making of modern international society than the emollient 'expansion'[121] narrative of the early English School. Yet this thesis calls us to disrupt this neat periodisation, and not simply by rejecting the notion of a *distinctively nineteenth-century* 'standard of civilisation' (e.g. by reconceiving the legal standard as simply the continuation of perennial European practices of extra-European domination, both past[122] and present[123]). My argument is different. Whilst a more nuanced story, this vision of *two orders* is still itself too neatly drawn—an artifice that begins to collapse under the weight of the inclusion of Darwinism in the period's international thought.

The problem has been this narrative's monolithic understanding of 'European' thought in the period—in Keene's analysis, for instance, we find a subtle and textured exegesis of extra-European thought, yet the discussion of *intra*-European thought still maintains the classic English School presupposition of self-evident principles of sovereign equality and mutual toleration. Keene concludes that 'orthodox theories of

[120] Keene 2002, 121 emphasis mine.
[121] Bull and Watson 1985.
[122] Muldoon 1979; Cavallar 2008.
[123] Bowden 2009 chs. 7-8.

order in modern world politics are inadequate because their analysis of the development of modern international order is *too narrowly concentrated on the European states-system*',[124] yet the irony is that we might, for once, need to be *more* Eurocentric—or, more specifically, more attentive to the influence of a particular European-born theory which was then exported to the rest of the world and found emulative adherents everywhere (who are similarly entirely overlooked in existing histories).

An exhumation of a much earlier form of intra-European existential martialism than the two world wars thus suggests that we need to rethink the idea of two distinct orders. Indeed, Keene's argument accepts the naturalist underpinnings of one half of the dual order—the Grotian distinction of *occupatio* and *dominium* invoked by colonisers—yet asserts that civilisational practices reigned within Europe. I contend that a form of naturalism persisted there too. Indeed, Keene's astute observation in *International Political Thought* (2005), cited earlier but worth restating, contradicts or corrects this earlier assertion of the highpoint of the 'dual order'. As he instead recognises there:

> It is difficult to exaggerate the implications for social and political thought of this change…. The application of Darwinian science to human affairs helped to *demolish much of the ethical and progressive dimension that the concept of civilization had given to the structure of international order*. It became much harder to see international politics in terms of a benevolent process leading towards this end goal, and the international system—much like Darwin's view of the natural world—became an arena of competition with no *telos* whatsoever.[125]

This is precisely the argument which I am making here, agreeing with the later argument by Keene against the earlier.[126]

Despite the different flavours to the intra- and extra-European discourses (race coming in as the main axis of difference), both were fundamentally the same: a thoroughly naturalist language embraced the holism it implied, even if some (including Darwin himself) clung to the bifurcating language of civilisation. Indeed, those who drew most sharply on civilisational distinctions were often Darwinian *anti*-imperialists (outlined in chapter five). As Hellström recognises, evidently 'Darwin's theory was used to naturalise and so justify just about any aspect of the prevailing order; within his own lifetime, it was invoked to naturalise and justify imperialism and racially codified

[124] Keene 2002, 145.
[125] Keene 2005, 181 emphasis mine.
[126] It is important to note that he has even more recently moved away from this earlier dualism and embraced a much more flexible and nuanced neo-Weberian account of international positionality in the period, as in: Keene 2014.

exploitation… *At the same time* it could also be—and it was—employed *to undermine the prevailing order*.'[127]

This thesis accordingly reveals a new way to think about late nineteenth-century international order, prevalent at the time but absent from our existing narratives—not *only* a 'standard of civilisation', but also a Darwinian 'standard of nature', whereby the success or failure of international politics was judged against the selective logic of the struggle for existence. Whether empires, states, or tribes, those who failed this trial of nature were not merely socially ostracised from international society (as with civilisational standards),[128] but materially eliminated from the arena of political life altogether. As Paul Kennedy put it: 'While it is obvious that no one in 1885 could accurately forecast the ruin and desolation which prevailed in Europe sixty years later, it *was* the case that many acute observers in the late nineteenth century sensed the direction in which the dynamics of world power were driving', and precisely because of this new awareness 'intellectuals and journalists in particular, but also day-to-day politicians, talked and wrote in terms of a vulgar Darwinistic world of struggle, of success and failure, of growth and decline.'[129]

The dichotomy was no longer between 'civilised' or 'uncivilised' states or 'rising' and 'falling' nations, but between the 'living' and the 'dying', the 'surviving' and the 'extinct'. The logic of this standard of nature undermined the sociality of 'international society' and instead theorised international politics in distinctly natural terms, in the very harshest sense[130]—not just a neutral 'anarchy', but as a world of constant foundational conflict. Enmity is as much a social concept as amity[131] and enemies as constructed as friends, but with Darwinism every other 'organism' became adversarial by nature.

[127] Hellström 2017, 102 emphasis mine.
[128] Either as 'behavioural' or 'ontological outlaws', as in: Donnelly 2006, 147.
[129] Kennedy 1989, 195.
[130] Thus very different to the nascent cosmopolitanism of legal naturalism, at least as characterised in: Alexandrowicz 1967.
[131] Roshchin 2017.

Liberal civilisationalism	Darwinian internationalism
Societal difference: bifurcated **Political competition:** configurative **Rhetoric:** appeal to culture and morality **Historiographical analogy:** human history ('historical time') **Typical claim:** *'civilised nations are superior to savages'*	**Societal difference:** holistic **Political competition:** existential[132] **Rhetoric:** appeal to nature and 'fitness' **Historiographical analogy:** natural history ('deep time') **Typical claim:** *'all nations are in a struggle for existence'*

Fig. 17. A revolution in thought:
The liberal idea of civilisation and Darwinian internationalism compared

Using Bull's triptych,[133] Darwinians thus heralded the thinnest version of an 'international system', although this really is a misnomer, for it invokes the mechanistic metaphor instead of the organic; rather than conceiving of international space as a 'system', for the Darwinians it was a geographic space in which organisms spread and competed. As with the most aggressive martialists, then, Darwinists not only negated the Grotian image of collaborative European international society—supposed by the early English School to be 'expanding' in this period—but went beyond the systemic calculations of the realists. (The difference is stark if one compares, say, that old Kissingerian exemplar Bismarck to his arch-Darwinian compatriot Friedrich von Bernhardi.)

We might therefore say that the standard of civilisation became a subcategory or subset of the standard of nature—for it was incidentally true that the material clout required to successfully compete in the international struggle for existence also happened to be held by the deemed 'civilised' European industrialised powers. Yet this was did not

[132] My comparison of 'political competition' here draws on Ruggie's distinction between 'configurative' and 'constitutive' wars in: Ruggie 1993, 162–163. Another way in which this could be expressed is that of agonistic political theory: a competitive 'agonism' of accommodated difference versus an ontological 'antagonism' which seeks to eliminate the political opponent altogether. Mouffe 1993.
[133] Bull 1977.

preclude other states (like Japan, or even theoretically African states) amassing similar clout *without* also adhering to European racial, cultural, moral, or religious norms. This is precisely why the Darwinian idiom was so appealing to these non-European polities.

Darwinism was not alone in its anti-civilisationism. Despite its 'enlightened' origins, Darwinism represented one iteration of a broader theme of Western *fin de siècle* irrationalism which would profoundly undermine the old civilisational ideal. One finds a similar expression of the dark side of humanity's inner nature in Freud's vision of civilisation's repressive effects on the psyche and the fear 'that unless a less repressive form of civilization could be developed there were dangers (illustrated by the First World War) of a build-up and eventual explosion of psychological tensions.'[134] Civilisation and nature were thus again placed in antithesis; despite the attempts of civilisation to repress its opposite, there remained a 'bit of unconquerable nature'[135] (the id) ready to erupt at any moment.[136] More idiosyncratic was Nietzsche's nihilistic attack on Western civilisation as the expression of a feeble 'slave morality'—which, alongside a crude social Darwinism and a racialised reading of *Lebensraum*, would be hijacked by the Nazis as ideological fuel for their project of Aryan world domination.

Darwinism's influence was thus profound. The globe, as we shall promptly see, looked anew under Darwinism's influence: the Europeans were at a constant threat of destroying one another in a hyper-competitive and ever-closing world; the emergent 'barbarian' powers meanwhile threatened either to usurp the Europeans, or else to perish themselves; and the 'savages' of the world were fated to doomed destruction, either by the extinction events of European colonisation, or at the hands of each other through intra-tribal war. The struggle for existence was multi-dimensional, cutting upwards and across all forms of social hierarchy, and ever-present.

With Darwinism, a different story of the making of modern international society therefore emerges.

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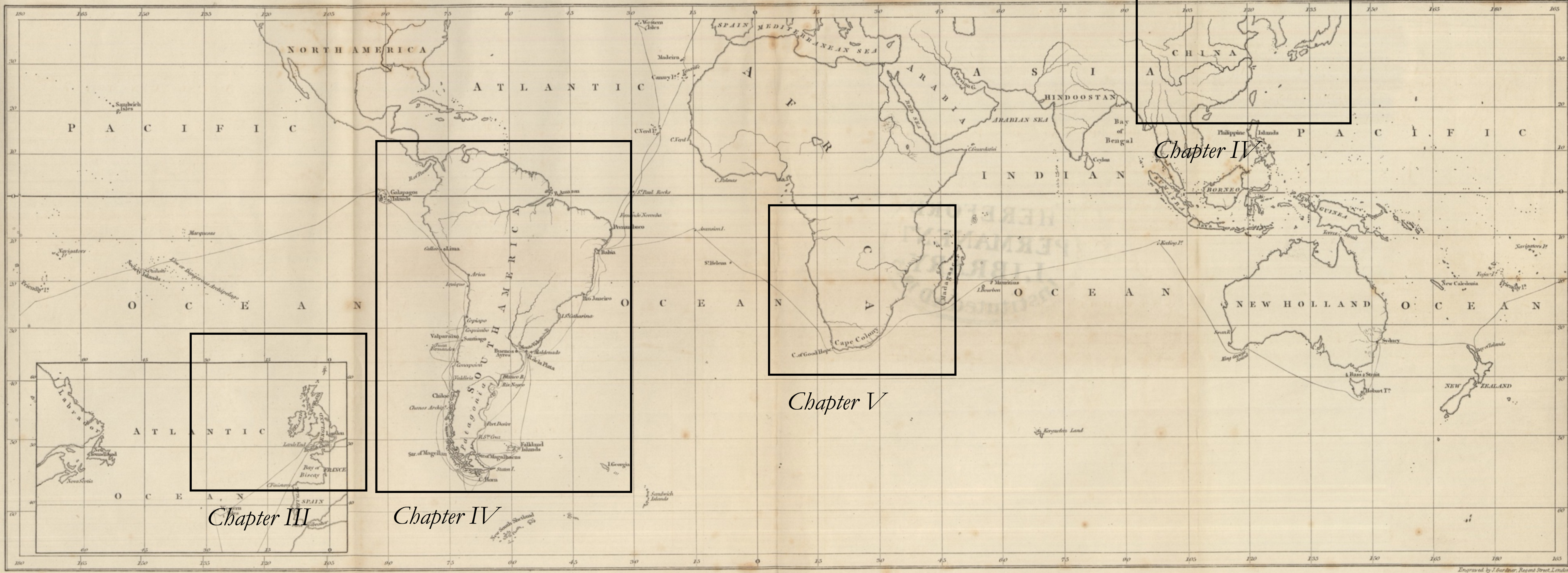
[134] Keene 2005, 183–184.

[135] Freud 1930, 44. Cited in: Bell 2020, 21.

[136] As Duncan Bell summarises, the implications of Freudian ideas on the world stage were thus militarist, echoing Darwin's emphasis on a base-level, 'natural' conflict: 'In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud had identified a death-drive, *Thanatos*, that competed with the life-drive, *Eros*, an argument he extended in *Civilization and its Discontents*… Because of the "primary mutual hostility of human beings," Freud had argued, "civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration," and human reason was locked in conflict with other forces: "the passions of instinct are stronger than reasoned interests."' Bell 2020, 6.

PART II

Darwinian Internationalisms



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CHAPTER III.

The Imperial Core

> '*Quidquid recipitur, ad modum recipientis recipitur.*'[1]
> — Thomas Aquinas (1485)

As noted previously, Charles Darwin is a prime example of what we might call a 'theorist/theory gap'. As with Victor Frankenstein and his creature, this occurs when a creator's creation contains such creativity as to impel rebellion, transmutating against intentions—also like 'Frankenstein', the creature can even become nominally equivalent to its creator. Such is the case with 'Darwin' and 'Darwinism'. This is, of course, a central feature of reception which, as Vergerio reminds us, implies the basic fact '[that] recipients are not passive followers, and what is received or inherited is not necessarily what was given or handed over. In other words, those who "receive" the texts of great thinkers have a considerable amount of agency, and they may alter the text in significant ways.'[2]

Such a process we shall begin to explore in this chapter, where we shall see how Darwin's creation—the theory of evolution by natural selection—rapidly led to a distinctive idiom of international theory in the place of its immediate reception: Victorian Britain. We thus now move away from a Skinnerian exegesis of a single author (a 'backwards-looking' history) to a 'forwards-looking' analysis of authorial reception. What, then, did Darwinism look like in what many assume to be its natural home: the imperial core?

I begin, proximally and chronologically, with T.H. Huxley—famously known as 'Darwin's bulldog'—who acts as a perfect prolegomenon[3] to the whole reception story, precisely because of his careful ambassadorial role which nevertheless prefigured a remarkable politicisation of Darwin's theory. In a comparison of two of Huxley's most significant works—*Man's Place in Nature* (1863) and 'The Struggle for Human Existence' (1888)—one can see Huxley's failed attempt to reiterate an 'original Darwinism', unspoiled by political influence, in the face of a gaping chasm of reception that had opened up in the decades between.

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[1] 'Whatever is received is received according to the manner of the receiver'. Cited in: Vergerio 2019, 123.
[2] Ibid.
[3] To invoke Huxley's term from 'Evolution and Ethics'.

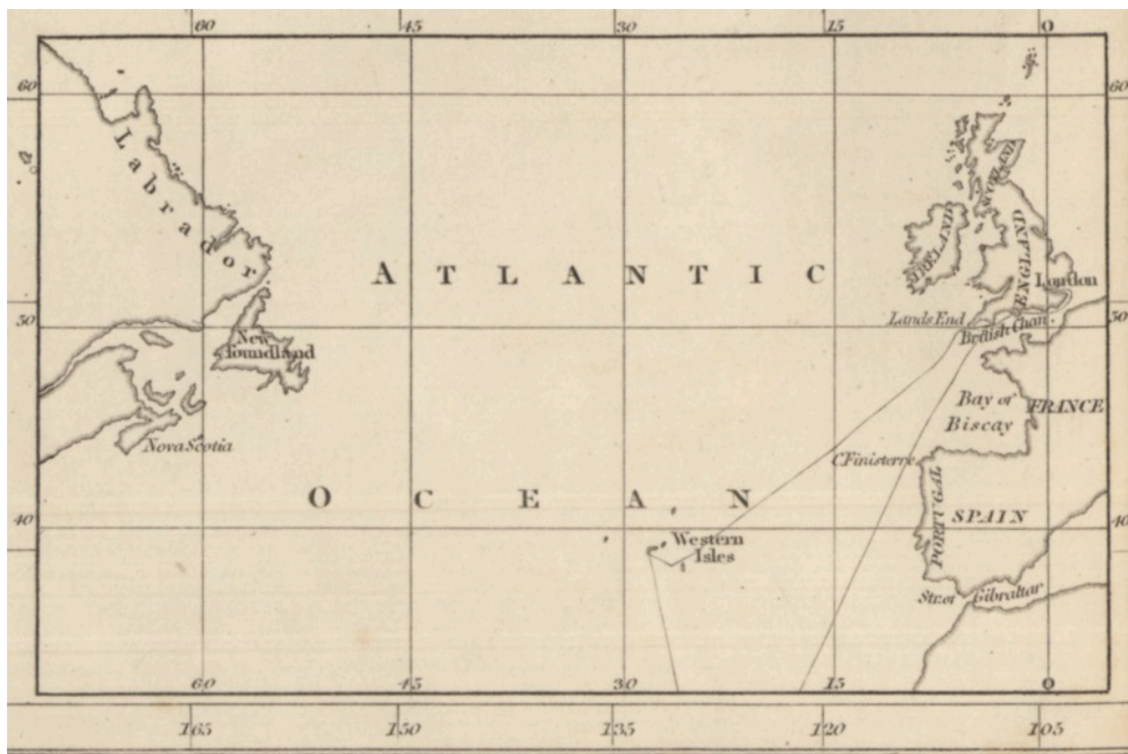

Fig. 18. Home and back:
Detail of the map of the *Beagle*'s voyage[4]

Thereafter, I group the theorists discussed according to three broad categories of 'savagery', war, and empire. On the influence of Darwin on the idea of 'savagery', I restage a much-forgotten debate between Richard Whately, John Lubbock, and George Campbell on the relation of 'savage' to 'primeval man'. In the theorisation of war, I investigate Walter Bagehot's application of the selectionist motif to historical progress—which is drawn out even more explicitly by J. Ellis Barker and Herbert Spencer, who both applauded the struggle for existence as a purifying process of international selection. Anticipating chapter five, I shall then examine how Darwinism was both borne out and aided the defence of empire, from the perspective of the imperial core. I shall discuss the incubation of anthropological and natural sciences within British imperial structures, before turning to the abstract theorisation of a naturalist imperialism by figures such as John Robert Seeley and Charles Wentworth Dilke.

[4] Detail from full chart in: FitzRoy 1839, vol. 2: Proceedings of the Second Expedition, 1831–36, Under the Command of Captain Robert Fitz-Roy, R.N. Appendix: 'Chart: Principal tracks of H.M.S. Beagle 1831-6'.

On this theme of empire, I then turn to unpack the notion of 'imperial claustrophobia'—the intense and widespread sense of the 'closure of the world' which was experienced in the imperial core in the last decades of the century—which was most directly confronted within the emergent field of geopolitics. There, I unravel the arguments of Halford Mackinder and Friedrich Ratzel. Finally, I end the chapter with a discussion of the perceived rise of the non-European 'barbarian' powers within this newly 'closed' world, thus intimating towards the following two chapters. We shall thus conclude by grappling with the organicist visions of Lord Salisbury and Theodore Roosevelt, who both alike foresaw the 'rise' of the non-European world and proclaimed the arrival of the 'standard of nature', but with varying degrees of optimism. Above all, we shall see in this chapter that, for the most powerful polities, Darwinism was not simply a means for expressing or explaining this preponderance, but a warning of its evanescence and potential destruction—it was an idiom of paranoia, not power.

Huxley's 'Darwiniana'

A useful approach to a history of reception is a history of proximity—to begin with the author themselves before progressing concentrically outwards to increasingly distant individuals, thereby plotting just how far the 'ripples' spread and how much the ideas of the original transmutated in transmission. A good place to start would therefore be the man who earned the epithet of 'Darwin's bulldog': Thomas Henry Huxley.

Huxley first met Darwin in 1856 and was one of the few privy to the naturalist's closely-guarded theory prior to publication. As we saw in the Darwin chapter, he also became a crucial figure in the defence of Darwinism in the public sphere after the *Origin*'s publication.[5] As Adrian Desmond argues, Huxley's role was crucial in making evolutionary theory respectable: 'As the bottom dropped out of history and the Victorians peered, horrified, into the unfathomable abyss of geological time, it was the silver-haired Huxley who cast a stabilising anchor from the evolutionary ship.'[6]

[5] Not just at the aforementioned 1860 Oxford evolution debate, but also in the dialogue in the *Nineteenth Century* between Huxley and the Prime Minister: 'one chapter in Gladstone's lifelong engagement with the concept of historical "development", the unfolding or evolution of Providence to human reason over time.' Conlin 2020, 911.

[6] Desmond 1997, xi.

Indeed, Huxley's *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863) was granted the distinction of being 'the first published statement to the general public applying the Darwinian hypothesis systematically to man'[7] after Darwin's single cryptic line on anthropogenesis. In the absence of a willingly interventionist Darwin, Huxley entered into the flames on his behalf, and it is above all to him that the 'ape theory' ought to be properly attributed in its first public form. Thus, in *Man's Place in Nature* (a collection of his public lectures on the topic), Huxley can be seen treading a very careful line in introducing this theory to the Victorian public, with a forensic presentation (in a series of focussed chapters) of the scientific evidence for the common evolution of *homo sapiens* and apes.

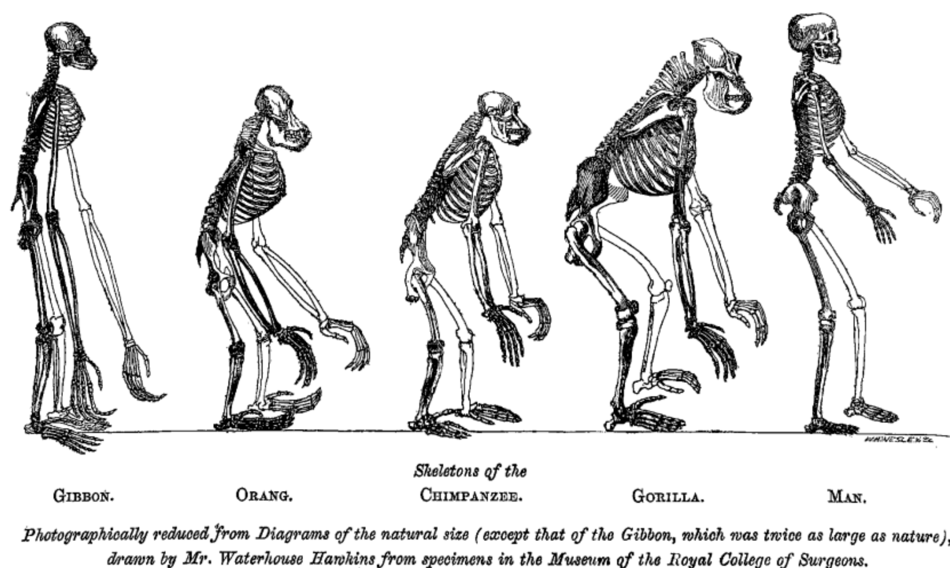

Fig. 19. Human and primate skeletons:
Frontispiece of *Man's Place in Nature* (1863)[8]

However, Huxley was no neutral 'delegate' of Darwinism but rather became an active 'trustee' of the theory (to invoke the Burkean jargon), willingly venturing into the political debates sparked by Darwin's theory. Indeed, Huxley's 'interpretation' was so significant

[7] Stocking 1987, 147.
[8] Image from: Huxley 1863.

that Darwinism and 'Huxleyism' were often seen as one and the same—as we shall see in the following chapter, in China it was actually *Huxley's* political writings (in highly mutated form), rather than the *Origin*, that first introduced the Chinese to 'Darwinism'.

A prolific essayist (writing on topics ranging from Hume to yeast), in the years following *Man's Place in Nature*, Huxley developed his interpretation in a range of essays preoccupied with the theory of evolution, as captured in the wonderful title of the second volume of his *Collected Essays*: his 'Darwiniana'. Most intriguing in this cornucopia is 'The Struggle for Human Existence' (1888), a striking piece which distils Huxley's fully developed vision of Darwinism as applied to the social world—one ultimately preoccupied with the question of fidelity and reception.

The gap between the two works is significant. In 1862, *Man's Place in Nature* was tentatively dipping its toe into dangerous new waters, with Darwin's theory still a controversial novelty to the Victorian imagination. As such, it remains largely 'scientific' in its focus and style. By 1888, however, not only was Darwin six years dead and the *Descent* already gathering dust, but the powder keg of Darwinism had long since exploded and its effects taken hold. By 1888, as we shall see in this chapter, a dizzyingly wide range of theorists had already 'politicised' Darwinism in Britain. In response, Huxley's 'intentions' in the piece are thus actually in a sense *contra*-Darwinian internationalist. That is, we see Huxley attempting to hold the fort for Darwin and to reiterate an 'original Darwinism' unpolluted by these later adaptations.[9]

In the piece, Huxley thus aims to reunite the two core themes of the *Origin* and *Descent*: on the one hand, the struggle for existence at the heart of the natural world, cast as objective fact, 'neither moral nor immoral, but non-moral';[10] and, on the other, the sharp distinction of this struggle's effect on 'civilised' versus 'savage' peoples, or what Huxley strikingly calls '*the ethical man*—the member of society… [and] *the non-ethical man*—the primitive savage, or man as a mere member of the animal kingdom… The latter fights

[9] Contextually, beyond the need to respond to these 'adaptations', Huxley's bleak tone in the piece may also have been influenced by personal tragedy: 'The death of his daughter in 1887 changed things. He fell into melancholia and a sense of alienation from an uncaring and value-free nature. In a cathartic essay penned soon afterwards, "The Struggle for Existence in Human Society", Huxley wrote bleakly of an animal world.' Crook 1994, 60. We should, however, be wary of such convenient contextual apologies. Sven Lindqvist reminds us as such when he ironically invokes this kind of excuse at the start of *'Exterminate all the Brutes'*, shrugging off 'Spencer's fantasies of annihilation… [which] I thought, were personal eccentricities, perhaps explained by the fact that all Spencer's siblings had died when he was a child. A calm and comforting conclusion.' Lindqvist 1997, 9.

[10] Huxley 1888, 733.

out the struggle for existence to the bitter end, like any other animal; the former devotes his best energies to the object of setting limits to the struggle.'[11] Huxley thus makes the case for the melioration of Darwinism's excesses through a reiteration of Darwin's civilisational distinctions. He accordingly invokes the evolutionist motif to paint a vista of historical progress from war-making beastliness to peaceable industrial society:

> Before the origin of the oldest known civilisations, men were savages of a very low type… among primitive men, the weakest and stupidest went to the wall, while the toughest and shrewdest, those who were best fitted to cope with their circumstances… survived. Life was a continual free fight… *the Hobbesian war of each against all was the normal state of existence*… The history of civilization—that is, of society—on the other hand, *is the record of the attempts which the human race has made to escape from this position*. The first men who substituted the state of mutual peace for that of mutual war… created society… [and] put a limit upon the struggle for existence.[12]

In this Darwinised Hobbesianism, Huxley thus follows Darwin in arguing that it is *through* 'civilisation' that human beings might escape the 'eternal competition of man against man and of nation against nation'.[13] On the international scale, Huxley even argues that it is the very existence of 'savage' peoples that creates the conditions for interstate conflict, for 'so long as the natural man increases and multiplies without restraint… they will necessitate, a struggle for existence as sharp as any that ever went on under the *régime* of war.'[14] It is only when civilisation comes to encompass the whole globe that peace will break out, 'not merely among nations, but among men, and the struggle for existence will be at an end.'[15] Huxley therefore presents one of the starkest distinctions between the so-called 'savage' and 'civilised', the former being agents of chaos and modern remnants of an historical condition of brutality: 'the primal pugnacity of man'.[16]

In this piece then, Huxley is clearly arguing with Darwin against the Darwinians. Modern society is theorised specifically as an *escape from* the struggle for existence, which 'savages' are seen to define. The use of the 'ethical' and the 'non-ethical man' in place of the 'civilised/savage' encompasses this idea, also anticipating 1894's *Evolution and Ethics*, where Huxley developed this idea in a strident yet exasperated anti-Spencerian attack—

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[11] Ibid., 736 emphasis mine.
[12] Ibid. emphasis mine.
[13] Ibid., 740.
[14] Ibid., 738.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Crook 1994, 60.

a last gasp in defending an 'ethical' Darwinism (one rooted in the distinctive morality of civilisation) against the crude holism of what it had become.[17]

Huxley's disdain for the Darwinian internationalists' 'misunderstanding' of his friend's theory thus shows us just how profound the (mis)reception of Darwin's theory was to become after the *Origin* hit the shelves. To demonstrate, let us thus push ourselves from the riverbank and drift a little further downstream away from Darwin.

Savage mnemonics in the Whately-Lubbock-Campbell debate

> 'And how will man ever succeed in seeing himself as Nature formed him, through all the changes which the succession of times and of things must have wrought in his original constitution, and to disentangle what he owes to his own stock from what circumstances and his progress have added to or changed in his primitive state?'[18]
> — Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1755)

Huxley's notion of modern 'savages' as somehow representing an earlier historical condition was an idea widely mooted. It can be seen most fully in a much-forgotten debate in the two decades after the *Origin*'s publication concerning the character of ancient 'primitive' human beings and their relation to the contemporary 'savage'. It was a debate fought by Richard Whately, John Lubbock, and George Campbell.

Darwin himself had mused on this thorny issue: 'Of individual objects, perhaps no one is more certain to create astonishment', he says, 'than the first sight in his native haunt of a real barbarian,—of man in his lowest and most savage state. One's mind hurries back over past centuries, and then asks, could our progenitors have been such as these?'[19] In a kind of scientised reprise of the contractarian debates of the Enlightenment,[20] the Whately-Lubbock-Campbell debate followed this inquiry, compelled by two interlinked questions which drew on then-recent anthropological empirics: what did the original 'primitive' form of humanity look like; and, inversely, what could contemporary 'savage' humans tell us about this original condition?

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[17] I will return to *Evolution and Ethics* next chapter, in the discussion of Yan Fu's Chinese translations of Huxley.
[18] Rousseau 1997, 124.
[19] Darwin 1839, vol. 3: Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836, 605.
[20] Indeed, Whately makes an attack at Rousseau: 'As for all the alleged advantages of savage life… all this exists only in poems and romances… or in the theories of such philosophers as the well-known Rousseau, who have undertaken to maintain a monstrous paradox because it affords the best exercise for their ingenuity.' Whately 1854, 4–5.

Seeking answers, Victorians often looked to 'savages' as bearing evidence of a prior state, as contemporary records of historical evolutions. In their form, one could glimpse the deepest text of 'nature's palimpsest', to use Digain Williams' evocative phrase.[21] Or, in Cannon Schmitt's terminology, this was 'a *mnemonics of savagery*, turning to savages in remembrance of the origins of the civilized.'[22] In turn, this had profound implications too for how 'civilised' man was to be seen in contrast. As Lubbock summarises it, the debate cut two ways, between degenerationists and progressionists:

> Many writers have considered that man was at first a mere savage, and that our history has on the whole been a *steady progress towards civilisation*, though at times, and at sometimes for centuries, the race has been stationary, or even has retrograded. Other authors of no less eminence have taken a diametrically opposite view. According to them, *man was from the commencement pretty much what he is at present*… more ignorant of the arts and sciences than now, but with mental qualities not much inferior to our own. Savages they consider to be the degenerate descendants of far superior ancestors.[23]

Whately's original civiliser

Beginning chronologically, Richard Whately (then the Archbishop of Dublin) made his argument in a speech to the Young Men's Christian Association, then published in 1845 as a pamphlet entitled *On the Origin of Civilisation* (oddly anticipating the title of Darwin's great work). Whilst preceding the *Origin*, the influence of the *Voyage of the Beagle* is obvious across the text.

Whately's ambition was to show that 'savages of the most extreme kind'—as he puts it, 'men in the lowest degree, or even anything approaching to the lowest degree of barbarism in which they can possibly subsist at all'[24]—were simply incapable of *ever* having advanced to an improved state. On the frontispiece of the book, Darwin's ur-savage Fuegians represented a contemporary case of this extreme condition, and a puzzle that required an answer. Such peoples to Whately, like Darwin, are described with complete disgust:

> If you look to the very lowest and rudest races that inhabit the earth, you behold beings sunk almost to the level of the brute-creation, and, in some points, even below the brutes. Ignorant and thoughtless, gross in their tastes, filthy in their habits, with the passions of men, but with the intellect of little children, they roam, half-

[21] Williams 1922.
[22] Schmitt 2004, 57 emphasis mine.
[23] Lubbock 1868, 1 emphasis mine.
[24] Whately 1854, 21.

> naked and half-starved… And they are sunk, for the most part, quite as low, morally, as they are intellectually…[25]

It therefore proved a logical requirement for Whately—a man of God and Victorian sensibilities in an age of evolution—to explain how such 'brutes' could ever have advanced, all *without* equating the 'civilised' with 'savagery' and whilst also maintaining Christian orthodoxy.[26] For Whately, it was evidently 'a complete moral certainty that [such] men left unassisted in what is called a state of nature… never did, and never can, raise themselves from that condition.'[27] Such spontaneous progress or 'self-civilising' was impossible. The trick was to theorise a passive, static savagery and an active, interventionist civilisation. He thus contends that there must always be a 'civiliser' in transitions out of 'utter barbarism': an outside encounter with civilisation which raised savage peoples.[28] Thus, 'the first introducer of civilisation among savages, is, and must be, Man in a more improved state.'[29]

In Filmerian style, Whately extends this logic backwards to the very first condition of savagery, musing that because there could not have been a human civiliser in such a condition—'in the *beginning*, therefore, of the human race… there was no man to *effect* it'[30]—this must have been the work of divine intervention. That is, 'there must have been, in short, something of a revelation made to the first or to some subsequent generation of our species'.[31] The Biblical narrative can thus be salvaged. Like Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Whately conjectures evolution-by-intervention: the 'civilised' mysteriously leading the 'savage' down a path of improvement, thereby also naturalising imperialism. *Contemporary* 'savages' were, in Whately's theory, not just the stagnant remnants of an unsaved brutal antiquity, but potentially 'degenerated' peoples who had fallen from a once previous, civilised condition: devolution, not evolution.

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[25] Ibid., 3–4.
[26] As Nietzsche put it: 'We wished to awaken the feeling of man's sovereignty by showing his divine birth: this path is now forbidden, since a monkey stands at the entrance.' Cited in: Foucault 1977, 143.
[27] Whately 1854, 17.
[28] In an odd way, Whately's argument therefore makes a claim of uneven and combined development.
[29] Whately 1854, 19.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

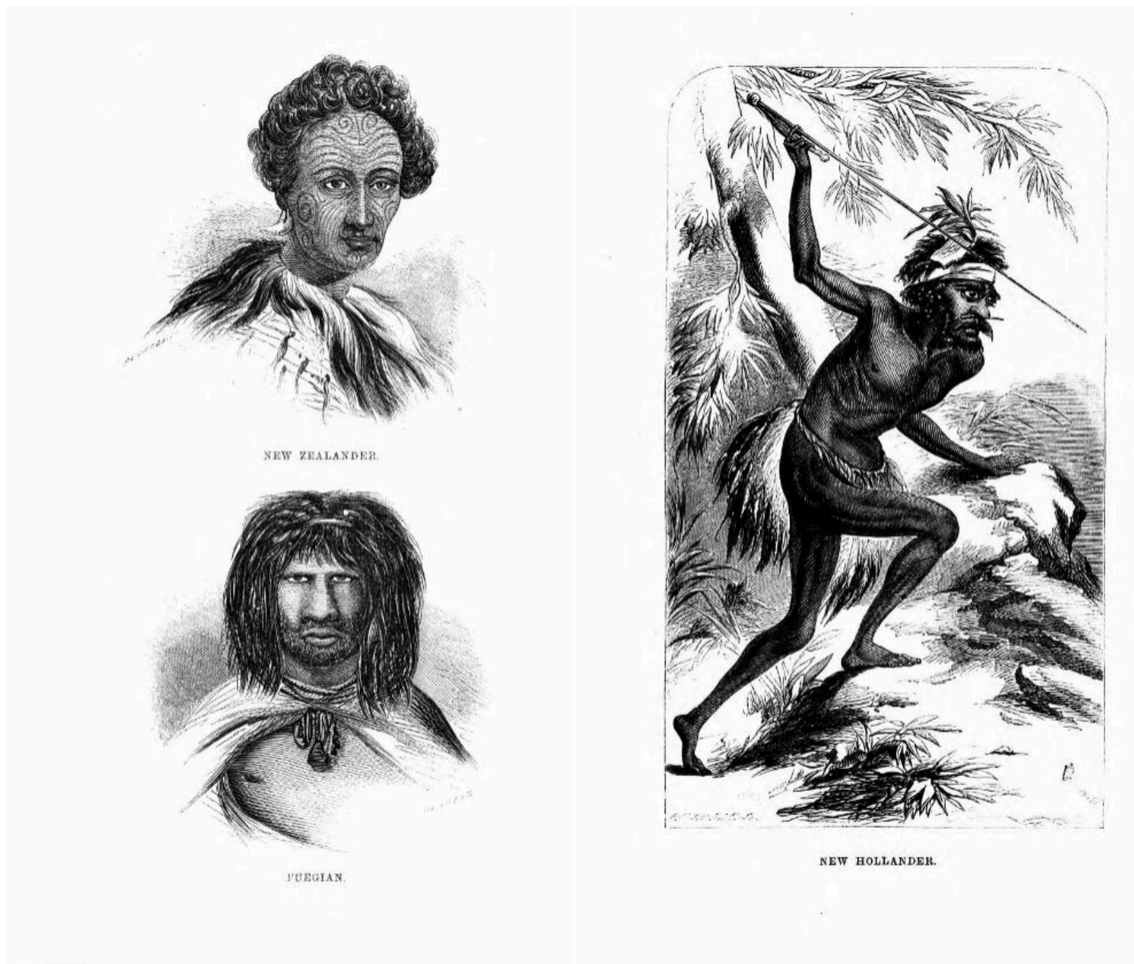

Fig. 20. Darwin's Fuegian in a triptych of 'savages':
Frontispiece of *On the Origin of Civilisation* (1854)

Lubbock's progressivism

Whately's odd theory was not ignored; indeed, 'the apparent absurdity of Whately's degenerationist argument should not obscure the fact that in the mid-nineteenth century, in one form or another, it had considerable force and enjoyed wide acceptance in both lay and scientific circles.'[32] It did not go uncriticised, either. John Lubbock, a close friend of Darwin's (again, one of the few privy to his theory pre-publication), gave the most forceful response in his piece 'The Early Condition of Man',[33] which was first read at the

[32] Gillespie 1977, 42.
[33] Lubbock theorised his argument more fully the following year in *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man* (1870).

British Association for the Advancement of Science in Dundee in 1867[34] and published the following year in the *Anthropological Review*.

In the essay, Lubbock parses out both the logical and empirical problems in Whately's degenerationist idea of a 'static savagery', and instead advances a contrasting progressionist view that bridged the 'savage'/'civilised' divide: 'there are indications of progress even among savages', he acclaims, and 'among the most civilised nations there are traces of original barbarism.'[35] In contrast to Whately's Hobbesian move to utterly separate 'savagery' and 'civilisation', Lubbock thus opts for a gradualism explicated with Darwinian evolutionism. For Lubbock, 'Whately's taunt to produce a race of self-civilizing savages' was a logically impossible bar to disproving his theory since there could be no evidence of such peoples beyond proto-historical records: 'Lubbock complained that the Archbishop had framed the question so as to exclude the possibility of proof: an alien eyewitness who could leave a record of such progress would necessarily be civilized and so destroy the required isolation of the savages; while a people sufficiently literate to leave a contemporary record of their own elevation would not be savages.'[36]

Instead, Lubbock draws on the anthropological evidence of his time (from the presence of marriage to the Australian boomerang[37]) to try and *empirically* prove a spectrum of development, to show that 'existing savages are not the descendants of civilised ancestors; that the primitive condition of man was one of utter barbarism; that from this condition several races *have* independently raised themselves. These views follow, I think, from strictly scientific considerations.'[38] For Lubbock, Whately's idea of a lost age of civilisation simply had no evidence to support it. His conclusion is thus progressive, but still imperial: 'if the past has been one of progress, we may fairly hope that the future will be so too; *that the blessings of civilisation will not only be extended to other countries and other nations*, but that even in our own land they will be rendered more equable.'[39]

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[34] At the reception of Lubbock's speech of the text in Dundee, Darwin's ur-savage was again centre-stage: 'the best account that had ever been given of this early state of man was that given by their friend Charles Darwin, whose eminent name was well known. He described the condition of things in Tierra del Fuego, which had been unvisited for hundreds of years.' Lubbock 1868, 15.

[35] Ibid., 5.

[36] Gillespie 1977, 43.

[37] The boomerang example was most famously discussed by Tylor.

[38] Lubbock 1868, 13 emphasis mine. Lubbock concedes that 'while I do not mean for a moment to deny that there are cases in which nations have retrograded, I regard these as exceptional instances.'

[39] Ibid., 13–14 emphasis mine.

Curiously, Lubbock here was departing somewhat from a view advanced just a few years earlier, in *Prehistoric Times* (1865). There, Lubbock's description of 'savages' is much closer to Whately's. Working backwards from the present through the annals of time, Lubbock lurches forward to the contemporary savage as representative of primeval man. The book is indeed 'a rather grim Cook's tour of savagery, sweeping eastward from the Hottentots in Africa through the Veddahs, the Australians, the Tongans, the American Indians, down to the Fuegians at the tip of South America.'[40] In his descriptions of such peoples, 'Lubbock belonged to what might be called the "too offensive for description" school of ethnography; his account of savage nations is a one-hundred page elaboration of that apocryphal nineteenth-century ethnographic account: "manners, beastly; religion, none".'[41] Lubbock's descriptions there are thus closer to Whately's:

> There are, indeed, many who doubt whether happiness is increased by civilisation, and who talk of the free and noble savage. But the true savage is neither free nor noble; he is a slave to his own wants, his own passions; imperfectly protected from the weather, he suffers from the cold by night and the heat of the sun by day; ignorant of agriculture, living by the chase, and improvident in success, hunger always stares him in the face, and often drives him to the dreadful alternative of cannibalism or death.[42]

What, then, accounts then for Lubbock's shift from *Prehistoric Times* to the *Origin of Civilisation*? In George Stocking's view, it was purely instrumental: 'Lubbock's view of savagery reflected the demands—and the structure—of his argument… In the absence of adequate archaeological data, he turned to contemporary savagery, focusing on what from his view were its most primitive aspects… But when his argument required a more favourable need, Lubbock's picture of the savage changed somewhat.'[43]

Campbell's inversion of progress

Yet it was Lubbock's shift to the progressionist view that elicited response, with the argument in *Civilisation* controversial precisely due to its flattening of the savagery/civilisation distinction.

[40] Stocking 1987, 153.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Lubbock 1865, 484.
[43] Stocking 1987, 154.

In response, George Campbell (the eighth Duke of Argyll) interjected in 1869[44] with *Primeval Man*—a critique of both Whately and Lubbock's theories, but especially Lubbock's argument as 'very much the weaker of the two.'[45] An avowed Christian like Whately, Campbell is similarly left tying himself in knots in order to square advances in anthropology with his religious beliefs: 'as regards the Primitive Condition of Mankind,' he says, 'it must be remembered that, according to the narrative in Genesis, there never was any generation of men which lived and walked in the primal light.'[46]

In resolution, Campbell seeks to refute Lubbock's progressionist notion that 'traces of barbarism' within contemporary civilisation prove (by reversing the clock) that primeval man was 'savage'. Campbell instead argues that such 'traces or remains of barbarism may be indication of the fact that those nations… *have passed through* a stage of barbarism. But it afford no presumption whatever that barbarism was the Primeval Condition of Man, any more than the traces of Feudalism in the laws of modern Europe prove that feudal principles were born with the Human Race.'[47]

Campbell's argument instead involves the reiteration[48] of Whately's idea of 'degradation': that contemporary 'savages' represent degraded or backward forms of 'civilised' man, thus inverting evolution into *de*volution.[49] Savage peoples were thus not superior to an earlier, primitive condition (a vertical, temporal comparison), but inferior to modern, civilised nations (a horizontal, spatial difference). Again, drawing on Genesis, Campbell claims degradation is inhered in humanity: 'It was the first man who fell. The second man was a murderer. The causes, therefore, of degradation are represented as having begun, so far as the race is concerned, at once.'[50] This notion of degradation could be applied to individuals and nations alike:

> Nothing in the Natural History of Man can be more certain than that both morally, and intellectually, and physically he can, and he often does, sink from a higher to a

[44] Campbell also mounted an earlier attack of Darwin's work in *The Reign of Law* (1867).
[45] Campbell 1869, 5. The Duke of Argyll was also an important interlocuter in the debate over Darwin's theory of beauty (outlined in the second half of the *Descent of Man*), defending an intrinsic religious view of beauty over Darwin's instrumental evolutionary view. Donald and Munro 2009, 15–16.
[46] Campbell 1869, 27.
[47] Ibid., 133–134 emphasis mine.
[48] Indeed, this was precisely Lubbock's characterisation of the Duke of Argyll's attack: 'Replying at the Exeter meeting of the British Association in 1869, Sir John set the tone of progressionist response by charging Argyll with merely reproducing the Archbishop's position "with but slight alteration and somewhat protected by obscurity".' Gillespie 1977, 47.
[49] A related, but not identical, term was that of 'degeneration', when a species undergoes stagnation in its fortunes in natural selection, as in: Lankester 1880. This will be discussed in chapter five.
[50] Campbell 1869, 28.

> lower level. This is true of Man both collectively and individually—of men and of societies of men. Some regions of the world are strewn with the monuments of civilisations which have passed away. Rude and barbarous tribes stare with wonder on the remains of Temples, of which they cannot conceive the purpose, and of Cities which are the dens of beasts.[51]

The progressive promise of Darwinian evolution therefore had a perverse inverse. Again, Darwin becomes a source of authority, with Campbell citing him in full for many pages at length, and the ur-savage again appearing: 'The inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego are perhaps the most degraded among the races of mankind. How could they be otherwise?'[52] For Campbell, the Fuegians demonstrated that weaker races were being driven further afield from civilisation, 'and when the ultimate points of the habitable world are reached, the conditions of existence cause and necessitate a savage and degraded life… The case of the Fuegians is a case in which there can be no doubt whatever the causes of their degraded condition.'[53] Further, he even invokes the example of 'Jemmy Button'[54] (one of the Fuegians taken aboard the *Beagle* and brought back to Britain) as proof of the potentiality of 'civilising savages'.

On the issue of authority, Campbell also acknowledges that common thread amongst these late nineteenth-century conjectural arguments: the legitimating power of science.[55] In Campbell's words, 'both arguments [of Whately and Lubbock] are avowedly conducted irrespective of any belief in the Mosaic narrative of Creation. They both profess to be purely scientific; that is, founded on natural knowledge, and using for the discovery of truth such facts and inferences as are ascertainable by reason.'[56] Even Whately's argument, coming from an Archbishop, states that he did not resort to using the Book of Genesis (unlike Campbell), because he 'thought it important to show,

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[51] Ibid., 156. Campbell's idea of civilisation is largely one of moral and intellectual capacities, rather than simply knowledge of the arts (as Lubbock seems to argue). Here he anticipates the *Descent*.
[52] Ibid., 167.
[53] Ibid., 170–171.
[54] Such crude naming of those natives encountered by Europeans was of course common. The others named by the *Beagle*'s inhabitants on the first expedition included 'Boat Memory' (real name lost), 'Fuegia Basket' (real name yok'cushlu), and 'York Minster' (real name el'leparu). 'Jemmy Button' (real name o'run-del'lico) was supposedly so named because he had been purchased from his parents for the cost of a single button, no doubt a false invention of the Europeans. 'Boat Memory' died of smallpox upon arrival in Plymouth. The other three were returned to their homes on the second (Darwin's) voyage. For a discussion of the hostage Fuegians, see: McEwan, Borrero, and Prieto 1997, 147–148.
[55] Campbell is also relevant in relation to changing perceptions of time in the nineteenth century—in *Primeval Man*, he distinguishes between 'Time-absolute' (quantifiably measure by years) and 'Time-relative' (measurable only by the succession of events). More significant was Lubbock's geological 'Three Age System'.
[56] Campbell 1869, 6 emphasis mine.

independently of that authority and from a monument actually before our eyes—the existence, namely, of civilised man—that there is no escaping such conclusions as agree with the Bible narrative.'[57] Campbell too, despite his consistent invocation of scripture, invokes the mantle of science: 'it is in the same light that [things] will be considered here.'[58]

Across the interchange between these three theorists, then, one sees the early impact of Darwinism on forming new conceptions of savagery rooted in 'deep time'—recast variously as a permanent object of civilised intervention, proof of civilisation's progression, or as a degraded form of humanity—as well as the distinctive appeal of science as powerful category of rhetorical legitimacy. We will return to such themes in chapter five.

Bagehot the martialist

How did the category of *war* 'evolve'? We saw Darwin's main radical innovation in the *Origin* was perennialising war into the natural world—the all-pervasive 'struggle for existence'—so how did this idea influence the British conception of international conflict?

Here I turn to Walter Bagehot, widely recognised for his authoritative work on constitutional theory, *The English Constitution* (1867). However, Bagehot also penned a more unusual book: *Physics and Politics: or, Thoughts on the Application of the Principles of 'Natural Selection' and 'Inheritance' to Political Society* (1872), which arrived the year after the *Descent of Man*, although first published in five parts in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1867 (thus representing a post-*Origin* reception).[59] As its title implies, just as Darwin invoked 'the doctrine of Malthus applied to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms', so Bagehot applies the doctrine of Darwin to the international realm.[60] The reception of the effort was tepid: 'Bagehot surprised his cohorts in 1872 with the relatively abstract *Physics and Politics*, his one real effort—if a preliminary one—to devise a "science of society", that

[57] Ibid., 7.
[58] Ibid., 27.
[59] Darwin himself read Bagehot's serialised book, and indeed references it in the *Descent*. Crook 1994, 49.
[60] At least, Darwin's doctrine as understood by Bagehot. Here we see the unusual reception of Darwinism as noted earlier. As Crook argues, 'it was symptomatic of the confused world of biological discourse at the time that a book making such a Darwinian promise should contain a high degree of Lamarckian theory.' Ibid., 48.

elusive endeavour of the age. The Victorians were not overly impressed—partly no doubt because he was regarded as a brilliant journalist, not an academic.'[61] Yet it remains a curious work.

Bagehot begins by marvelling at the Victorian age: 'a new world of inventions—of railways and telegraphs—has grown up around us which we cannot help seeing; a new world of ideas is in the air and affects us, though we do not see it.'[62] What created this 'new world' which Britain was at the apex of? Of those 'principles [which] change the philosophy of our politics',[63] Bagehot focusses on the classic Victorian obsession: the idea of *progress*, which Darwinian evolutionism espoused the purest version of.[64] As Bagehot notes, 'our ordinary conversation, our inevitable and ineradicable prejudices tend to make us think that "Progress" is the normal fact in human society… history refutes this. The ancients had no conception of progress… they did not even entertain the idea.'[65] Even if they had not recognised it, progress was something of a transtemporal feature of political life: 'not even in the savages of Terra del Fuego [*sic*], do we find men who have *not* got some way.'[66]

So, what drives progress? Darwinism provided the fulcrum—specifically, the selectionist motif. Like Whately, Lubbock, and Campbell,[67] primitive man remains central to this vision, but Bagehot focuses on the *motor* of development: 'the Use of Conflict'.[68] The logic of selection allows Bagehot to propose three iron laws of progress:

> First. In every particular state of the world, those nations which are strongest tend to prevail over the others; and in certain marked peculiarities the strongest tend to be the best.
>
> Secondly. Within every particular nation the type or types of character then and there most attractive tend to prevail; and the most attractive, though with exceptions, is what we call the best character.
>
> Thirdly. Neither of these competitions is in most historic conditions intensified by extrinsic forces, but in some conditions, such as those now prevailing in the most influential part of the world, both are so intensified.[69]

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[61] Ibid., 47.
[62] Bagehot 1872, 1. On railways and telegraphs in Victorian imperial thought, see: Bell 2021.
[63] Bagehot 1872, 11.
[64] This focus on the *idea* of progress (rather than any material factors) as the central reason for the West's preponderance we shall see echoed in Yan Fu's Darwinism, to be discussed in the following chapter.
[65] Bagehot 1872, 41.
[66] Ibid., 42 emphasis mine.
[67] It is likely that Bagehot read these authors. At one point, he makes a distinctly Whatelyian argument in stating that 'if some superhuman power had set down the thoughts and actions of men ages before they could set them down for themselves—we should know that the first step in civilisation was the hardest step.' Ibid., 52.
[68] Ibid., 41.
[69] Ibid., 43.

In short, this was political evolution by natural selection of military advantage. Bagehot was no thoroughgoing martialist, however, and he does note the limits of war—virtues such as 'humanity, charity, and a nice sense of the rights of others, it certainly does not foster.'[70] Nevertheless, it is to war that we owe the march of progress in the very first place, for 'in the early age of man—the "fighting age"… there was a considerable, though not certain tendency towards progress. The best nations conquered the worst.'[71] Even virtues which today we do not consider martial (such as the love of the law) were once necessary to discipline nations in order to defeat others. Thus, whilst Bagehot 'shared liberal hopes that the art of organised killing would wither away in a world dedicated to talk and trade… Nevertheless he recognised with Whiggish caution that warfare was a biologically and culturally entrenched human institution—one that probably rested on an instinctive basis, and had been crucial in fostering innovation and variability. As such it would be long a-dying.'[72]

Significantly, Bagehot also 'observed that progress was a *European* concept. Many societies—savage, Oriental—failed to improve.'[73] Whilst not mooting degeneration, for Bagehot contemporary 'savages' were, in their geographical isolation, left outside of the mechanics of the natural selection: 'this principle explains at once why the "protected" regions of the world… are of necessity backward.'[74] 'Savages', then, are a case of inertness, a consequence of the inaction of the iron laws of progress; at the same time, they would be destroyed precisely once brought into contact with the 'advanced' nations. So too for 'Oriental' societies, which Bagehot includes as exemplars of 'the whole family of arrested civilisations… [Those nations which] seem to be ready to advance to something good—to have prepared all the means to advance to something good,—and then to have stopped, and not advanced. India, Japan, China, almost every sort of Oriental civilisation, though differing in nearly all other things, are in this alike. They look as if they had paused when there was no reason for pausing.'[75] As we shall see in the

[70] Ibid., 78.
[71] Ibid., 81. Bagehot, typical of the period, engaged in his own form of historical age-making, counting three stages in civilisation's evolution: the 'preliminary (or race-making) age', the 'fighting (or nation-making) age', and the present 'age of discussion'.
[72] Crook 1994, 50.
[73] Crook 1994, 49 emphasis mine.
[74] Bagehot 1872, 82.
[75] Ibid., 53.

following chapter, Chinese and Japanese Darwinians actually shared this notion of arrested Orientalism.

Such evolutionist-selectionist visions as those of Bagehot's would recur across Darwinian internationalism. Another striking example is the odd figure of James Ellis Barker—a homeopath originally trained as an historian who 'warned constantly of the danger of war between Britain and Germany.'[76] In *Great and Greater Britain* (1902), Barker argued explicitly that if 'might is right in international politics… the law of the survival of the fittest and strongest, which rules the whole animal and vegetable creation, applies with equal force to man and to his political associations'.[77] Consequently, the world of international politics:

> …was not a world of ease and peace, but a world of strife and war. Nature is ruled by the law of the struggle for existence and of the survival of the fittest and the strongest. States, like trees and animals, are engaged in a never-ending struggle for room, food, light, and air, and that struggle is a blessing in disguise, for it is the cause of all progress. Had it not been for that struggle, the world would still be a wilderness inhabited by its aboriginal savages.[78]

For such martialists, war was therefore not only a 'natural fact' but, as in Darwin, a productive force: '*The abolition of war would be a misfortune to mankind.* It would lead not to the survival of the fittest and strongest, but to the survival of the sluggard and the unfit, and therefore to the degeneration of the human race.'[79]

The more towering figure of Herbert Spencer was another similarly drawn to such notions. Although more Lamarckian than Darwinian, Spencer—the originator of the term 'survival of the fittest'—spent his life outlining an all-encompassing evolutionist philosophy: the 'Synthetic Philosophy', driven by a 'fundamental "law of metamorphosis"… [i.e.] evolution, to which he gave the highest general sense possible, incorporating not only organisms but the inorganic and the social… from the formation of concentrations of matter… to the formation of social institutions and coherent forms of social life and cooperation out of primal, undifferentiated human hordes of asocial beings.'[80]

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[76] Claeys 2019, 181.
[77] Barker 1902, 23.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 25.
[80] Burrow 2000, 44–45.

Like Bagehot, Spencer's evolutionist theory of politics was thus above all a teleological one: 'Progress,' he asserts, 'is not an accident, but a necessity. Instead of civilization being artificial, *it is a part of nature*; all of a piece with the development of the embryo or the unfolding of a flower.'[81] In Spencer's international thought, this evolutionism also took on martialist form, despite a concern with the long-term possibility of peace between nations. 'It had to be reluctantly admitted,' he says, 'that war, everyway and always hateful, has nonetheless been a factor in civilization, by bringing about the consolidation of groups… until great nations are formed.'[82] Like Bagehot, the paradox thereof was that the cultivation of martialist cooperative skills would eventually render war moot,[83] moving societies from the 'militant' to the 'industrial' form.

Yet the high tide of aggressive imperialism (which Spencer strongly opposed) seemed to contradict this evolutionary process toward peaceability. His theory of development was thus somewhat confused on colonisation: 'From war has been gained all that it had to give. The peopling of the Earth by the more powerful and intelligent race, is a benefit in great measure achieved; and what remains to be done… [is] the quiet pressure of a spreading industrial civilization on a barbarism that slowly dwindles.'[84] Institutionally, were it not empire that was to perform such a task, 'Spencer [instead] hoped that in the collaboration of the Concert of Europe he could detect an "end to the re-barbarization which is continually undoing civilization",'[85] revivifying the march of Western civilisation through counter-revolution.

However, others, as we shall now see, placed more stock in the imperial project, with Darwinism (itself born of imperialism) radically changing how many in the imperial core thought about an institution at its zenith.

From imperial sciences to natural empires

The discursive arena of the Whately-Lubbock-Campbell debate outlined prior was the Anthropological Society, yet very few studies of international thought have actually

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[81] Spencer 1851, 80 emphasis mine. Albeit, this Lamarckian claim preceded the *Origin*.
[82] Spencer 1908, 569.
[83] On this 'paradox', see: Schuurman 2016.
[84] Spencer 2010, 664.
[85] Schuurman 2016, 524.

looked more directly at anthropologists themselves as contributors to international theory.[86] This is a striking oversight, considering the disciplinary similarity of IR and anthropology—both being fundamentally concerned with societal difference, and both often occupied with the question of how political obligation might be sustained in the absence of central authority (in anthropology, at the level of stateless societies; in IR, at the international level). Indeed, as Brian Schmidt notes, 'the field's antecedents included international law, diplomatic history, the peace movement, moral philosophy, geography, and *anthropology*.'[87] Whilst the other 'antecedents' have enjoyed substantive engagement—the history of international law and diplomatic history being particularly well-served—the influence of anthropology on IR's 'pre-history' has been largely ignored.

This dovetails with my focus here on Darwinism because, in Britain, the emergence of disciplinary anthropology came at exactly the same time as an expanded empire wrought the question of societal difference to the fore of imperial governance. Indeed, in the history of anthropological theory, the earliest theoretical approach was that of 'evolutionism', with the 1860s (i.e. the gap between Darwin's *Origin* and *Descent*) the formative period of 'classical evolutionism'.[88] For these armchair evolutionists, all societies were thought to pass through those three classic stages of social development: savagery, barbarism, and civilisation,[89] with human diversity conceived as different stages in this single developmental process. For the evolutionists, comparing accounts of diverse customs of Western and non-Western peoples across time might therefore allow for the reconstruction of a single, grand history of humanity's progression.[90]

Yet the pursuit of anthropological research served less as an exercise in encyclopaedic curiosity as much as ideological Othering: 'Surveying the world's cultures… men such as E.B. Tylor had no doubt that the monogamous family and an austere Christianity (or a godless rational morality) represented the triumph of virtue over primitive habits.'[91] The evolutionist movement was thus 'a literature where the line

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[86] The cross-disciplinary interchange has been largely methodological, as discussed in: Lie 2013.
[87] Schmidt 2013, 6 emphasis mine.
[88] Stocking 1987, 239; Candea 2018.
[89] For an exemplar, see: Tylor 1865.
[90] A story of progression and increasing complexity that is ultimately rooted in the idea of *the state* as an inevitability. For a counter-history which usurps this anti-nomadic 'Universal History', see: Ringmar 2020. This draws on the pathbreaking arguments of recent anthropologists and historians who have shown that the foundation of states was in many ways destructive to the lives of their inhabitants. See especially: Scott 2017.
[91] Kuklick 1991, 22.

between "scientific" anthropological views and personal cultural values was often blurred',[92] with the 'scientific' mantle a legitimising veneer.

In Britain, anthropology—itself 'born of the colonial situation'[93]—was closely linked with the high-tide of British imperialism, with anthropologists both *theorising* cultural practices that had been discovered within the Empire and acting as *practical* assistants in the exercise of colonial governance. Indeed, the discipline defined itself by its practicality as a 'useful scholarship… [and] anthropologists frequently advertised their field's practical value.'[94] Such was exemplified in the grand lobbying effort (including by Lubbock, amongst others) to establish an 'imperial bureau of ethnology', conceived as an academic arm of the Empire 'to serve [these] dual objectives: *to increase scientific knowledge* by recording those varieties of human behaviour that were rapidly disappearing at home and abroad; and *to assist colonial administrators* by interpreting the values and customs of those peoples who had come under British domination.'[95]

Besides anthropology, evolutionary natural science (to which it was closely linked) was similarly imperialist, with fieldwork in colonial territories being a particularly important resource.[96] As Mark Clement argues, an individual here that one might not expect is that of Alfred Russel Wallace—the 'co-creator', alongside Darwin, of the idea of natural selection and renowned for his anti-imperialism.[97] Yet, whilst Wallace 'has been acknowledged by historians as a staunch critic of the "new" imperialism of the late nineteenth century, he is not customarily portrayed as an opponent of British colonialism in *mid-century*',[98] i.e. during the most important period of his scientific research. On the contrary, 'Wallace associated himself with European colonial regimes during his long stint of field work in the Malay Archipelago… [and] depended on colonial networks to facilitate his research and collection of specimens for financial gain.'[99]

This experience in the Malay would be critical for Wallace, much in the same way as the voyage on the *Beagle* for Darwin. In the Dutch East Indies, Wallace would happen

[92] Stocking 1987, 152.
[93] Kuklick 1991, 26.
[94] Ibid., 6–7.
[95] Ibid., 46 emphasis mine.
[96] An enormous historical literature now exists on the theme of science and empire, but for a strong discussion on science and British imperialism specifically, see: Drayton 2005.
[97] As he argued in 1899: 'We, as a nation, have no right whatever to claim any superiority as regards our treatment of those less civilised people with whom we come in contact.' Wallace 1899.
[98] Clement 2016, 56 emphasis mine.
[99] Ibid.

upon his two most important discoveries: the idea of natural selection and the biogeographical demarcation line between Asian and Australian fauna ('Wallace's Line').[100] He also became enraptured by political matters, becoming particularly obsessed with the Dutch Cultivation System, even writing to Darwin himself to ask why he had not mentioned his discussion of the Cultivation System in his commendation of Wallace's book. When the subject drifted from science to politics, Darwin's response was typically coy: 'I read all that you said about the Dutch Government with much interest, but I do not feel I know enough to form any opinion against yours.'[101]

Wallace would develop this focus on international politics more explicitly in a striking paper[102] delivered to the aforementioned Anthropological Society in 1864,[103] which addressed the matter of 'civilisation' more directly.[104] Wallace's language is potent, and draws thoroughly on the extinction discourse:

> It is the same great law of "the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life," which leads to the inevitable extinction of all those low and mentally undeveloped populations with which Europeans come in contact… The intellectual and moral, as well as the physical qualities of the European are superior; the same powers and capacities which have made him rise in a few centuries from the condition of the wandering savage… to his present state of culture and advancement… *enable him when in contact with the savage man, to conquer in the struggle for existence, and to increase at his expense*… just as the weeds of Europe overrun North America and Australia, extinguishing native productions by the inherent vigour of their organisation, and by their greater capacity for existence and multiplication.[105]

This is a very significant moment, being a very early case of applying Darwin's theory to human beings—perhaps only the second, following one year after Huxley's *Man's Place in Nature* (1863)—and one of the first to thoroughly utilise the selectionist motif in terms of theorising a general law of selection between nations. Whilst drawing of course on

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[100] van Wyhe 2013.
[101] Clement 2016, 61.
[102] The commentary on the paper is also notable (again!) for the appearance of the ur-savage, brought up by Thomas Bendyshe: 'the mind of the European is so extremely developed… [unlike] those races of men who certainly have not been developed far beyond the animal, the negro, or the inhabitant of Tierra del Fuego'. Wallace 1864, clxxiv.
[103] As an attendant of the Anthropological Society's meetings, Wallace contradicted Darwin and Huxley who both boycotted the group because of its racial polygenism; they attended the liberal monogenic Ethnological Society instead. Wallace maintained that his attendance was purely practical, as the Ethnologist's meetings clashed with the Zoological Society's meetings which he also attended. On this, see: Clement 2016, 71.
[104] In doing so it draws on that great civilisational thinker, François Guizot: first in a discussion of the impact of climate on European civilisation (clxiv); and then to concur with Guizot's assertion that 'for myself, I am convinced that there is a destiny of humanity, a transmission of the aggregate of civilisation' (clxix). On Guizot's role in developing the idea of civilisation, see: Bowden 2009 ch. 2.
[105] Wallace 1864, clxiv–clxv.

Darwin's writing on 'savage extinction' in the *Voyage of the Beagle*, Wallace also seems to anticipate many of the arguments of the *Descent*.

Wallace's language of 'overrunning weeds'[106] also brings us to the way in which the naturalist and organicist motifs (the equivalence of politics with the natural world and the vision of polities as organisms) were highly potent for the *theorisation* of empire in the imperial core. John Robert Seeley, the most sophisticated theorist of British imperialism, argued for instance that colonisation took two forms: the modern; and the natural, '*natural* in the sense that it has manifest analogies in the natural world. "Colonies are like fruits which only cling till they ripen," said Turgot. Colonisation, say others, is like the swarming of bees; or it is like the marriage and migration to another house of the grown-up son.'[107] Yet Seeley soon collapses his own distinction:

> And yet the modern system *might be represented as natural also*… is there anything necessarily unnatural… that the State is capable of indefinite growth and expansion? The ripe fruit dropping from the tree and giving rise to another tree may be natural, but so too is the acorn spreading into the huge oak that has hundreds of branches and thousands of leaves.[108]

Admittedly this is an impressionistic Darwinism, since Seeley never explicitly cited Darwin himself.[109] By contrast, the Liberal politician Charles Wentworth Dilke was more unambiguously Darwinian in his *Greater Britain* (1868), half-memoir and half-tract.[110] There, in an extensive discussion—indeed, an entire chapter entitled 'The Two Flies'—he draws parallels between the natural selection of the local flies of New Zealand and the fate of the Māori peoples, echoing Wallace's description of 'overrunning weeds':

> The case of the flies is plain enough. The Maori and the English fly live on the same food, and require about the same amount of warmth and moisture: the one which is best fitted to the common conditions will gain the day, and drive out the other… The English fly is the best possible fly of the whole world, and will naturally beat down and exterminate, or else starve out, the merely provincial Maori fly… That which is true of our animal and vegetable productions is true also of our man.[111]

Dilke thus like others saw the 'savage' as to be inevitably eradicated as a result of 'the salutary spread of "Saxondom" around the globe… [prophesising that] "the Red Indians have no future. In twenty years there will scarcely be one of pure blood alive." In New

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[106] Also anticipating the eugenic use of this notion, to be discussed in chapter five.
[107] Seeley 1888, 37.
[108] Ibid., 56 emphasis mine.
[109] Crook 1999, 647.
[110] It is important to note, however, that Dilke underwent something of a critical turn in his views on the new imperialism of the last decade of the century. Lindqvist 1997, 25–27.
[111] Dilke 1869, 274–275.

Zealand, the Maori "numbered 200,000" in 1840, but "they number 20,000" thirty years later.'[112] He also argued that it was evolutionary adaptation that explains the differentiation of this 'inevitable' destruction: 'Because of their faculty for imitation, Africans fare better than the "conservative" and rigid "American savage"; it is more difficult for Dilke to explain the vanishing of the Maori, both because he believes them to be more flexible than "the Red Indians" and because, in his view, they have not been subjected to genocide as have the Tasmanian and Australian aboriginals.'[113]

The shift under Darwinism, as with 'savagery', was therefore from empire as a kind of moral-institutional mission to defences of empire in naturalist-organicist terms—that empire was simply an ineradicable pattern of political behaviour inscribed in nature, with imperial expansion often likened to organic processes of expansion and domination, like the growth and spread of a plant across an ecosystem, overwhelming 'less fit' species. Such notions also seeped into the popular discourse, as evinced in a curious little piece in the *Telegraph* in 1869. A kind of state of the union address, the piece reflects on the 'state of savages' in the mid-nineteenth century: 'Those delightful friends of youth, "the savages," are almost everywhere having a bad time of it,'[114] it opens. We are then told of the cause of their misfortune:

> In the old days, civilisation spread slowly and imperceptibly. Then it extended, as a drop of ink does upon blotting-paper, by gradual concentric advances; now, like a plant which has passed through the early stages… it shoots out its suckers and branches in all directions, going right to the heart of strange places and peoples at a bound…[115]

Similarly, on reflecting on Bismarck's legacy of 'a tenure of office of nearly 28 years' at the time of his resignation in 1890, the *Times* captured the pessimistic *Zeitgeist* in thoroughly Darwinian terms. Countering those hypocritical 'sentimentalists' who criticised the imperial expansion of foreign powers whilst lauding their own national adventures, it is argued that such expansion cannot be judged in any way, as it is simply inscribed in the natural order of things:

> [It] pretty generally prevails that mankind acts rightly in spreading over the face of the globe, and that higher races are destined to supplant lower ones… Ignorance of

[112] Brantlinger 2003, 6.

[113] Ibid. We shall see this idea of 'savages' being differentially adapted reappear in the discussion of the Zulus in chapter five.

[114] Those delightful friends of youth 1869.

[115] Ibid. The author is keen that we ought not to feel sympathy: 'Nobody, of course, cares for wild beasts and savages, excepting boys; and civilisation is doubtless the right thing.'

history lies at the bottom of all the reasoning of the sentimentalists. Might is ultimately the true and only source of right… And can we be astonished if fitness—that is, physical, intellectual, and moral superiority—carries away the palm in international competition? Is it not an additional proof of the unity of nature, this analogy of the laws governing human fate to those regulating the animal and vegetable kingdoms? Higher levels are attained by evolution; aptness of for the conditions of terrestrial life insures [*sic*] the rise of those who are fit to make mankind soar upwards, while a want of the requisite qualities provides for the elimination of those who drag humanity downwards.[116]

In visions such as these, ethical concerns were consumed by the brute demands of natural fact: 'It may be objected that physical force comes in for too considerable a share in the prizes of the struggle for existence—that moral and intellectual qualities ought to weigh more,'[117] the piece muses. These 'sentimentalist' concerns were said to be unscientific and ignorant: the past and the future was, and would be, a history of imperial struggle.[118]

The 'closure of the world'

'The world… is nearly all parcelled out, and what there is left of it is being divided up, conquered, and colonised. To think of these stars… that you see overhead at night, these vast worlds which we can never reach. I would annex the planets if I could; I often think of that. It makes me sad to see them so clear and yet so far.'[119]
— Cecil John Rhodes (n.d.)

'There is a distribution of organisms in Space, and there is a distribution of organisms in Time.'[120]
— Herbert Spencer (1893)

This transformation of the category of empire within the imperial core (into the vision of a crowded spread of organisms) was also informed by a profoundly changed historical situation: what we might call the 'imperial claustrophobia' which defined the final decades of the long nineteenth century.

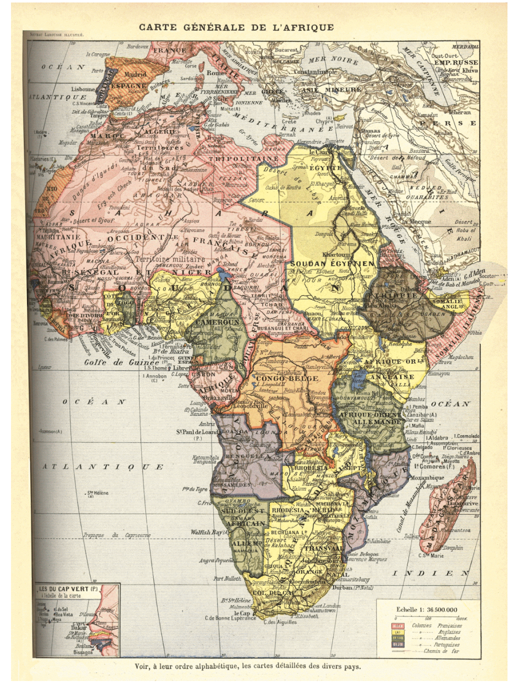
Just as individuals are born, flourish, and die in domestic societies, so too do polities in international society. In the long nineteenth century, the life chances of

[116] (FROM A GERMAN CORRESPONDENT.). The Expansion of Germany 1890.
[117] Ibid.
[118] I shall return to the popular discourse of empire in more detail in chapter five.
[119] As recounted by W.T. Stead in: Rhodes and Stead 1902, 190. Rhodes's desire to 'annex the planets' was not unique; rather, the enclosure of the terrestrial, inner spaces in the late nineteenth century would indeed logically lead to the idea of the colonisation of extra-terrestrial, outer spaces. This would become a key theme of twentieth-century international thought. On this, see: Deudney 2020.
[120] Spencer 1893, 393. Cited in: Kearns 2009, 63.

polities[121] became a particularly salient theme in an age of turbulence, wherein international social space was continually reconfigured on new lines. Across the globe, the final decades of the nineteenth century witnessed dramatic changes which heralded the 'death' of old feudal states, the 'birth' of new national states,[122] and the expansion and spread of national empires.[123] This is partly why Darwinism was so appealing, as its vision of organic evolutionary development via existential struggle could account for the dynamics of the period—of widespread polity birth, growth, decay, and death.

Yet a distinctly different feature of this international social space was its newfound finitude. That is, with the rise of the new imperialism, the 'shrinking of the world'[124] that defined late nineteenth-century globalisation was driven not only a deepening economic and cultural interconnection, but also an increasing territorial competition over an *ever-shrinking amount of space*. As Jürgen Osterhammel summarises, by the end of the century, 'the planet was becoming more and more "closed." The space in which new dynamic forces might seek an outlet was diminishing all the time. International conflicts would therefore increasingly result in struggles to divide up the world and to redivide what was already divided.'[125] International social space was thereby packed in more and more tightly as the final imagined *terra nullius* vanished and European empires sought to secure the last spaces of potential expansion.

[121] I owe this term to Quentin Bruneau.
[122] For a good historical account of the legal recognition of these new states by the old dynastical powers, see: Fabry 2010 ch. 3.
[123] The relationship of British nationalism to imperialism in this period is a huge topic. For a good discussion, see: Bell 2007.
[124] Harvey 1989.
[125] Osterhammel 2015, 494.



Figs. 21. and 22. A continent transformed:
Africa in 1852 and in 1911[126]

This process was most dramatically exemplified in the Scramble for Africa, which divided up the last supposedly 'empty' space of the world at breath-taking speed—from around 10 per cent of European control in the 1870s to over 90 per cent by the turn of the century (with only Abyssinia and Liberia holding out from conquest). A similar process occurred in the New World with the closing of the American frontier in 1890.[127] The sense of a world 'closing in' thus followed: imperial claustrophobia.[128] A Darwinian world of imperial competition in this new situation seemed simply a statement of fact: 'To stand

126 Images from: Wikimedia Commons.
127 Keene 2005, 182.
128 Another, less mentioned effect of this world-closure was the rise of British suburban topographical walking, which proposed that the real 'undiscovered' spaces were no longer 'out there' in far-flung Africa or South America, but in the urban fringes and edgelands of industrial Britain. This is announced in the introduction of one 1911 Pathfinder guide, *Afoot Round London*: 'Now that the North Pole has been reached and Cook's tourists penetrate to Patagonia' the guide begins, 'there is very little undiscovered country left outside England for the roving, adventurous individual to explore. But in England, and especially within an hour's ride from London, there are vast tracks of *terra incognita* still left.' Cited in: Rogers and Papadimitriou 2009. This tradition, albeit under the changed condition of late-modern capitalism and often under the influence of the psychogeography of the French Situationists, is continued today in the work of Iain Sinclair, Will Self, Nick Papadimitriou, John Rogers, and many others. Coverley 2018 ch. 4.

still meant to be left behind. Only those who grew and expanded would have a chance of survival in a viciously competitive environment.'[129]

Mackinder: the 'Post-Colombian Age'

This idea of 'world closure' was most famously expressed in the emergent field of geopolitics,[130] obsessed as it was with the spatial implications of evolutionary theory as applied to international relations.[131] Most notable in Britain was Halford Mackinder, the geographer whose 1904 piece 'The Geographical Pivot of History' inaugurated the field of geopolitics alongside Friedrich Ratzel's *Politische Geographie* a few years earlier in 1897. As apotheoses of this claustrophobic *Zeitgeist*, both are worth unpacking.

Mackinder surveys a world already explored, mapped, and conquered, theorising the end of 'the Colombian epoch' around the year 1900.[132] This was a world where 'there is scarcely a region left for the pegging out a claim of ownership, unless as the result of a war between civilized and half-civilized powers.'[133] Such was a 'closed political system' wherein 'every explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos, will be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe, and weak elements in the political and economic organism of the world will be shattered in consequence.'[134]

This situation undermined the whole notion of a distinctive 'civilised' sphere, intensifying as it did the European balance of power by negating the possibility of the 'safety-valves' of the periphery.[135] As Keene puts it: 'The ability to redirect social tensions

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[129] Osterhammel 2015, 494.
[130] Later, in the interwar period, the field of geopolitics would become even more explicitly concerned with the existential fate of nations, both by the Nazis and the smaller powers at threat. A dramatic exposition can be seen in the 2019 film *Nova Lituania*, which follows the story of Professor Feliksas Gruodis: a geography lecturer who in the days before World War II cooks up an eccentric plan to create a 'backup Lithuania', an overseas colony on the tip of Madagascar intended to serve like the seed vault of Svalbard, containing the memory of the Lithuanian nation to be reactivated after the war. Inspired by the real-life figure of Kazys Pakštas and his dream of 'Dausuva', the fear of impending political mortality hangs over every frame of the film.
[131] Of course, not all variations on the theme of evolutionary space were imperialist. Most different was Peter Kropotkin's radical internationalist interpretation. For a good comparison of Mackinder and Kropotkin, see: Kearns 2009 ch. 3. See also: Crook 1994, 106–111. However, Kropotkin's view here was heterodox and certainly not mainstream in the field of geopolitics—as symbolised by the title of his 1885 piece 'What Geography *Ought* to Be' (rather than what it really was).
[132] Mackinder 1904, 421.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid., 422. Mackinder's use of organicist language here is striking. Elsewhere he similarly refers to 'human history as part of the life of the world organism' (422).
[135] The same role of 'safety-valve' was also played by the American frontier. Keene 2005, 182.

so that their consequences were played out in the "barbaric" spaces beyond the family of civilized nations was now no longer an option… British and American thinkers were now displaying their nervous awareness of the importance of divisions *within the European political system*, and less of the confident early nineteenth-century expectation of being able not only to handle such divisions but to overcome them and ensure the steady progress of civilization.'[136] Indeed, Mackinder's elaborate theory of the struggle for power focussed on the control of the 'World-Island' as the fulcrum of power, with the ability to control Eastern Europe the desideratum of any future world-hegemon (which the events of the short twentieth century would certainly bear witness to).

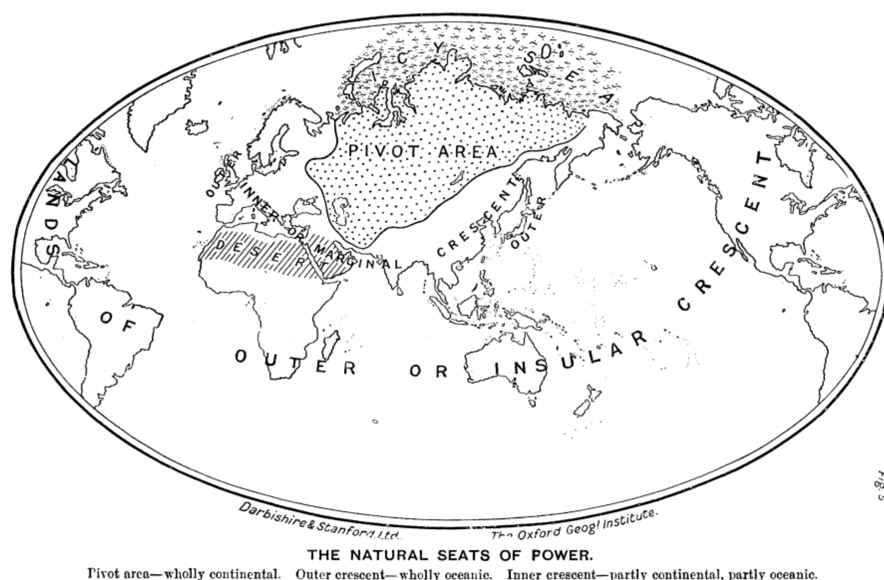

Fig. 23. The struggle for space:
Mackinder's 'Heartland' theory of geopolitics[137]

The consequent geopolitical struggle in this closed world, for Mackinder, was starkly Darwinian, and his thought contained all the core features of Darwinian internationalism.[138] First was the struggle for existence. As he expressed in a piece on the 'scope and methods' of the geographical discipline, 'communities of men should

[136] Ibid., 183 emphasis mine.
[137] Image in: Mackinder 1904, 435.
[138] Most of my citations from Mackinder in this section are drawn from the excellent discussion in: Kearns 2009 ch. 3. I would direct the reader there for a full analysis of Mackinder's engagement with Darwinism.

[basically] be looked on as units in the struggle for existence, more or less favoured by their several environments'[139] and in this struggle of communities (divided into 'races, nations, provinces, towns'[140]) Mackinder 'propose[s] the term "geographical selection" for the process on the analogy of "natural selection".'[141]

In *Britain and the British Seas* (1902), Mackinder marshalled this idea to theorise the British Empire's pivotal geopolitical position in this process of selection, with an emphasis on its advantageous terraqueous specificity.[142] As a survey of every angle of Britain's geography, the book moves inexorably towards its conclusion: that 'the most important facts of contemporary political geography are the extent of the red patches of British dominion upon the map of the world, and the position of the hostile customs frontiers. They are the cartographical expression of the eternal struggle for existence as it stands at the opening of the twentieth century.'[143] In this crowded world, Britain—'no longer a self-sufficing organism'[144] but an imperial behemoth—must hold firm. As he reminds the reader: 'Other empires have had their day, and so may that of Britain. But there are facts in the present condition of humanity which render such a fate unlikely, provided always that the British race retain its moral qualities.'[145]

The organicist image of the polity was also frequently invoked by Mackinder, most strikingly in his final lecture course of 1923, where he analogised the role of the geographer *vis-à-vis* the polity to the doctor *vis-à-vis* her patient: 'When the nation is ailing and unhappy, what should the nation do? If it is wise, and it very seldom is, it should summon the geographer, the doctor of humanity, who *first* looks at the anatomy of the nation before announcing the nature of the trouble and ordering medication.'[146] Mackinder's worldview was therefore a spatialised Darwinism, organised around the

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[139] MacKinder 1887, 143. Here, Mackinder explicitly quotes Bagehot's *Physics and Politics* as the authority.
[140] Ibid., 157.
[141] Ibid., 159.
[142] The term 'terraqueous' here I borrow from: Campling and Colas 2021.
[143] Mackinder 1902, 343. Incidentally, this idea of the 'size of nations' (discussed also in demographic terms by the eugenicists in chapter five) was not just a favourite of the geopolitical theorists but a theme across the ages—from debates over the plausible size of an American republic to recent prophecies of the competitive advantage of small city-states in a climate-ridden world. This is a fascinating yet profoundly understudied topic that demands a monograph of its own. Sadly, the most substantive extant study is frustratingly rationalist rather than historical: Alesina and Spolaore 2005.
[144] Mackinder 1902, 341. Mackinder also alludes to London as the 'brain of the Empire' (312).
[145] Ibid., 350. Such themes of imperial decline will be revisited in chapter five.
[146] As recounted by Mackinder's contemporary Martha Woolley and cited in: Kearns 2009, 70.

belief that 'nature is ruthless, and we must build a Power able to contend on equal terms with other Powers, or step into the rank of States which exist on sufferance.'[147]

***Ratzel, Kjellén, and* Lebensraum**

Over in Germany, a similar theory was espoused by Friedrich Ratzel in his concept of *Lebensraum* ('living space'), now infamous due to its central place in Nazism. Originally however it was a concept coined in an 1860 review of the *Origin of Species* (translated into German that year) by Oscar Peschel,[148] Ratzel's predecessor in the geography chair at Leipzig.[149] Ratzel took up this idea of *Lebensraum* as a means for translating the struggle for existence into a biogeographical theory focussed on the effect of space on the evolutionary development of species.

Like Mackinder, Ratzel begins from an assumption of the limits of a closed world: 'Everything that wants space on our planet earth must draw on the finite number of 506 million square kilometres of its surface… The fact that the entire development of life on earth is limited to one and the same surface area implies that all internal life forms as well as the external influences that affect life are concentrated within the tight borders of that surface.'[150] The problem arising from this situation is that this finite physical space is met with the vitality of life: 'There is a tension between the movement of life, which never rests, and the space on earth, which does not change. It is from this tension that the *struggle for space* is born.'[151] This extension of the natural logic of *Kampf ums Dasein* ('struggle for existence') to a geographical logic of *Kampf um Raum* ('struggle for space'), Ratzel argues, was obvious in Darwin's theory but left undeveloped:

> Darwin, in the famous third chapter of his *Origin of Species*, takes for granted Malthus's views on the relationship between the multiplication of living organisms and their living space. He expects that although humans are creatures that reproduce slowly, in less than a thousand years of unrestrained reproduction they would fill the earth in such a way as to leave no space for more. His argument left no doubt that the human struggle for life would largely have to be a struggle for space. And yet, remarkably, neither he nor his successors have studied this aspect of the question in detail.[152]

[147] Mackinder 1905, 143.
[148] Peschel 1860.
[149] DeSilva 2013, 38.
[150] Ratzel 2018, 60–61.
[151] Ibid., 72 emphasis mine. For a fascinating discussion of Ratzel's engagement with idioms of life and death more broadly, see: Klinke 2018.
[152] Ratzel 2018, 72.

As in Mackinder's 'Heartland' theory, Ratzel also places great emphasis in this biological struggle for space on what he called 'border regions'. 'These borders', he argues, 'are not to be understood as dividing lines but as fringes, for only if they are spatially distinct—either in a connected fashion or separated and drawn out like islands—can we understand their status as a natural battle ground in the to and fro of living organisms' shifts in space.'[153]

Just as biological organisms must compete to thrive within this world of finite space, so too must states. Whilst it is certainly true that Ratzel's theory was in its fundamentals a biological one—and 'many of Ratzel's biographers have treated *Lebensraum* as an entirely scientific concept in the tradition of Humboldt and Darwin, which was taken over by politicians for purposes never intended by Ratzel'[154]—as with Darwin this myopic proposition is motivated again by obsessions with maintaining the purity of 'science'. Indeed, in the first place (like Darwin), it is notable that even in describing purportedly biological processes, Ratzel draws on international metaphors—as in the use of the use of the idea of 'conquest or colonisation'.[155]

Yet in *Politische Geographie* (1897), Ratzel also directly extended biological expansionism to geopolitical phenomena.[156] There, Ratzel's arguments appear as clearly imbricated in the rise of German colonial ambitions in the final decade of the century (to 'cut up the already divided world') of which Ratzel was a keen proponent as a founding member of the Pan-German League (a leading nationalist organisation). Indeed, in the *Geographie*, Ratzel propounds an account of international struggle that seems to provide an articulation for German colonisation, as Lindqvist recounts:

> Jews and gypsies are brought together with "the stunted hunting people in the African interior" and "innumerable similar existences" into the class of "scattered people with no land." Land with no peoples, on the other hand, no longer exists. Not even the deserts can today be regarded as ownerless empty spaces. So a growing people needing more land has to conquer land, "which through killing and displacement of the inhabitants is turned into uninhabited land."[157]

Ratzel's *Lebensraum* was the solution: to 'recultivate' adjacent border regions and to colonise distant lands as an act of displacement. It was an idea to be widely taken up by

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[153] Ibid., 75.
[154] Smith 1980, 55.
[155] Ratzel 2018, 66.
[156] Frustratingly, the book as whole remains untranslated into English, despite a long-planned translation, even since when it was discussed in: Rumley, Minghi, and Grimm 1973.
[157] Lindqvist 1997, 145–146.

others—most notably by the Swedish geopolitical theorist Rudolf Kjellén (and thereafter other German thinkers, particularly Friedrich von Bernhardi and Karl Haushofer, and of course, Hitler, who read Ratzel in prison). I shall not dwell too much on Kjellén and others here, because their work breaches too far into the twentieth century,[158] and furthermore I do not wish to engage in an endless unpacking of a Darwin-Ratzel-Kjellén-Bernhardi Russian doll of reception. Suffice to say that Kjellén's translation of *Lebensraum* into international theory resembles what one would expect: 'the state as a life-form'[159] in an expansive process of domination.

The key logic at play in all these geopolitical ideas was thus that the late nineteenth century's 'closure of the world' must lead to a Darwinian logic—and, crucially, that being 'civilised' would play little role in this remorseless struggle.

The rise of the 'barbarians'

Elsewhere, that whole notion of 'civilisation' was being undermined in a different way, and here I want to close by setting up the following chapter. Alongside the emergence of imperial claustrophobia as a result of the final divvying up of the 'empty lands' of the globe, the latter period of the nineteenth century also saw the rise of those non-European powers categorised as 'barbarian' or 'semi-civilised' (or, semi-peripheral). When coupled with imperial claustrophobia, this rise of the 'barbarians' engendered a profound sense of peril in Europe. If the crowding of the world represented a kind of horizontal challenge to international order (as theorised spatially by geopolitics), this latter process radically challenged the verticality of the hierarchies by which that ordering was believed to be structured.

Three crucial events were notable in appearing to signify a new configuration of power: the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5); the Spanish-American War (1898); and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5).[160] Each in their own way seemed to represent the shifting sands of world politics away from the preponderance of the European empires and towards the Eastern powers and the New World republics, which we shall consider in

[158] For a detailed exploration of the influence of Ratzel on Kjellén, see: DeSilva 2013.
[159] Kjellén 1916.
[160] Also, the forgotten defeat of Italy by the Abyssinians at Adowa in 1896. As pointed out in: Rhode 2017, 10.

the following chapter. The Sino-Japanese conflict pitted two emergent Eastern powers undergoing processes of Westernisation. The Spanish-American War meanwhile saw the vitality of the powerful American republic set against the languor of the Old World's Spanish Empire. And the Russo-Japanese war saw the behemoth Russia defeated by an increasingly powerful small Eastern archipelago which only a few decades prior had been in a condition of complete isolation from the rest of the world. Taken together, such conflicts seemed to symbolise an emergent non-European challenge to the 'civilised nations'.

Much of this fear over emergent powers was linked to the aforementioned sense of imperial closure; the Spanish-American War, as Lenin put it, could be seen, for instance, as 'the first war for a redistribution of the world already distributed'.[161] (Indeed, Lenin's theory of imperialism was in many ways the exportation of the idea of world closure to the logic of capitalism.) The most famous American Darwinian, William Graham Sumner, was among many impelled to turn to writing on issues of international relations precisely as a result of the fear he felt towards the war.[162]

The consequence of all this was, again, that cracks in the 'standard of civilisation' began to appear long before its ultimate undoing in 1945, with discourses not only of intra-European competition but of destruction foregrounded. Consider Sumner's lament of America's war with Spain. This behaviour, he argued, was befitting only of an Old World empire, yet he rejected American expansion not only through the lens of a traditional republican anti-colonialism[163] but also through a pluralistic rejection of the civilisational language itself:

> There is not a civilized nation which does not talk about its civilizing mission just as grandly as we do. The English, who really have more to boast of in this respect than anybody else, talk least about it… The French believe themselves the guardians of the highest and purest culture… The Germans regard themselves as charged with a mission, especially to us Americans, to save us from egoism and materialism. The Russians, in their books and newspapers, talk about the civilizing mission of Russia in language that might be translated from some of the finest paragraphs in our

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[161] Cited in: Ellwood 2012, 25.

[162] Bannister 1979, 108.

[163] Sumner elaborates on this theme in 1896's 'The Fallacy of Territorial Extension', written in the shadow of Hawaiian absorption. There, he addresses 'the question of expedient size' (265) of polities in an age of both national self-determination and imperial growth. He argues that bigger is not better: whilst 'territorial aggrandizement enhances the glory and personal importance of the man who is head of a dynastic state', it is 'the fallacy of confusing this with the greatness and strength of the state itself.' (266) The perennial extension of the American frontier was thus a threat to the state, because 'this confederated state of ours was never planned for indefinite expansion or for an imperial policy.' Sumner 1992, 265–269.

> imperialistic newspapers. The first principle of Mohammedanism is that we Christians are dogs and infidels, fit only to be enslaved or butchered by Moslems… The Spaniards have, for centuries, considered themselves the most zealous and self-Christians, especially charged by the Almighty, on this account, to spread true religion and civilization over the globe.[164]

The *subjectivity* of appeals to civilisation thus offered no firm ground on which to launch claims of territorial expansion—compared, that is, to the scientific *objectivity* of Darwin. Indeed, it was this determined pursuit by the 'civilised states' of continued imperialism in a world of spatial closure that would lead precisely to the great catastrophe, as Sumner himself ominously prophesised in 1901: 'No one will deny that the enterprises of territorial acquisition on the art of the great states… are very likely to bring them into collision with one another… The probability is great that war will result, and even that the [twentieth] century will be as full of war as the eighteenth century was.'[165]

In the orthodox story of the period, the success of the non-European states was *proof* of the civilisational standard: that the civilising project was not only possible but could be highly successful. Yet I would contend that it undermined the Europeans' sense of supremacy and evinced the truth of the Darwinian worldview. As Paul Kennedy puts it:

> The recent Chinese defeat in their 1894–1895 war with Japan, the humiliation of Spain by the United States in their brief 1898 conflict, and the French retreat before Britain over the Fashoda incident in the Upper Nile (1898–1899) were all interpreted as evidence that the "survival of the fittest" dictated the fates of nations as well as animal species. The Great Power struggles were no longer merely over European issues—as they had been in 1830 or even 1860—but over markets and territories that ranged across the globe.[166]

The 'living and dying nations'

The culmination of this Darwinian moment in the imperial core can be summarised in a single speech given on the eve of the new century. Here, the Darwinian image of international relations in all its aspects—its organicism, its naturalism, its evolutionism, and its national selectionism—was expressed in distilled form at the Primrose League in an address by the then-Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, on May 4th 1898. Salisbury had a

[164] Ibid., 276–277.
[165] Ibid., 376.
[166] Kennedy 1989, 195.

keen interest in evolutionary biology,[167] and here he put it to work in theorising the future of world conflict.

The speech was delivered within this context of fierce international competition in a recently 'closed' system,[168] as embodied in the Spanish-American War which had begun just a few weeks earlier on April 24th. In response, Salisbury not only outlined the new policies required for Britain's imperial positioning in this uncertain world, but also heralded a whole new vision of international order based on a radical bifurcation of the world's nations—not as 'civilised' and 'uncivilised', but something new. As he declared: 'You may roughly divide the nations of the world as *the living and the dying*.'[169]

On one side of this new division were those 'living nations', characterised by Salisbury as possessing many of the classic measures of great power status, but no moral-cultural features: 'the great countries of enormous power growing in power every year, growing in *wealth*, growing in *dominion*, growing in the perfection of their *organization*.'[170] The third of these features—their 'organisation'—alluded to organicism, as well as British imperial-cyborgism[171] and scientism: 'Railways have given to them [the living nations] the power to concentrate upon any one point the whole military force of their population and to assemble armies of a magnitude and power never dreamed of in the generations that have gone by. Science has placed in the hands of those armies weapons ever growing in their efficacy of destruction.'[172]

The image of the inverse—the 'dying nations'—bared more potent Darwinian themes. In the first place, Salisbury rejects the cultural categories of the standard of civilisation and casts a much wider net: 'By the side of these there are a number of

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[167] In 1894, for instance, he delivered an inaugural address in Oxford for the British Association of the Advancement of Science on the topic of Darwinism, entitled 'Evolution: A Retrospect', where he accepted Darwin's theory of evolution but rebuked natural selection as its mechanism. Salisbury 1894. As Andrew Roberts highlights in his biography, before this Salisbury had 'long applied to the theory of natural selection to international relations, believing that the survival of civilisations went to the fittest.' Most notable amongst which, as Roberts highlights, was an earlier similarly naturalist distinction made in the *Saturday Review*, where he proclaimed that 'eat and be eaten' was 'the great law of political as of animated nature. The nations of the earth are divided into the sheep and the wolves—the fat and the defenceless against the hungry and the strong.' Similarly, in 1877, Salisbury likened the moribund state of Turkey in organicist terms: 'we go on treating and respecting the Turkish Empire as a living organism, when everybody else was treating it as a carcass.' Roberts 1999, 691–692.

[168] My reading here of the context of Salisbury's speech draws from: Rhode 2017.

[169] 'Living and Dying Nations': From Lord Salisbury's Speech to The Primrose League, May 4 1898 emphasis mine.

[170] Ibid. emphasis mine.

[171] Bell 2021.

[172] 'Living and Dying Nations': From Lord Salisbury's Speech to The Primrose League, May 4 1898.

communities which I can only describe as dying… They are mainly communities that are *not Christian*, but I regret to say *that is not exclusively the case*, and in these States disorganization and decay are advancing almost as fast as concentration and increasing power are advancing in the living nations that stand beside them.'[173]

The candidates for the 'dying nations' included not only traditionally 'uncivilised' or 'barbaric' non-European states—such as Turkey, Egypt, Persia, the Latin American republics, China, or Morocco[174]—but also European states such as Portugal (in financial turmoil at the time), Poland (in constant partition), and even the Austro-Hungarian Empire (fraught by internal tension).[175] Spain too, by virtue of its military engagement with the vitality of the United States—and which three days prior, on May 1st, had suffered an astounding defeat with the Americans' destruction of a Spanish fleet at Manila—was another implicit candidate for a 'dying nation' by the measures of Salisbury's metrics,[176] even if not directly mentioned.[177] Then comes the classic Darwinian fatalism, and a dark omen of destruction:

> Decade after decade they [the dying nations] are weaker, poorer, and less provided with leading men or institutions in which they can trust, apparently drawing nearer and nearer to their fate and yet clinging with the strange tenacity to the life which they have got… How long this state of things is likely to go on of course I do not attempt to prophesy. All I can dictate is that the process is proceeding, that the weak states are becoming weaker and the strong states are becoming stronger. It needs no speciality of prophecy to point out to you what the inevitable result of that combined process must be…[178]

Furthermore, this existential struggle could not be confined alone to the destruction of the dying by the living, but thereafter must be followed by a fight between the strong themselves: 'the living nations will gradually encroach on the territory of the dying, and *the seeds and causes of conflict among civilized nations will speedily appear.* Of course it is not supposed that any one nation of the living nations will be allowed to have the profitable monopoly of curing or cutting up these unfortunate patients, and the controversy is as to who shall have the privilege of doing so, and in which measure he shall do it. These

[173] Ibid. emphasis mine.
[174] Candidates mentioned by: Rhode 2017, 8–9.
[175] My examples here are again drawn from: Ibid., 9.
[176] On Spain, see: Ibid., 19.
[177] Ibid., 55. As Rhode notes (81), whilst Spain never became prey to dismemberment by other 'living nations', it *did* close the century by effectively ending its centuries-long imperial dominance by selling its remaining colonies in the Pacific to Germany in February 1899.
[178] 'Living and Dying Nations': From Lord Salisbury's Speech to The Primrose League, May 4 1898.

things may *introduce causes of fatal difference between the great nations whose mighty armies stand opposite, threatening each other*. These are the dangers, I think, which threaten us in the period that is coming on.'[179] The prescience is stark.

Salisbury's speech, then, exemplified the profound implications of the Darwinian vision of international relations *par excellence*—a world of struggle between living organisms, which went beyond the civilisational distinctions to encompass European states as well as non-European. As Ben Rhode summarises: 'European states had long considered dissecting other European states; more novel was the way the language of superiority over non-European races, and its implicit justification of their extinction or replacement, was now applied to Europeans.'[180] It is obviously notable that such an idea can be found in the language of the leader of the world's most powerful empire, and not only in the abstract writings of theoreticians.[181]

It is also notable that, whilst Salisbury certainly admired Darwin and often applied such language to international relations, he did *not* even identify as 'Darwinian' in the sense one might expect from this speech. Rather, Salisbury was more ambiguous on the matter. As he expressed in an 1894 address at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford (to the British Association for Advancement of Science), there was an 'inadequacy of Darwinism to explain everything in nature, whilst fully admitting that *The Origin of Species* had proved that animals with different characteristics could descend from common ancestors… After praising Darwin's genius and describing the book as "the most conspicuous scientific event of the half-century", Salisbury went on to criticise the doctrine of natural

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[179] Ibid. emphasis mine.
[180] Rhode 2017, 9.
[181] Visions of intra-European cannibalism also manifested in late-century daily discourse, becoming particularly acute after numerous crises in the Balkans. Commenting on the Eastern Question in 1887, for instance, the *Economist* noted how the crisis in Bulgaria, 'although it has become more acute, does not threaten any more than before to lead to a European war.' Whilst an intervention from Russia was feared on such grounds, it appeared that Russia remained 'unfit' to compete in a broader conflict: that 'even were it in the interest of Russia to plunge Europe into a general conflict… her military preparations are in a more backward condition than those of any other great Power on the Continent. The recent revelations of her financial weakness, while they might not affect her prospects, were she involved in a struggle for national existence, are a serious obstacle to her entering on an essentially aggressive war.' Bulgaria and the Peace of Europe 1887. The discourse around small nation-states was similarly framed in existential terms. In 1894, the *Economist* also noted the financial burdens for small states surviving in a Europe of wealthy great powers: 'It is a marked feature of the modern world that the civilisation it desires, and without which it feels humiliated, is excessively expensive… Even great and wealthy States like France and Germany are burdened by this necessity, which the little States, with the exception of Holland, are entirely unable to meet… The little States have, in fact, to struggle for pecuniary existence, and after a few more years will be compelled to suspend all efforts at what the modern world considers progress from sheer incapacity to raise the necessary funds.' The Small States of Europe 1894.

selection, arguing it was self-contradictory'[182] and sided ultimately with some role for divine intervention. The fact that Salisbury's speech was so deeply evocative in its Darwinian internationalism despite such critiques is proof, I would argue, of the depth of the idiom's influence in the vernacular of international politics.

Roosevelt's Romanes

Salisbury was not the only leader to espouse such views. The same venue of Salisbury's 1894 evolution lecture (the Sheldonian Theatre) also hosted another great espousal of organicist prophecy in 1910 (albeit one less pessimistic), when U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt delivered the Romanes lecture of that year, entitled 'Biological Analogies in History'.[183] There, Roosevelt outlines his own vision of Darwinian internationalism, a central feature of the president's thought eclipsed in the popular imagination by his status as a progressive icon in the domestic political realm. Yet as David Burton argues: 'Few public men of his time, and his times were ripe with evolutionary thought, appeared more strikingly Darwinist than did Theodore Roosevelt.'[184]

As with Salisbury's biography, the influence of biological Darwinism on Roosevelt as a fact *qua* itself is no surprise. In his early years, Roosevelt's primary obsession was natural science (ornithology in particular),[185] and throughout his life Roosevelt carried this interest with him, manifested most notably as president with his advocacy for conservation and the national parks. His knowledge of Darwinian theory is evident in the Romanes lecture, which demonstrates an impressively sophisticated understanding of the then-orthodoxy in biology. Central in the appeal of Darwinism for Roosevelt was the organicist motif and the power of 'biological analogies'. As he argues:

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[182] Roberts 1999, 594. In attendance at the speech was Henry Fairfield Osborn, whose epithet 'before and after Darwin' I invoked earlier.

[183] And, of course, delivered seventeen years after Huxley's famous contribution to the series. Another Darwinian instalment in the series also came in 1905, from Ray Lankester under the theme 'Nature and Man'. Even later down the series was 1943's lecture which, amidst the total war wrought by those German arch-Darwinists, was delivered by Huxley's grandson, Julian Huxley, on the topic of 'Evolutionary Ethics'. On which, see: Vivas 1948. Julian Huxley was also known for the concept of the 'modern synthesis' of Darwinian natural selection and Mendelian heredity.

[184] Burton 1965, 103.

[185] Under the influence of Darwinism, ornithology in the early twentieth century would come to be concerned with international concepts, such as the fight for 'territory' between warring species, and the 'migration' of birds from one place to another. Such notions can be seen most extensively in Henry Eliot Howard's influential *Territory in Bird Life* (1920): Howard 1920. Thanks to Olivier de France for pointing me to this.

> We see strange analogies in the phenomena of life and death, of birth, growth, and change, between those physical groups of animal life which we designate as species, forms, races, and the highly complex and composite entities which rise before our minds when we speak of nations and civilizations.[186]

While Roosevelt concedes that the metaphor is imperfect—for 'there is no exact parallelism between the birth, growth, and death of species in the animal world, and the birth, growth, and death of societies in the world of man'—nonetheless 'there is a certain parallelism. There are strange analogies; it may be that there are homologies.'[187] Whilst, 'as in biology, it is necessary to keep in mind that we use each of the words "birth" and "death," "youth" and "age," often very loosely… in one sense there is no such thing as an "old" or a "young" nation, any more than there is an "old" or "young" family',[188] nevertheless, analogies can be found: 'when we speak of the "death" of a tribe, a nation, or a civilization,' he argues, 'the term may be used either one of two different processes, the analogy with what occurs in biological history being complete.'[189] The biological analogy thus has descriptive power.[190]

As with species (composed of individual animals), Roosevelt argues, so polities, civilisations, and nations (composed of individual entities) are subject to life-spans on a macro-scale, and along this scale the twin processes of *development* and *extinction* can be observed, Janus-faced, 'in obedience to laws of evolution, of progress and retrogression, of development and death.'[191] Such processes can, he argues, be mapped onto political life.

Most powerful is the concept of extinction in explaining the fortunes of political life. Here, Roosevelt distinguishes between two types of biological extinction, and two parallel processes of destructive mechanisms. A species may on the one hand fully 'die out', ending the species and leaving no descendants; on the other, it may simply be 'replaced' (via naturally selected mutations) by new forms over time, gradually leading to the emergence of a whole new species—a Ship of Theseus-style replacement, with no

[186] Roosevelt 1910, 4.
[187] Ibid., 7.
[188] Ibid., 15.
[189] Ibid., 18.
[190] He also recognises the normative power of invoking the mantle of science: 'Another feature of the change, of the growth in the position of science in the eyes of every one, and of the greatly increased respect naturally resulting for scientific methods, has been a certain tendency for scientific students to encroach on other fields. This is particularly true of the field of historical study'. Ibid., 5.
[191] Ibid., 8–9.

clear demarcating moment of death. 'Thus', he argues 'in one case the line of life comes to an end. In the other case it changes into something different.'[192] These processes by which such extinctions occur are what he terms the 'catastrophic' and the 'gradual'.

These forms of extinction, he argues, also exist in 'the history of human societies, in the history of the rise to prominence, of the development and change, of the temporary dominance, and death or transformation, of the groups of varying kind which form races or nations'.[193] 'Gradual' extinction, for one, explains the process of a polity's change in form over time—thus, for instance, the Italian city-states represent an early form of what is now the larger emergent species of the Italian nation-state.

Colonisation is another such example, likened as a split in the evolutionary tree but still linked to its previous form: 'So, nowadays, Victoria or Manitoba is a new community compared with England or Scotland; but the ancestral type of civilization and culture is as old in one case as in the other.'[194] The overseas colony, whilst superficially an extension of the original 'organism', thus becomes in a sense a genuinely new form but linked by heredity: 'I of course do not mean for a moment that great changes are not produced by the mere fact that the old civilized race is suddenly placed in surroundings where it has again to go through the work of taming the wilderness, a work finished many centuries before in the original home of the race… [But] the ancestral history is the same in each case. We can [thus] rightly use the phrase "a new people," in speaking of Canadians or Australians, Americans or Afrikanders.'[195]

Such a colonial people are however still differently 'new' compared to the deeper historical chasm between the 'civilised' and 'barbaric', and so too are they differently 'new' to other cases of branching, such as that between the Western and Eastern Roman Empires which 'were also in every way different; their lines of ancestral descent had nothing in common… their social problems and aftertime history were totally different. This is not true from those "new" nations which spring direct from old nations. Brazil, the Argentine, the United States, are all "new" nations, compared with the nations of

[192] Ibid., 10.
[193] Ibid., 14–15.
[194] Ibid., 17.
[195] Ibid.

Europe; but, with whatever changes in detail, their civilization is nevertheless of the general European type.'[196]

One might therefore imagine an evolutionary tree of the political world, unfurling over time, whereby some polities diverge more substantively to their predecessors, others undergo rapid and frequent changes, while others remain relatively static for long periods, and others still simply vanish altogether.

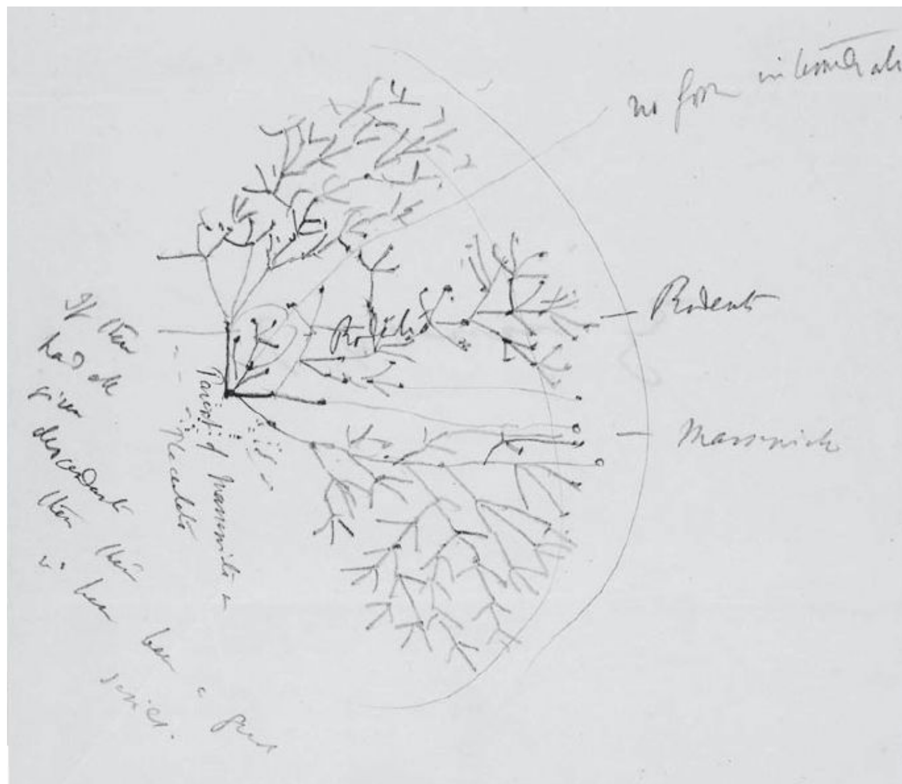

Fig. 24. A phylogenetic tree:
Sketched by Darwin in 1857 or 1858[197]

This latter phenomenon concerns the second, more dramatic process of extinction: the 'catastrophic'. For Roosevelt, the most potent examples here are tribal,[198] and here *race* plays a key role in ascertaining the puzzle of continuity vs. extinction:

> Certain tribes of savages… have within the last century or two completely died out; all of the individuals have perished, leaving no descendants, and the blood has

[196] Ibid., 17–18.
[197] Image reproduced in: Archibald 2014, 90.
[198] Another example of extinction discourse.

disappeared. Certain other tribes of Indians have as tribes disappeared or are now disappearing; but their blood remains, being absorbed into the veins of the white intruders, or of the black men introduced by those white intruders; so that in reality they are merely being transformed into something absolutely different from what they were.[199]

In cases of colonisation, then, the 'gradual' and the 'catastrophic' process deeply interact: the white intruders are extensions of their own original organism which eradicate the local forms. Thus, competition and the struggle for existence play the key role in the branching of the tree of life—or, what Roosevelt at one point terms the 'riot for life'.[200]

This highlights again the ambiguity at the heart of the biological analogy—that a taxonomy of political life-span is more troublesome than its biological analogue. If Mendelian genetics eventually provided the solution to the problem of transmutation in biology, ascertaining the processes of development and extinction in political societies is less clear. Is it according to statehood, culture, or race that these occur, all of which are variously essentialising or socially constructed?

When referring to the even broader category of 'civilisations' (rather than tribes or nations) this problem is even stronger, for 'a like wide diversity in fact may be covered in the statement that a civilization has "died out",'[201] and again even the faintest trace of cultural or racial continuity is always detectable. Even the sheer destruction of Rome, 'a violent dislocation',[202] nevertheless could not extinguish its influence from beyond the grave, even if in survival its form was changed: 'As for the culture of Rome… It has suffered a complete transformation, partly by natural growth, partly by absorption of totally alien elements, such as Semitic religion, and certain Teutonic governmental and social customs; but the process was not one of extinction, but one of growth and transformation, both from within and by the accretion of outside elements.'[203] Thus, a

[199] Roosevelt 1910, 18.
[200] Ibid., 13. More specific phenomena are noted by Roosevelt as being implicated in the causes of death and decline. For instance, in the case of empires and large nations, he focusses on the classic tension of core and periphery: 'If in any such case the centrifugal forces overcome the centripetal, the nation will of course fly to pieces… The minute that the spirit which finds its healthy development in local self-government, and is the antidote to the dangers of an extreme centralization, develops into mere particularism, into inability to combined effectively for achievement of a common end, then it is hopeless to expect great results. Poland and certain Republics of the western hemisphere are the standard examples of failures of this kind; and the United States would have ranked with them, and her name would have become a byword of derision, if the forces of union had not triumphed in the Civil War.' Ibid., 23. Other specific causes considered include natural resources and cultural decline.
[201] Roosevelt 1910, 19.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid. For Roosevelt's extended comparison between Rome and the British Empire, see: Ibid., 32–34.

basic continuity can be observed. The civilisation of 'Rome' can be seen as surviving even as 'new organisms' emerge again and again: 'the people of Italy kept the old blood as the chief strain in the veins. In a few centuries came a wonderful new birth for Italy. Then for four or five hundred years there was a growth of many little city states… Again Italy fell… and again, in the nineteenth century, there came for the third time a wonderful new birth.'[204]

The myth of race—central to Roosevelt's worldview—further complicates his ability to define discontinuities. 'Racial connections' (as between Britain and the United States) appear to exist even in times of profound political upheavals. Contrarily, even in cases of long-term political stability, an 'invader race' cannot remain unaltered for old forms may reassert themselves: 'A tall, fair-haired, long-skulled race penetrates to some southern country and establishes a commonwealth. The generations pass. There is no violent revolution, no break in the continuity of history, nothing in the written records to indicate an epoch-making change at any given moment; and yet after a time we find that the old type has reappeared and that the people of the locality do not substantially differ in physical form from the people of other localities that did not suffer such an invasion.'[205]

Regarding 'civilisation', Roosevelt also espouses a strikingly Huxleyian position in an assertion of its *artificiality*: 'Most of the great societies which have developed a high civilization and have played a dominant part in the world have been—and are—*artificial*; not merely in social structure, but in the sense of including totally different race types. A great nation rarely belongs to any one race, though its citizens generally have one essentially national speech.'[206] The influence of the American tradition of pluralism, of *e pluribus unum*, is in evidence here. Elsewhere, he acclaims, again with Huxley, the need for ethics to complement brute natural selection: 'rugged strength and courage, rugged capacity to resist wrongful aggression by others will go hand in hand… to combine justice and strength in the same nation.'[207]

Roosevelt closes the lecture, like Salisbury, by casting an eye to the future, and the future fortunes of the tree of life. What new 'births', rises, and 'extinctions' can be

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[204] Roosevelt 1910, 27.
[205] Ibid., 29.
[206] Ibid., 21–22 emphasis mine.
[207] Ibid., 38.

foreseen? Japan, he notes (and as we shall see promptly), has shown an example of success—for, in recent history, 'substantially all of the world achievements worth remembering are to be credited to the people of European descent. The first exception of any consequence is the wonderful rise of Japan within the last generation—a phenomenon unexampled in history; for both in blood and in culture the Japanese line of ancestral descent is as remote as possible from ours, and yet Japan, while hitherto keeping most of what was strongest in her ancient character and traditions has assimilated with curious completeness most of the characteristics that have given power and leadership to the West.'[208] Otherwise, he identifies the Iberian peninsula as showing signs of resurgence.

Ultimately—and in contrast to Salisbury's violent pessimism—he ends with an appeal to an optimistic, imperial paternalism, impelling of the need for the civilising mission, thus pushing against the bleak fatalism of a pure Darwinism. It is akin to an inverse Marxism: there, the revolution is certain but must be strived for; here, destruction is certain, but we should continue nonetheless:

> I believe with all my heart that a great future remains for us; but whether it does or does not, our duty is not altered… In the ages that have gone by, the great nations, the nations that have expanded and that have played a mighty part in the world, have in the end grown old and weakened and vanished; but so have the nations whose own thought was to avoid all danger, all effort, who would risk nothing, and who therefore gained nothing. In the end, the same fate may overwhelm all alike; but the memory of the one type perishes with it, while the other leaves its mark deep on the history of all the future of mankind. *A nation that seemingly dies may be born again; and even though in the physical sense it die utterly, it may yet hand down a history of heroic achievement, and for all time to come may profoundly influence the nations that arise in its place by the impress of what it has done.* Best of all is it to do our part well, and at the same time to see our blood live young and vital in men and women fit to take up the task as we lay it down; for so shall our seed inherit the earth…[209]

In another end-of-century address, 'The Strenuous Life' (1899), Roosevelt muses on the need for an industrious spirit to face this new century. In one sense, this is a simple reiteration of the classic American theme of 'hard work'. Yet, in preaching 'the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labor [*sic*] and strife',[210] the speech also bears more obviously Darwinian characteristics:

> I preach to you, then, my countrymen, that our country calls not for the life of ease but for the life of strenuous endeavor [*sic*]. The twentieth century looms before us

[208] Ibid., 31.
[209] Ibid., 36–37 emphasis mine.
[210] Roosevelt 1901, 3.

> big with the fate of many nations. If we stand idly by, if we seek merely swollen, slothful ease and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then the bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world. Let us therefore boldly face the life of strife, resolute to do our duty well and manfully… we are certain that the strife is justified, for it is only through strife, through hard and dangerous endeavor [*sic*], that we shall ultimately win the goal of true national greatness.[211]

Closing remarks

In this chapter, we have seen just how quickly Darwinism was taken up within international thought in its immediate point of reception. Amongst the diversity of thought just surveyed, what general points can we say about the form that Darwinism took in the imperial core? Most salient, I believe, is the fact that Darwinism in the core was not the crude caricature that we are used to. Rather than being simply or solely a *façade* for confident acclamations of strength, Darwinism in the core was also often a form of *paranoia*—a means to express not only notions of evolutionary superiority, but also a deep fear of decline and destruction: the fear of becoming one of the 'dying nations'. This theme of degeneration, as well as the theme of empire, will be picked up again in chapter five when we turn to the colonial periphery.

Now, though, let us return to those so-called 'barbarian' states whose ascendancy so startled the Europeans. Instead of seeing such states as passive facts 'out there' for the Europeans to respond to, let us look at how *they* understood their treacherous rise in power. Crucially, what role did Darwinism play thereof?

[211] Ibid., 21–22.

CHAPTER IV.

The Semi-Periphery

> 'We thought that of all in the human race none were nobler than we. And then one day from tens of thousands of miles away came island barbarians from beyond the pale, with bird-like language and beastly features, who floated in and pounded on our gates requesting entrance and, when they did not get what they asked for, they attacked our coasts and took captive our officials and even burned our palaces and alarmed our Emperor. When this happened, the only reason we did not devour their flesh and sleep on their hides was that we had not the power.'[1]
>
> — Yan Fu, in 'On the Speed of World Change' (1895)

What influence, then, did Darwinian internationalism have outside the imperial core? Such an inquiry is not some curio but a necessity, since the so-called 'barbarian' and 'savage' polities are utterly absent from the commonly imagined story of Darwinism. Instead of being seen as active agents in their own right, non-European peoples are almost always painted as passive subjects—the theorised and not the theorisers, the deemed 'unfit' in the struggle for existence. 'Social Darwinism' appears as solely a phenomenon of the core: a driving force (or *post hoc* justification) for its policies of exploitation and colonisation, merely a tool of the powerful.

This is far from the truth. Rather, as Hiroshi puts it, 'the realms haunted by Social Darwinism are almost infinite: it looms wherever there is competition.'[2] Its spirit can accordingly be seen across the entirety of late nineteenth-century international space, including—as I show in this chapter and the one following—in the semi-peripheral and peripheral polities, where Darwinian internationalism proved a powerful idiom for these societies to counter their Western oppressors. It was a 'weapon of the weak' as much as it was a tool of the powerful. As C.A. Bayly notes, in these weak polities 'men feared for the organic health of their own societies, yet hoped that weak nations, like endangered species, might finally adapt survive.'[3]

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[1] Translation from: Pusey 1983, 50. I open with this passage for it exemplifies the importance of perspective—'island barbarians from beyond the pale, with bird-like language and beastly features' recalls Darwin's description of the Fuegians, yet here it is Darwin's Englishmen themselves that are cast as the aesthetically perverse barbarians. Here again we see the inverting power of Darwinism, where the 'civilised' become 'savage'.
[2] Hiroshi 1999, 246.
[3] Bayly 2004, 317.

In the first of these two chapters, I focus on those polities broadly captured under the label of the 'semi-periphery'. Not formally colonised by the West yet nevertheless forced into a position of informal domination, such polities existed in a condition of uncertain liminality.

I will first explore the fascinating story of the Darwinian reception in those Eastern polities—China and Japan—which are so central in the classic English School narrative of the 'expansion of international society'.[4] In these societies, one finds a widely-embraced emulative or 'mimetic Darwinism' motivated by the two central, interlinked tasks of the day: (1) finding an *explanation* for the state's 'backwardness' *vis-à-vis* the preponderant West; and (2) finding a *solution* to escape this condition. Darwinian internationalism provided both. Secondly, I turn more briefly at the close of the chapter to the 'satellite case' of Latin America. There, Darwinian internationalism was similarly utilised to attempt to escape a condition of liminality—in this case, to 'prove the whiteness' of the nascent creole republics to their European progenitors as a means of securing their equality in international society.

In these semi-peripheral polities, we shall see how Darwinism reigned in periods of existential crisis almost as a form of 'meta-ideology' against which all other policy suggestions were to be measured. Darwinian internationalism thus served 'not as one of a number of contending theories arguing for claims of truth. Rather, it was enshrined as the absolutely true criterion by which to judge the validity of various [other] political ideologies.'[5] Its erasure from the history of global international thought is therefore in dire need of correction.

Case selection

Suffice to say again, an encyclopaedic account of Darwinism's influence across the entire world is beyond the possibilities of this thesis. This chapter, which draws on the literature on Darwin's global receptions,[6] thus focusses on two main examples of Darwinian

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[4] Bull and Watson 1985. Alongside the English School's emphasis on the socio-legal account of this process in the East, there is also the increasingly vast literature in economic history on the 'rise of the West' in this period, which takes a more materialist position. See especially: Pomeranz 2000; North and Thomas 1973; Hall 1986; Ferguson 2011; Anievas and Nişancıoğlu 2015.

[5] Hiroshi 1999, 242.

[6] My use of this literature mirrors those who, in a similar vein, have utilised empirical research in global history to reshape theoretical understandings of international relations. See, for example: Phillips and Sharman 2015.

internationalism's reception in the semi-peripheral polities: China and Japan; and, briefly, Latin America. Some brief justification here is thus worthwhile.

Why China and Japan? For one, they are ideal-type exemplars. That is, China and Japan bear all the key features that defined the 'semi-peripheral' or 'semi-civilised' states of the late nineteenth century, i.e. 'those communities organised in entities, which were recognised by the centre as "states" but which did not belong to the inner circle of industrialised Western powers. Unlike the colonies, they were perceived by the centre as having a claim to sovereign equality, but, like the colonies, they had allegedly not reached the highest "civilisational" status.'[7] With their histories of unequal treaties, extraterritoriality, and military intervention, China and Japan are archetypal of this category.

As the quote above implies, they are also archetypal of the so-called 'civilising state' in the narrative of the 'standard of civilisation'. The Sino-Japanese tale of modernisation—of states apparently fully embracing Western forms and practices—is one of *the* central pillars supporting the classic English School civilisational narrative. Other cases such as the Ottoman Empire and Russia are also cited, yet these are more ambiguous in their status *vis-à-vis* the 'family of nations': were the Islamic Ottomans ever really admitted as *full* members, even after 1856? And has Russia not always been in the awkward corner of 'semi-Europeanness'?

By contrast, China and Japan began as clear outsiders—both geopolitically isolate and both utterly morally-culturally 'non-European' and non-Christian—yet by the Second World War stood as fully recognised, powerful states. In this chapter, I thus take China and Japan as cases *par excellence* of this civilisational story and show how, in its complete oversight of the Darwinian moment, the reigning tale of the two nations' late-century experience misses a crucial part of the story. Whilst their adoption of Darwinian internationalism is congruent with the idea of these states as 'copying the West', their embrace of Darwinism also undermined the moral-cultural precepts of the 'standard of civilisation'; its vision of the standard of nature allowed these states to theorise a path where they could protect their culture, race, and customs whilst also surviving as a state. They need only to become powerful enough.

[7] Bernstorff 2018, 247.

A third reason for focussing on these cases is that they have fascinating, specific dynamics in their reception stories. In the Eastern polities, so-called ‘social Darwinism’ actually arrived first, with ‘scientific Darwinism’ following only thereafter, thus being the mirror image of the European experience. The linguistic and cultural gaps between the Eastern polities and Europe also entailed idiosyncratic receptions in various ways—a phenomenon which I foreground by focussing on the act of translation as a form of ideological manipulation (to be theoretically unpacked below), allowing as it did an even greater range of manipulation. As we shall see, the gap between the original ‘Darwin’ and ‘Darwinism’ became so vast in some cases that translators became theorists in their own right. Exploring this process thus provides a powerful example of global intellectual history, by adding a third dimension of the reception dynamic—the crossing not only of the boundary from science to politics, but also into new languages and cultures.

This idiosyncrasy also explains why I latterly turn to the Latin American reception experience as a counterbalance to the Sino-Japanese tale. A ‘satellite case’ such as this helps to provide further evidence for a shared semi-peripheral reception and avoids equating one part of the semi-periphery’s experience as indicative of the entire.

The Chinese case

Let us begin in China with some historical scene-setting. As above, China appears as one of the most significant states in the story of late nineteenth-century international society. This is due to the central status that it plays in the story of the ‘expansion of international society’ and the role of the ‘standard of civilisation’ thereof.

As famously espoused by Gerrit Gong and widely reproduced, China’s experience is said to exemplify the active embrace of the civilisational ideal and of moving from isolation to socialisation, albeit following a forced reckoning with the newly preponderant West. Briefly summarised, this historical narrative starts with the First Opium War (1840–42) with the British, following which China was subjected to the first of its ‘unequal treaties’: the Treaty of Nanking, which ceded Hong Kong, compelled the payment of reparations, and opened ports to British trade and residence. This in turn led to a re-entrenched isolationist foreign policy on the part of China, until humiliated again in the Second Opium War (1856–60). Thereafter, ‘it dawned on the Chinese that the situation

was unprecedented… thus the "self-strengthening" policy [the *Ziqiang yundong*] was adopted, stressing knowledge of the West'[8] and an emulation of their victors.

Engagement with the West soon followed: the first foreign ministry created (the *Zongli Yamen*); the first permanent diplomatic missions to Western capitals established; and the learning of foreign languages encouraged through the founding of the Interpreters College. The First Sino-Japanese War (1894–5)—which saw China pitted against Meiji Japan in the throes of its own rapid modernisation—supposedly marked the moment of Chinese adherence to the European laws of war. China's genuinely *equal* membership in international society was, however, not fully realised until well into the twentieth century—after the final collapse of the Qing regime, and even beyond the republican era and first phase of civil war—with the renegotiation of the unequal treaties and the end of extraterritorial privilege codified amid global war with the Sino-British and Sino-American New Equal Treaties (1943). This 'nominally completed China's efforts… to be recognised as a "civilised" state.'[9]

This orthodox story has been critiqued in numerous ways. Particularly salient is Zhang's argument that Gong overstates and oversimplifies the adherence to moral-cultural norms as the main condition of China's entry into international society.[10] Rather, Zhang argues, China's entry was assured by it becoming an undeniable sovereign state, through both internal reforms and external diplomacy, and participation in the building of international order.[11] My own critique follows along these lines by emphasising the 'existential' aspects of China's story over the moral-cultural.

Yet still crucially missing from the Chinese story is its importation of Western natural science, which became imbricated with the 'civilising' process in intriguing ways.[12] Central here was the translation into Chinese of the works of Herbert Spencer and T.H.

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[8] Heraclides and Dialla 2017, 40.
[9] Gong 1984, 163.
[10] Such is also clear with the partial admission of the Ottoman Empire into the 'Family of Nations' in 1856 in the Treaty of Paris, despite no change in its religious-cultural difference. Zhang 1991, 7.
[11] Zhang 1991.
[12] It is also one of the less studied of the various national contexts in the 'Darwin reception' cottage industry. As Xiaoxing Jin argues: 'The transmission of Darwinism in China has not been well studied… China is not a variation on a common theme, but an outstanding example, whereby reception was shaped by a scientific or philosophical culture that had nothing to do with that of the West and whose suppositions were completely different.' Jin 2019, 118. Benjamin Schwartz's account of Yan Fu's thought and (Schwartz's protégé) James Pusey's study of Darwinism's influence on Mao remain the authoritative contributions, from which this chapter draws on alongside more recent scholarship.

Huxley by the translator Yan Fu,[13] who pitched Darwinism as a novel way of thinking that could explicate China's difficult gestation as a modern nation.

To summarise what follows, Yan's translations and his image of the Chinese organic-state—further popularised by the journalist Liang Qichao—exerted such a deep influence in late-century China that Darwinian internationalism arguably became *the* quotidian register of Chinese international thought, with Darwinian phrases ubiquitous in the era of modernisation. As James Pusey summarises: 'After 1895, the Japanese-Chinese translation of the famous Spencerian slogan, "the survival of the fittest," *yu sheng lieh pai* (the superior win, the inferior lose)… was to force its way into a thousand essays and dominate for a time the Chinese editorial mind as *the* argument for almost any course of action.'[14] So influential they were, some individuals were even *named after* Yan's translations. In all, as Vincent Shen summarises:

> Among the currents of Western thought being brought into the stream of Chinese intellectual history, the most powerful was Darwinian evolutionism, which was accepted by and greatly influenced *all contemporary thinkers and Chinese intellectuals*; no matter what other Western ideas they accepted, be it Liberalism, pragmatism, Nietzschean philosophy, or Marxism, *all accepted Darwinian evolutionism*. Even as some ideological groups seemed to fight against one another, the leaders of these camps, namely Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, and later Mao Zedong, in the Marxist camp and Hu Shi, Jiang Menglin, and Chai Yuanpei in the liberalist and pragmatist group, were all greatly influenced by Darwinian evolutionism.[15]

Some dissenters, we shall see, reacted to this widespread politicisation with counter-political translation works, most notable being Ma Junwu's attempt at a 'faithful' scientific translation of the *Origin of Species*. The reception of Darwinism in China thus occurred as the mirror image of Europe's: the political version arrived first; and the scientific version followed as an attempted corrective.

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[13] Throughout this chapter, I use modern *pinyin* Romanisation for Chinese names and words, such as 'Yan Fu' for 严复. Older scholarship, such as in Benjamin Schwartz's study, instead use the now defunct Wade-Giles romanisation (thus 'Yen Fu'). In citation I honour that usage. Yan was also known by the traditional courtesy name Ji Dao (幾道), however this rarely appears in scholarship.

[14] Pusey 1983, 4.

[15] Shen 2014, 49 emphasis mine.

Translators as theorists?

This chapter thus presents translators as 'theorists' in their own right, an idea which raises the methodological question of whether it is appropriate to do so (rather than, say, seeing translators as messengers of other, 'real' theorists).[16]

The idea of translators as active shapers of the object of their task has, of course, long been reckoned with. One thinks for instance of Borges's mischievously liberal translations, where characters change gender or plotlines tilt on different axes from the preferences of the purportedly 'neutral' messenger of the text.[17] Even in subtler cases, it is quite clear that translation is not simply an act of mere 'copying'. Today, literary translations are more widely understood to be *new* works of art in their own right.[18]

Yan Fu himself was a central contributor to this precise question, and to the theoretical study of translation studies in China, known as 'Chinese translation theory'. There, he is most famous for his triad of the core elements of translation: *faithfulness* (信), *expressiveness* (達), and *elegance* (雅). Whilst the demand for faithfulness, he argued, must always take priority, the translator may need to compromise on pure representation for the sake of clarity and elegance. In the case of Yan's own translations, as we shall see, his fidelity to the priority of faithfulness is dubious indeed, being frequently clouded not only by the latter two of the triad, but also to a fourth element: political utility.

One can see the active role of the translator in the very first line of Yan's translation of Huxley's lecture 'Evolution and Ethics', where Huxley's musings on the Hobbesian state of nature through the British countryside 'visible from the windows of the room in which I write'[19] become in Yan Fu's version 'a story retold by the translator himself; the translator thereby assumes the role of narrator. In this way, the translator becomes the agent of writing, thus his subjectivity in choosing and judging for the readers what to read, what to learn, and which position to take, becomes important.'[20]

[16] A related but distinct question is that of whether it makes sense to attempt to 'translate' works from one culture directly into another. The (in)famous Whorfianist conclusion is no. For a defence of the intelligibility of such cross-cultural interchanges, see: Schwartz 1964, 92–95.
[17] The philosophical implications of translation are most famously explored by Borges in 'Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*', wherein Menard aims to go beyond the act of translation into pure authorship.
[18] As exemplified in Jennifer Croft's recent campaign to name translators on the covers of books.
[19] Huxley 1894, vol. 9, 1.
[20] Shen 2014, 55.

There is also a political impetus to viewing translation as an active process in the case of non-Western contexts: namely, the postcolonial urge to see non-Western actors as more than passive subjects. This problem is inherent, as discussed earlier in the thesis, in the very idea of 'reception'.[21] The reality is that, in cases of translation, ideas are never simply 'adopted' but rather first decontextualised, reshaped, and then recontextualised into a new place.[22] Such was certainly the case with the Sinicisation of Darwinism, with the stark difference between Chinese and European intellectual contexts requiring serious recontextualisation—needing to account in particular for the problem of how to integrate Darwinian notions of 'struggle' and competition into a Confucian culture structured by very different notions of balance, harmony, and interdependence.[23] Furthermore, as we shall see, translations can *themselves* be objects of reception and contestation.

Methodologically, then, it seems entirely apt to consider translations as political texts. It is in the *gap* between original and translation that the 'meanings' and 'intentions' (to invoke the Skinnerian jargon) can be ascertained.[24] Indeed, as global intellectual historians have recognised, translation offers an ideal focus in which to interrogate the cross-cultural flow of ideas,[25] as we shall now see.

Yan Fu: the individual and the international

Charles Darwin never set foot in China or Japan. Nor did he correspond with scientists there. He also died years before the following Chinese reception story even begins, and doubtless would have been surprised at just *how* influential his theory would become in the Eastern polities. In the map of the *Beagle*'s voyage, the East is so wholly peripheral to

[21] Vergerio 2019. On this *vis-à-vis* Japan specifically: Kijima and Hoquet 2013, 27.
[22] For an excellent overview of such issues, see: Burke and Richter 2012.
[23] Shen 2014, 51. Of course, this is somewhat simplified. As Shen argues, whilst there were few conceptual precedents in Chinese for ideas like 'struggle for existence', Darwin's ideas about natural selection did also draw on ideas about the *interdependence* of the natural world which were possible to integrate into the prevalent Chinese ontology. Evolutionist philosophies of history did also exist in inchoate forms in China, as with the eminent Taoist philosopher Zhuangzi's concepts of *hua* ('transformation'), which was invoked in Yan's translation of 'survival of the fittest' (*shi zhe sheng cun*).
[24] Tomas Wallenius's study of the influence of editorial control on the reception of international legal texts offers a similar example of where it is this *gap* between authorial intent and a messenger's deliverance where often the most interesting processes of reception are to be found. Wallenius 2018.
[25] See, for instance: Moyn and Sartori 2013 ch. 6.

the imaginary of FitzRoy and his crew that the Japanese archipelago is neither named nor even fully realised cartographically.

Fig. 25. An untravelled, far-flung land:
Detail of the map of the *Beagle*'s voyage[26]

Barring some tentative earlier episodes,[27] it was the late 1890s when a Chinese translator would be the first to introduce Darwinism into China: Yan Fu. In doing so, he appears in history as one of those distinctively globalised individuals who seem to exemplify the

[26] Detail from full chart in: FitzRoy 1839, vol. 2: Proceedings of the Second Expedition, 1831–36, Under the Command of Captain Robert Fitz-Roy, R.N. Appendix: 'Chart: Principal tracks of H.M.S. Beagle 1831-6'.
[27] Earlier insubstantial introductions included the Kiangnan Arsenal's Chinese translation of Lyell's *Principles of Geology* in 1871, entitled *Dixue qianshi*. Mentions of Darwin's work also appeared in journalism from the 1870s onwards, on which see: Yang 2013, 185–187. Counterintuitively, Christian missionaries also played a key role in this pre-Yan phase, on which see: Jin 2020, 48–49. Yet, as James Pusey argues, perhaps the very first to bring something like 'Darwinism' to China was the prophetic British Consul Rutherford Alcock, who was also one of the first Western diplomatic representatives in the newly opened East. As Pusey recounts: 'Born the same year as Darwin… Alcock, after ten exciting if exasperating years of service half inside the Gates of China, wrote in 1855 from Shanghai of "a natural and moral law which governs the life, and growth, and decay of nations, as clearly as it does the life of man… the race to be benefited is inferior and weaker, intellectually and physically, than the nation civilizing—have had but one result: the weaker has gone down before the stronger." This grim law, which seemingly gave Alcock great hope, was written four years before *The Origin of Species*, and forty years before *The Origin of Species* was really introduced to China.' Pusey 1983, 3. The startling foresight of Alcock's suggests one of two things: either he was a genius; or the new process of Eastern modernisation so naturally suggested a process of emerging existential struggle that even a lay diplomat could foresee its arrival.

encounter between cultures, being as he was 'the first Chinese literatus who relates himself seriously, rigorously, and in a sustained fashion to modern Western thought.'[28] His life was an 'international' one, socially and intellectually. Where other individuals in this thesis theorised the international, Yan Fu lived it.

Figs. 26. and 27. Portrait of Yan Fu,
and the title page of the *Tianyanlun* (1896)

A brief sketch of this remarkable life is worthwhile.[29] After a conventional Chinese childhood, it was at the naval Foochow Shipyard School that Yan first encountered Western science, language, and culture, following his choice to enrol in the School of Navigation, where the language of tuition was English—the mother country of which would remain his preoccupation for life. After five years of study and many years thereafter at sea, he finally ventured to England in 1877 to pursue his passion.

In England, a dual interest gripped him: intellectual and political. On the one hand, he ventured further into the world of Western knowledge, immersing himself in

[28] Schwartz 1964, 3.
[29] This biographical section draws on: Ibid., 22–30.

the Darwinian science that had already shaped European intellectual life (the *Descent* was published but a few years prior to his arrival).[30] Yet these scientific interests were also driven by a fundamental political (rather, international) concern: that of unevenness. As Benjamin Schwartz outlines:

> He seems to have arrived in England already obsessed with the question which was to underlie all his subsequent investigations… *What was the secret of Western wealth and power?* Above all, what was the secret of Great Britain's wealth and power, for in 1877 Great Britain was by all odds the pristine exemplar of wealth and power. It was this burning preoccupation… which led Yen Fu's eager study of British political, economic, and social institutions, and finally even to his entirely unprecedented concern with contemporary British thought.[31]

Yan's obsession with this question was even mulled over in frequent discussion with China's first ambassador, Guo Songtao, who was by now stationed in England as per the self-strengthening policy.[32]

On his return to China in 1879, however, Yan remained an outsider and suffered a long period of depression as a result of his unused talent (no doubt exacerbated by opium addiction). The moment which broke years of impotence was the moment that would overshadow his entire life and the life of China: the First Sino-Japanese War, following which Yan Fu's fame exploded as he 'became one of the leading intellectual publicists of China… [and] all his pent-up thoughts finally found public expression.'[33] His political life proper began with his involvement in the *Gongche Sangshu* movement, which vigorously opposed the deeply unpopular Treaty of Shimonoseki, which had ended the war with Japan through the ceding of Taiwan, Liaodong, and Penghu and the compellence of China to pay reparations.

It was amid this 'explosion in 1894–95, when in his own words he felt "things choked up my breast, which I had to vomit forth".'[34] For whilst China's relative weakness to *the West* had been obvious to all observers, 'the discrepancy between the self-strengthening efforts of the Chinese and those of the "eastern dwarfs" had not been

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[30] Ibid., 33–34.
[31] Ibid., 29 emphasis mine. As Schwartz notes, it was a recurrent phenomenon that Chinese overseas students would repeatedly experience this drift to political concerns: 'Sent abroad to study some specific field of "practical" knowledge, the most gifted seldom found themselves in a proper state of mind for unrelieved attention to their chosen field of professional study. The enormously unsatisfactory general condition of China, contrasted with the wealth and power of their host country, inevitably turned their attention to general problems.' (28)
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 32.
[34] Ibid., 33.

generally realised.'[35] Whilst war with the British had raised the classic civilisational question—'How could China could become "more civilised" *vis-à-vis* the West?'—humiliating military defeat by its similarly 'backward', tiny Eastern neighbour in the First Sino-Japanese War rocked Chinese society to its core, and wrought the distinctively Darwinian question: 'The burning question before them was… "How can we be strong?" Only now it was phrased in more desperate terms, "*How can we survive?*"'[36] This was compounded further by that imperial claustrophobia which not only infected the European imagination but China's too, for as Kang Youwei put it:

> If Japan can so terrify us with big talk that she can grab the whole island of Taiwan without losing a single arrow, then all the barbarians will think China is easy to bully. The French will ask for Yunnan and Kwangsi, the English will ask for Tibet and Kwangtung, the Russians will ask for Sinkiang, and the Germans, the Austrians, the Italians… the Portuguese and the Dutch will all connive to join in.[37]

From the war, the fear of becoming one of Salisbury's 'dying nations'—'that China might now finally be "cut up like a melon" by the great world powers'[38]—thus became widespread, and to which a Darwinian vision of international struggle could both offer an analysis and, crucially, prescribe a solution.

The Darwinian sages

> 'How fast the world is changing! For a lack of better words, I would like to use the term "destiny" to describe it.'[39]
>
> — Yan Fu, in 'On the Speed of World Change' (1895)

The core of Yan's ideas on the Chinese situation can be found in a series of essays published in the *Zhibao* newspaper in 1895, the year the war with Japan ended. Entitled 'On the Speed of World Change', 'On the Origin of Strength', 'On Our Salvation', and 'In Refutation of Han Fu', taken together these essays 'shed an extraordinary light on Yen Fu's entire image of the world at this time… [and] articulate all the basic assumptions which are to underlie his translation efforts of the next few years',[40] in essence serving as

[35] Ibid., 42.
[36] Pusey 1983, 7 emphasis mine.
[37] Ibid., 49.
[38] Schwartz 1964, 42.
[39] Translation from: Qiang 2020, 104.
[40] Schwartz 1964, 43.

the 'prolegomenon to the whole translation exercise.'[41] In their broad sweep, these pieces 'portrayed China's situation as one of serious crisis… [and argued] that China had to make fundamental changes both culturally and institutionally to survive in a new world.'[42]

These fundamental changes went far beyond emulation of Western diplomacy or military strategy. Rather, for Yan, it was ultimately in *the realm of ideas*—and not just in technological, military, and political preponderance—that the West's superiority to the East was to be found. (Here we see echoes of Bagehot's emphasis on the *idea* of progress as the central feature of Western preponderance.) The Chinese needed to seek new ideas for new times, for 'while the Chinese love the ancient and ignore the modern,' he argued, 'Westerners stress the new in order to overcome the old.'[43] The self-strengtheners' attempt to realise this fact had been too modest, at which Yan's frustration is tangible: 'Do those now madly talking about Western learning and foreign affairs have any idea what it is Westerners have been ceaselessly pursuing for the last fifty years, that in accord with which they are able not only to order and protect their own lives, but also to govern their countries and enrich their people?'[44]

What they had 'been ceaselessly pursuing' was (like Bagehot argued) the *idea of progress*. The problem with the Chinese, Yan argues, is that in an epoch of rapid 'world change' they had clung to a Confucian historicism which saw 'the process of nature and of human affairs in terms of a cycle of order and disorder, prosperity and decay.'[45] The Chinese 'sages' had it all wrong—a politically explosive assertion, for this criticism of the entire orthodoxy included not only eminent philosophers and scholars but indeed 'all China's rulers… [which meant] that Yen Fu's outburst was not only Confucian blasphemy, but something perilously close to treason.'[46]

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[41] Ibid. As Pusey notes: 'Benjamin Schwartz has well called "Whence Strength?" a prolegomenon to the whole of Yen Fu's thought. It might equally well be called a prolegomenon to Chinese thought in general for the thirty years that followed. For, with remarkable prescience, Yen Fu raised almost all the major themes his contemporaries were to argue about and finally fight about so heatedly.' Pusey 1983, 62.

[42] Qiang 2020, 104.

[43] Translation from: Schwartz 1964, 44.

[44] Translation from: Pusey 1983, 59. Despite the temporal urgency present in these essays, and the allusion to 'fifty years' of Western progress here, Yan is nonetheless cautious on just how quickly China could 'catch up'. On this, see: Ibid., 73–75.

[45] Translation from: Schwartz 1964, 44. On the emergence of distinctly Chinese ideas and discourses of 'progress' in the nineteenth century, see: Vogelsang 2020; Pusey 1983 ch. 1.

[46] Pusey 1983, 54–56. Despite this attack on Confucianism, Yan also cleverly performed the role of 'ideological innovator' in the way in which he went about transforming Confucian concepts into their very opposite. Most significant was his translation of the 'struggle for existence' into *wu jing tian ze* ('things contend, Heaven chooses') which explicitly invoked the central Confucian concept of *tian* (天): 'struggle (*cheng*) was a bad word

In contrast to the stubborn Confucians, for Yan what 'the sages of the modern West have clearly understood [is] the processes of evolution. It is their grasp of the "course of destiny" which has made possible unrestricted operation of the forces of evolution.'[47] Or, as James Pusey pithily puts it: 'the Westerners' secret was belief in progress. Chinese believed in cycles and got nowhere. Westerners believed in progress and progressed.'[48]

Of course, not all 'Western sages' had recognised this fact. Conservatives still looked backwards. The Whigs had got some way there. Yet its truth had been struck upon most purely by the Darwinians.[49] From Darwin, all was revealed:

> Since the publication of this book [*The Origin of Species*], vast changes have occurred in Western learning, government and philosophy. Those who assert that the teaching of Mr. Darwin have done more to renew the eyes and ears and to change men's thoughts than Newton's discovery of physical laws are perhaps not indulging in empty words.[50]

In the wake of this revolution in thought, the Chinese had to throw away their old ideas,[51] to ditch Confucian falsehood for Darwin's truth. In a classic appeal to nature, the *facts* of evolution and the struggle for existence recognised by 'Darwin the great sage' thus provided a productive programme for *action*. The closer the Chinese adhered to its truths (as had the West)—above all, the truth of the fact that 'races compete with races, and form groups and states, so that these groups can compete with each other'[52]—the more successful they could become. Or, as he as he put it in 'Whence Strength?', the central edict that 'the weak are conquered by the strong, the stupid are enslaved by the intelligent'[53] both explained China's predicament and also glimpsed at a potential new

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in Chinese… And Yen Fu realized it, for he himself challenged the Classics on just that issue, anticipating conservative attack.' Ibid., 61.

[47] Schwartz 1964, 45.

[48] Pusey 1983, 51. As Pusey notes, there is therefore something of a paradox at the heart of Yan Fu's belief in idealist determinism: 'Did the West get ahead just by saying, "I think I can, I think I can"? Were they number one because they tried harder? …It is a confusion "fated" to all would-be determinists who want also to believe that human determination is a determining factor in human history.' (51–2) This paradox of the 'Is/Ought' can also be seen in realism, as discussed in: Barkin 2009.

[49] Schwartz 1964, 45; Qiang 2020, 105.

[50] Translation from: Schwartz 1964, 45. For an alternative translation of this crucial passage: Pusey 1983, 59.

[51] Just as the Europeans cared less for Darwin's commentary on pigeons than human beings, so too the Chinese cared more about what Darwin could teach about China's future. As John Fryer (the director of the Kiangan Arsenal's department responsible for the original Lyell translation) noted far before Yan Fu: 'The origin of man is insignificant for us. There are few scholars who have contemplated man's final destiny. It is not worthwhile to waste time on man's origins; instead, why not devote our efforts to research on man's final destiny?' Cited in: Jin 2020, 49.

[52] Translation from: Schwartz 1964, 55.

[53] Translation from: Jin 2020, 123.

reality: 'The brown and black races constantly waver between life and death, why not the 400 million Yellows?'[54]

Yan thus believed that there was 'nothing retrogressive or atavistic in the growing "struggle for existence" among the great powers of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. This struggle is not an incomprehensible throwback to a presumably obsolete militant phase of history. It is rather the logical culmination of the release of human energies and their consolidation within national societies.'[55] The very evolutionary model used by the Western powers to justify hierarchical practices against weaker powers was therefore completely correct—and it was high time the Chinese embraced it.[56] This was a mimetic Darwinism.[57]

Yan's Spencer: from individualism to organicism

Yan's most sustained engagement with Darwinism, however, came not through Darwin himself—whose strictly scientific preoccupations clouded Darwinism's political possibilities—but through his interlocuters: Spencer and Huxley. Yan was ultimately not all that interested in the scientific aspects and 'from the beginning, his excitement over Darwin was political and sociological, not anthropological or biological.'[58] There is thus a 'double-translation' at play in Yan Fu's work: a linguistic translation of political translations; an elevation of *hadith* over original scripture.

Rather than Darwin, it was instead from Herbert Spencer that Yan Fu 'derive[d] most of the elements of his thought'.[59] Whilst familiar with Darwinian science from his time in the naval academy and in England, it was through his reading of Spencer's work on return to China that Darwinism's political possibilities really manifested to Yan, his encounter with *A Study of Sociology* in 1881 being 'a major intellectual event in his life.'[60]

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[54] Translation from: Schwartz 1964, 55.
[55] Ibid., 80.
[56] As Pusey notes, an important part of this struggle for existence was, for Yan, as with other European Darwinians, racial. Many Chinese came to see the intra-racial conflict of the 'yellow' races in the Sino-Japanese War as intimating towards a broader inter-racial conflict. Pusey 1983, 68–69. On the racial aspects of Yan's argument in the 1895 essay 'Whence Strength?', see also: Yang 2013, 188–190.
[57] Evidently, this notion of 'mimetic' Darwinism raises historiographical questions. For aversion of doubt, I believe this reflects the way in which Darwinism was *actually* received in Chinese international thought, without meaning to reinforce a 'dichotomous "impact-response" model, which makes China a passive recipient of stimulus from an active West'. Yang 2013, 181–182.
[58] Pusey 1983, 54.
[59] Schwartz 1964, 80.
[60] Ibid., 33.

It was above all from Spencer that Yan finds the basic idea of Darwinism as an explanatory framework for the relative success or failure of nations.

However, Yan's translations of Spencer's work depart significantly from the individualism[61] and anti-nationalism characteristic of Spencer.[62] Instead, the central thing that Yan takes from Spencer is organicism—more specifically, a collectivist variation of the organic nation-state glimpsed in Spencer's use of the biological analogy.[63] As Schwartz argues, organicism was crucial to Yan's international concerns because it offered a descriptive foundation from which to build: 'Spencer… provides [for Yan] the enormously exciting and illuminating image of the "social organism". He not only indicates the paths to salvation; he also defines precisely what is to be saved.'[64] By reinterpreting China 'as a society-nation rather than a culture', its fate *vis-à-vis* the Western powers could be adequately grasped: 'It is an organism among other organisms within a Darwinian environment struggling to survive, to grow, and to prevail',[65] an arena 'not just of warring states, but of warring organisms, warring social organisms, of which only the fit would survive.'[66]

This use of the organicist motif also provided the potential remedy to China's ills (beyond merely embracing the Darwinian 'sages'). The mechanism for the organism's survival was after all, Spencer argued, the result of harnessing the 'energies' of the people: physical, intellectual, and moral.[67] Yet, contra Spencer's individualism, for Yan the key was to harness these three energies as a single body of people, a nation: 'As a cell of the organism known as China, the duty of the Chinese individual is not to any set of fixed, universal values or fixed beliefs. It is above all a commitment to the survival and growth of the social organism of which he is a part.'[68]

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[61] Indeed, the individual is almost entirely absent in Yan's vision of political life. On which, see: Pusey 1983, 70–71.
[62] Their sole overlap is thus their shared anti-imperialism.
[63] He also notably offers an intriguing Eastern-inflected interpretation of Spencer's concept of 'the Unknowable': 'To Yen Fu… Spencer's Unknowable is Gautama's Nirvana, the Brahma of the Adviata Vedanta, and even the "Principle" (*li*) of the Chu Hsi school of Confucianism.' Schwartz 1964, 105.
[64] Ibid., 56.
[65] Ibid., 50.
[66] Pusey 1983, 95.
[67] On Yan's translation of this triad: Ibid., 65.
[68] Schwartz 1964, 57.

Yan's Huxley: distorted doctrinaire

Whilst Spencer helped lay these foundations and merited a translation in 1903, it was actually T.H. Huxley's Romanes lecture 'Evolution and Ethics' (1893) that was the first and central part of Yan's corpus of translation, as well as his most widely influential work (in spite of its ornamental style pitched to the élite literati).[69] Why Yan chose Huxley, rather than Darwin or Spencer, to introduce the Chinese to the 'Western sages' was simple: Darwin was too strictly scientific, whereas Spencer's grandiose evolutionist philosophy was too elaborate for the urgent need to transform China's international prospects.[70] In the throes of crisis, Huxley was thus chosen for his poetic brevity.

The translation of Huxley's lecture—the *Tianyanlun* (1898)[71]—has elicited much fascination because, like the abolition of Spencer's individualist anti-nationalism, Yan's version of 'Huxley' is vastly distant from the man himself. Most glaringly, his use of Huxley as a tract of Darwinian internationalism is profoundly jarring considering that Huxley's lecture (as we saw in the previous chapter) was *explicitly anti-social Darwinian*. Indeed, it served precisely as an attack on the Spencerian excesses of applying the 'evolutionary ethic' outside of nature.[72] As Schwartz notes, 'it is most significant… that while the original title is *Evolution and Ethics*, Yen Fu simply calls his translation *On Evolution*',[73] thereby dropping the central division of the lecture and ignoring Huxley's plea that 'the ethical progress of society depends not on *imitating* the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in *combatting* it',[74] 'to subdue its masterfulness to purely ethical ends.'[75] Huxley instead explicitly defines his argument against a crude naturalism:

> The history of civilization details the steps by which men have succeeded in building up an *artificial world* within the cosmos… In every family, in every polity that has been established, the cosmic process in man has been restrained and otherwise modified by law and custom; in surrounding nature, it has been similarly influenced by the art of the shepherd, the agriculturist, the artisan. As civilization has advanced, so has the extent of this interference increased; until the organized and highly developed sciences and arts of the present day have endowed man with a command

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[69] Ibid., 93–94.
[70] Ibid., 98.
[71] The title chosen, as mentioned above, to invoke the Confucian concept of *tian* ('heaven', as in the idea of the Mandate of Heaven), which he uses as the equivalent of the broad concept of 'nature'.
[72] This is what Huxley refers to, in a barely concealed attack on Spencer, as 'the fanatical individualism of our time [that] attempts to apply the analogy of cosmic nature to society.' Huxley 1894, vol. 9, 82.
[73] Schwartz 1964, 100.
[74] Huxley 1894, vol. 9, 83 emphasis mine.
[75] Ibid., vol. 9, 85.

> over the course of non-human nature greater than that once attributed to the magicians.[76]

'Darwin's bulldog' is thus presented by Yan as the very opposite of his intentions. This phenomenon can be seen across his translations—not only in the caricatures of the Darwinians, but also in his versions of canonical liberal theorists (Smith and Mill), where one finds again a consistent focus on 'national energy' which leads Yan to equate liberalism to the collectivism and mercantilism which it so vigorously opposed in Europe.[77]

In the case of Huxley's essay, Yan's interpretation is not only naturalist but shorn of all ambiguities. On the very first page, for instance, 'Yan Fu's translation turns Huxley's scientific hypothesis "It may be safely assumed that…" into an imagination of Huxley, and Huxley's hypothetical phrase "it may be…" gets dropped without translation, resulting in a categorial assumption of「則無疑也」(literally "that is absolutely without doubt").'[78]

The sheer range of strange translations in the text have been mulled over by numerous scholars, including the transformation of scientific propositions on geology into metaphysical assertations[79] and, even more egregiously, the classic crude equation of evolution with *progression* (which ignored Huxley's nuanced appreciation of the non-directionality of natural selection).[80]

Yet it is the inclusion of the political organism in the panoply of the natural world which is most striking, for 'whereas Huxley limited his comments only to plants and animals, in Yan Fu's translation they are extended to human societies.'[81] Huxley's subtle intimations towards the biological metaphor are thus expanded far beyond original size, with organicism dominating Yan's translation and 'an extensive commentary occupying *one-third of the book*, [where] Yan Fu introduced Spencer's progressive "social organism" and his argument that functionally induced brain improvement defeats Malthusian over-population and natural inequality'.[82] It is clear that 'Huxley's horticultural metaphor for

[76] Ibid., vol. 9, 83–84 emphasis mine.
[77] Schwartz 1964 xii-xiii.
[78] Shen 2014, 55.
[79] Ibid., 56.
[80] Jin 2020, 51.
[81] Shen 2014, 56.
[82] Yang 2013, 193 emphasis mine.

colonization struck Yan Fu sharply, warning him of the doom of the Chinese people in the international struggle for existence.'[83]

Beyond and against Yan

Yan's introduction of Darwinism into China would become hugely influential, with his image of the Chinese state-organism in international struggle with the Western and Japanese powers offering a powerful new lens through which the project of modernisation could be understood.

Other notable Chinese theorists influenced by Yan's vision included the famed journalist and central architect of Chinese modernisation, Liang Qichao.[84] Liang was to widely popularise the Darwinian idiom beyond the audience that Yan Fu's scholarly text could reach—a Huxley to Yan's Darwin, as it were. Indeed, Yan sent the manuscript of the *Tianyanlun* immediately to Liang after finishing,[85] from which he 'in turn mined the translation for a series of articles'[86] in reformist journals and newspapers, written in his accessible and polemical 'Laing style'.[87] Thus, 'the survival of China, competition among nations, the strong versus the weak, history of the races, and the idea of progress emerged as *popular motifs*.'[88]

A key figure in the Hundred Days' Reform (alongside other Darwinians including Kang Youwei and Mai Menghua, before their deposal by the Empress Dowager Cixi), Liang's subsequent exile to Japan in 1901—which, as we promptly shall see, was in the throes of its own Darwinian moment—was to further compound his call for radical change.[89] Writing from Japan, Liang acclaimed the veracity of the Darwinian maxim: 'All men in the world must struggle to survive… This, then, is the principle of behind the extinction of nations',[90] an extinction which threatened China if it did not heed the radical reforms of the Wuxu group. Like Yan, behind the gamut of practical reforms (which most controversially included the scrapping of the traditional Confucian exams system)

[83] Yang 2013, 195.
[84] For the full treatment of Liang, see: Levenson 1953. See also: Pusey 1983 ch.s 3 and 6; Mishra 2012 ch. 3.
[85] Pusey 1983, 89.
[86] Yang 2013, 193.
[87] Pusey 1983, 84.
[88] Yang 2013, 194 emphasis mine.
[89] Mishra 2012, 149–151. Again, the full treatment is in: Levenson 1953 ch. 3.
[90] Translation from: Levenson 1953, 116.

was an embrace of a whole new intellectual worldview. Amongst these policies, Liang even argued for the increased memorialisation of past historical events and cultural signifiers (in the belief that memory was a font of state power), including the canonisation of Charles Darwin as a Western icon.[91] Liang even sought to 'Darwinise' other Western idols in his own translations.[92]

The success of Liang's popular front was such that not only did Darwinian concepts attain an everyday familiarity, but 'evolutionary cosmology grew so familiar that key words from Yan Fu's translation were even adopted for people's names',[93] most famous amongst which was the eminent diplomat and liberal theorist Hu Shih (which derived from Yan's translation of 'survival of the fittest'). The acclaimed short story writer Lu Xun was another whose life after encountering Yan Fu was remarkably changed.[94]

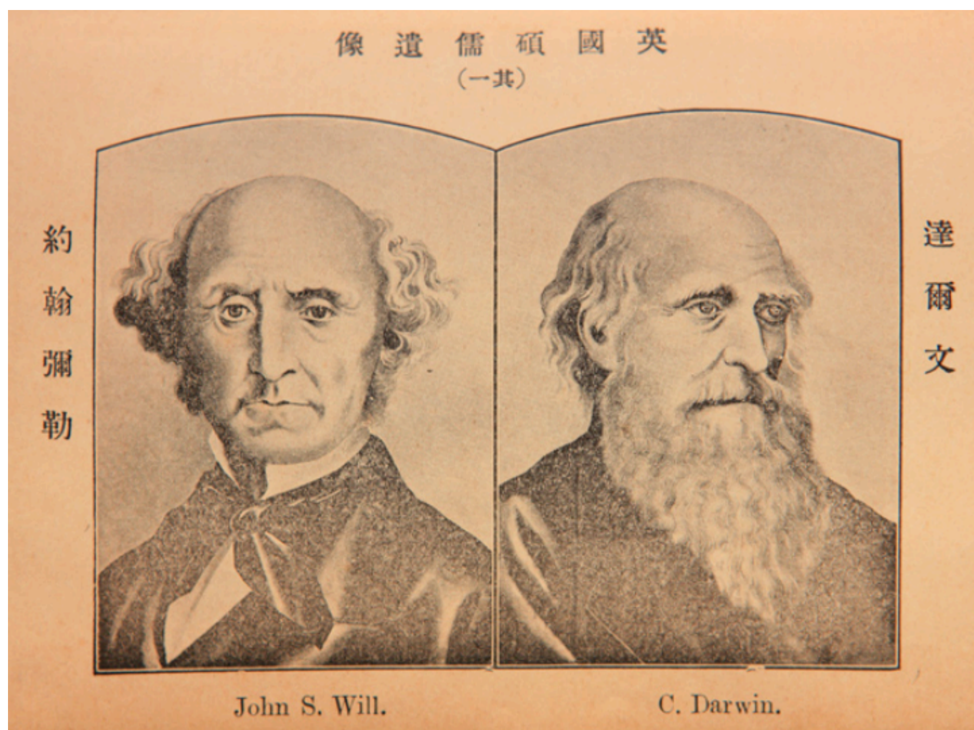


Fig. 28. The great sages:
Portraits of Mill and Darwin from a 1902 issue of Liang's *Journal of a New People*[95]

[91] Kwong 2000, 664.
[92] As in his translation of Fichte, discussed in: Kurtz 2012.
[93] Yang 2013, 197.
[94] Pusey 1998.
[95] Image from: Yang 2013, 196.

Yet Yan's vision also elicited negative reactions. As in other parts of the world, two basic responses emerged: (1) a scientistic Darwinism that attempted to reinstate Darwin into the realm of 'science proper'; and (2) anti-Darwinians of various stripes which, for the explanandum of Chinese weakness, offered diverse explanans contrary to Yan's belief in China's evolutionary backwardness.

On the former, the scientistic reproach castigated (not unreasonably) Yan's political project as a bastardisation of Darwinism that polluted its scientific purity. Most significant to espouse this view was the scientist Ma Junwu, who reacted against Yan's poetic licence through the first translation, on strictly 'scientific' grounds, of the *Origin of Species*[96] (which Yan never tackled) under the title *Daerwen wuzhong yuanshi*. This was to be a translation that would stress above all the first of Yan Fu's three principles of translation: *faithfulness*.[97] Begun in 1901 at the height of Darwinian fever but unpublished until after the First World War in the time of the May Fourth Movement,[98] Ma's act of translation was *qua* itself couched in civilisational terms, rooted in the belief that knowledge of Darwin's great theory was a precondition of being a 'civilised' state:

> This book (*The Origin of Species*) has been translated by all civilized countries of the world. Now our country cannot but become a civilized country… without a (Chinese) translation of this book.[99]

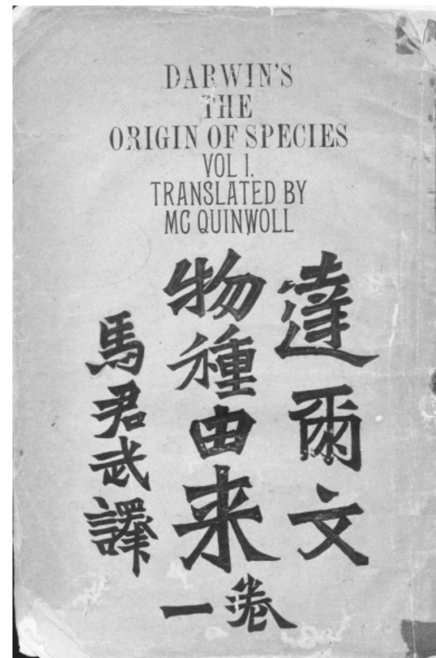
Yet Ma's translation was just as prone to distortion as Yan's. As Jin Xiaoxing's recent exegesis of Ma's translation demonstrates, his is just as concerned as Yan in turning Darwin's non-directional theory into a progressive one,[100] and ultimately 'neither Ma nor Yan sought to shift the public's focus away from the Spencerian sphere of social development and racial enhancement to the scientific deliberations of Darwinism.'[101] Ma's translation came too late regardless, and was already eclipsed by the Great War. The scientists had lost, and Yan's poetry won out over Ma's fidelity, as Vincent Shen laments:

> Unfortunately, even though the scientific discourse of Darwinism made its impact on Chinese intellectuals, it did not spread broadly and deeply in the Chinese mind. Social Darwinism, on the other hand, entered into people's common ideology, with

[96] Preceded by another translation of Haeckel's *Die Welträtsel* (1899).
[97] Shen 2014, 57.
[98] The process of Ma's translation of the *Origin* was long. It emerged first in 1902–3 with translations of five individual chapters of the book's sixth edition: the 'Historical Sketch', and chapters three (the classic 'Struggle for Existence'), four ('Natural Selection'), and then a compendium of all these plus chapter five. The full translation did not arrive until 1920, however. On the publication history, see: Jin 2019, 127.
[99] Translation from: Shen 2014, 57.
[100] See the substantive discussions in: Jin 2020, 52–55; Jin 2019, 131–140.
[101] Jin 2020, 55.

> its metaphysical assumptions and positions based on faith, pushing Chinese readers to take "competition for survival" as a social rule that must be complied with if China was to enter into modernity.[102]

Other Chinese Darwinians were still yet troubled by the route taken by Yan Fu, and some went down the alternative path of the Kropotkinites (or what D.P. Crook calls 'peace biology').[103] As Haiyan recounts: 'Some Chinese observers chose to see the dark side of evolution. For example, Zhang Taiyan… acknowledged with Huxley that good and evil evolved together. Zhou Zouren, a younger brother of Lu Xun, found "the theory of evolution is great, but too cruel".'[104]



DARWIN'S
THE
ORIGIN OF SPECIES
VOL I.
TRANSLATED BY
MC QUINWOLL

達爾文
物種由来
馬君武譯
一卷

Figs. 29. and 30. Portrait of Ma Junwu
and the 'first volume' of Ma's translation of the *Origin*[105]

Others still treaded more idiosyncratic paths, neither obviously pro-Darwinian nor anti. Kang Youwei is the exemplar here. Known primarily for his strange utopian tract *Da Tongshu* ('The Book of Great Unity', which theorised a perfect, borderless society predicated on the idea of a thousand-year eugenical march towards a single homogenous

[102] Shen 2014, 58–59.
[103] Crook 1994.
[104] Yang 2013, 198.
[105] Portrait available under creative commons. Title page of *Daerwen wuzhong youlai, yijuan* in: Jin 2019, 130.

race), Kang was another key interlocuter in the debates on China's weakness. At times, he appeared to present proto-Darwinian arguments, as in 1895 (the same year as Yan's famous essays on the Chinese situation) where, in 'an impassioned introductory editorial for the Society for the Study of Strength's new journal',[106] he wrote of the law of the strong in nature.[107] Yet Kang's thought was unorthodox, and strongly influenced by the complexities and curiosities of the odd, often quite illogical introductions of Western texts into China. Around the same time, as James Pusey demonstrates, Kang also espoused a contradictory civilisational conception of progress, one inspired in part by 'an unpretentious treatise entitled "Homely Words to Aid Governance," originally published in the mid-nineteenth century as part of *Chambers Educational Course*, edited by Messrs. William and Robert Chambers of Edinburgh',[108] which was peculiarly at the time one of the very few Western texts on political theory available in translation. There, 'progress as envisioned by the Chamberses was quite un-Darwinian. Progress was civilization, and civilization was the gradual extension of reason, knowledge, and good will.'[109]

Ultimately, even the ardent Darwinians themselves pivoted dramatically after the catastrophe of 1914, the apotheosis of their vision. Yan Fu lamented in 1918 that 'the European race's last three hundred years of evolutionary progress have all come down to nothing but four words: selfishness, slaughter, shamelessness, and corruption.'[110] Liang Qichao concurred: 'thousands of [Darwin's] words all came down to ten: "the struggle for survival and the survival of the fittest"… for individuals, the worship of influence and money became the sacred rule, and, for countries, militarism and imperialism became the most stylish political policies. Surely it was out of this that came this great international World War.'[111] The Sino-Japanese War catalysed a pursuit of competitive greatness; the Great War shattered greatness itself.

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[106] Pusey 1983, 57.
[107] 'The largest animals are the camel, the elephant, the mule, the horse, and the ox. All are of tremendous size, all several times as big as man. And yet men corral them, bridle them, break them, and ride them. They even slaughter and roast them. Camels, oxen, and horses try to voice their suffering… but, despite their cries, no one saves them, no one redresses their wrongs. Why? Because they are weak. Oxen and horses are guiltless, they are innocent, yet, however hard they toil and slave, they cannot escape the butcher. Why? Because they are stupid. The [Confucian] *Book of History* says, "They attack the stupid and annex the weak." If one is stupid and weak and so invites annexation and attack, then what can one expect?' Translation from: Ibid.
[108] Ibid., 22.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Translation from: Yang 2013, 198.
[111] Translation from: Ibid.

To Japan

> 'The eternal struggle—*life*
> Struggle against nature, struggle with society,
> Struggle with other living things,
> A struggle that goes on forever; it has no solution.
>
> So struggle!
> For struggle is life's flower;
> The fertile flower of life.
>
> But when life cowers to nature's power,
> Or to the force of society,
> From that struggle shunned
> Barren flowers bloom.
> One flower is religion.
> One flower is art.
>
> And worthless are the worms scrounging nectar from barren flowers.'[112]
> — Ōsugi Sakae, 'Barren Flowers' (1913)

What about China's adversary in the struggle for existence, the catalyst of its Darwinian embrace: what of the story of Darwinian internationalism in Japan?

Darwin's theory arrived on Japanese soil in 1877—somewhat earlier than China, indeed preceding the First Sino-Japanese War. As with China, this arrival occurred at a moment of profound change, in the middle of the Meiji Restoration which followed (at the hands of Commodore Perry's forced opening of Japan in 1853) the demise of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the end of feudalism, and the cessation of *sakoku*.[113] This context would ensure once more that 'people's interest in Darwinism consisted in its social and political implications rather than in biological theory.'[114] Japan, like China, was in the throes of its reckoning with a preponderant western world, with modernity foisted upon it.

As with China, according to the orthodox story this was a strictly 'civilisational' process: again, of an Eastern nation 'copying' Western behaviour, culture, and law, and slowly being accepted into the ring of 'civilised' states. In Gong's narrative, Japan is seen as undergoing an even more fundamental transformation than China's. From almost total

[112] Ōsugi 1913.
[113] As with Chinese, the transliteration of Japanese is a fraught process. I follow the dominant Hepburn romanisation, and also follow the Japanese naming convention of family name primacy, except again where these differ in citation.
[114] Shimao 1981, 93.

isolation[115] to its shock victory over the Russians in 1905 (the first major military victory of an Asian power over a European in the modern era), Japan's ascent was staggering in its steepness. Like China, the original impetus for transformation was an unequal treaty: the Convention of Kanagawa (1854), signed following the United States' intimidation of Japan by Commodore Perry's gunboat diplomacy. The treaty (like the Treaty of Nanking) opened Japanese ports to the Americans and forced Japan to abandon its autarkic policies through the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Following the Meiji Restoration in 1868, an explicit policy of rapid Westernisation was adopted by the Japanese. Thereafter, so the Gong story goes, the Sino-Japanese War provided a crucial litmus test of Japan's civilising process through moral comparison with its neighbour: 'After a bad start with its onslaught on Port Arthur… the Japanese followed the laws of war, unlike the Chinese. [The author] Fukuzawa dubbed it "a war between civilisation and barbarism".'[116] Accordingly, John Westlake and T.E. Holland—those famous enforcers of the standard—judged Japan to have followed the precepts of 'civilised' behaviour.[117] Consequently, in the Aoki-Kimberley Treaty (1894) the British renounced their extraterritorial privileges in Japan, and the country was set to take its place as a normal member of international society. If anything, Japanese emulation of the West went too far. In a historical coda, the story would come full circle with the Americans—who started the whole process of Japan's engagement with the outside world—ending Japan's imperial expansionist endeavours with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an act that itself would question whether the Americans were themselves the 'barbarians'.

However, once again, the overemphasis on the moral-cultural aspects of this process and the erasure of Darwinism's profound influence on Japanese international thought eclipses the credibility of this orthodox story. Certainly in one sense, the importation of Darwinism into Japan was part of a process of 'Westernisation': 'in the

---

[115] Under the policy of *sakoku*, established in the early seventeenth century, foreign relations and trade were severely restricted between Japan and other nations and Japanese commoners were banned from leaving the country. The main exceptions to this hermeticism were: the Dutch factory at Dejima (and its cultural influence via *Rangaku*, or 'Dutch learning'); limited permitted trade with China (through the Nagasaki port), Joseon Korea (permitted only by the Tsushima Domain), the Ainu peoples (by the Matsumae Domain), and the Ryukyu vassal state (by the Satsuma Domain); and limited diplomatic relations with Korea through the Joseon Tongsinsa (goodwill missions).

[116] Heraclides and Dialla 2017, 42.

[117] In the introduction and preface to Sakuye Takahashi's book on the war.

Meiji case, wherein Western knowledge was being "indigenized"… the West was an important source of prestigious intellectual material, and the scientific naturalism movement, in particular, was a rich source of "natural order" knowledge claims'[118] which the Meiji modernisers promptly utilised. As in China, this importation involved adapting Darwinism to pre-existing cultural contexts—Japan for instance was similarly influenced by Confucianism and faced similar problems in adapting Darwinism to Confucian ideas. Many Japanese authors accordingly adapted existing Confucian concepts to welcome Western ideas, as with 'the Confucian acceptance of non-regular natural interventions into human affairs [which] provided an entry point for the recognition of Western-style laws as agents of social and economic ordering. [Thus the writer] Tsuda… wrote a defence of the *laissez-faire* trade arrangements imposed by the West, describing international trade as being "like the principle of the winds and the tides," which would "ultimately reach equilibrium".'[119]

Yet in other senses, Japan had a more sympathetic context. For one, its animist religion Shinto—which in the 1860s the Meiji government attempted to sharply separate and venerate apart from Buddhism, rejecting *shinbutsu-shūgō* syncretism—was a highly recipient worldview, with Shinto ancestor-worship easily synthesised with Darwinism: 'Evolution was the endorsement of ancestor-veneration. Evolution taught the continuity of the life of the past with the life of the future on earth.'[120] The religious common sense[121] of the Japanese—'that everything is in a state of constant changing, [that] humans and other animals can be reincarnated interchangeably, and mankind is not a special created being but a part of the natural world'[122]—thus made the reception of Darwinism smooth. As such, as we shall see, Darwinism in Japan was accepted quickly, broadly, and deeply.

Whilst this importation was certainly a process of Westernisation, it was not however strictly a 'civilisational' process. For, in Japan as in China, Darwinian

[118] Cross 1995, 326.
[119] Ibid., 328.
[120] Wayman 1942, 248.
[121] On this idea of religious 'common sense', see Cox's idea of cosmology in: Cox 2000.
[122] Kijima and Hoquet 2013, 29. Kijima and Hoquet also point to other factors that provided a context for Japan's easy reception: its national familiarity with monkeys, making the idea of common descent easier; the modernisation process itself, proving the truth of the struggle for existence; their dislike for Christianity, shared, as we shall see, by Morse; the lack of a local form of anti-evolutionist biology; the interest in Chinese herbalism and 'natural' aesthetics; and the bookselling of Darwin's works in English and Dutch as early as 1876.

internationalism became so widely influential precisely because its vision of existential struggle was seen to provide a potent model for a future where Japan could *retain its culture* simply through the accumulation of ample power.

Morse the messenger

As in China, evolutionism had a pre-Darwinian history in Japan.[123] In regard to Darwin's theory more specifically, earlier intimations came throughout the 1870s, as for instance with mentions of the theory in the Shinto priest Aoikawa Nobuchika's 1874 brief tract against Christianity.[124]

Yet the key figure in the Japanese reception story is not a native but an outsider: Edward Sylvester Morse, an American zoologist who in 1877 first substantively introduced Darwinism to Japan in a series of lectures at the University of Tōkyō. A conchologist by training—shells had been his childhood passion which led him, aged 21, into a zoological career in 1859,[125] the year of the *Origin*'s publication—Morse found himself in a newly-opened Japan during a planned month-long visit to study local brachiopods.[126]

Morse's Darwinism was deeply rooted. Observing the fierce debates after the original publication of Darwin's theory, Morse had declared his Darwinian allegiance in 1873 and soon thereafter became its evangelist and expositor[127]—not just scientifically, but politically too.[128] For one, Morse espoused the heredity of social class and intelligence, which he also applied to the causes of crime and its solutions (including long-term incarceration to avoid criminality being passed on, 'perpetuating his kind').[129] One year before his arrival in Japan, Morse's politics were thus just as Darwinian as his science: 'The statute-books,' he concludes, 'are to again be revised from the standpoint of science.'[130]

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[123] On which, see the summary in: Godart 2017, 18–21.
[124] Shimao 1981, 94–95; Kijima and Hoquet 2013, 28; Godart 2017, 23.
[125] Martin 1995, 86.
[126] Wayman 1942, 230.
[127] Martin 1995, 87.
[128] Indeed, these views may be the reason for his hiring by the Meiji modernisers. Cross 1995, 336.
[129] Ibid., 332.
[130] Morse 1876, 198.

Whilst likely differing from these political positions, Darwin himself praised Morse's scientific work, including *The Brachiopedia* (1870)[131] and *Shell Mounds of Ōmori* (1879), the latter of which was the very first publication of Tōkyō University Press and to which Darwin lent a notable appraisement: 'Of all the wonders in the world,' he says, 'the progress of Japan, in which you have been aiding, seems to me about the most wonderful.'[132]

Upon arrival in Japan, Morse quickly happened upon this 'discovery' of the Ōmori shell mounds, which were huge middens on the edge of Tōkyō; of course, the locals were well aware of their existence. This occurred immediately after landing at Yokohama (one of the first port cities to open to outsiders), when Morse fortuitously observed the mounds from the train window *en route* to the capital. The trove of 'deep time' found in the Ōmori mounds was not only anthropologically significant, but also fed directly into the political mood of the time. As Sherrie Cross argues:

> No doubt the value of Morse's discovery would have been immediately apparent to his Meiji colleagues, whose intellectual efforts were intensely concentrated on the issue of Japan's status among nations. In the nineteenth-century Victorian hierarchy of nations and races, a matter of considerable concern among Japanese intellectuals, one of the distinctions used to differentiate between "superior" and "inferior" societies was that the former *had undergone transitions*, while the latter were regarded as unchanging relics… evidence of transitions and migrational "replacements" in Japanese history, similar to those boasted of by scholars of Western history, would be indicative of Japan's already substantial progress toward "civilization".[133]

On the back of such early achievements, mere days after his arrival in Japan Morse was approached to establish a department of zoology at the new Imperial University of Tōkyō, established but three months prior to Morse's arrival and eager for staff.[134] A perfect candidate to join the ranks of *oyatoi-gaikokujin* (the 'hired foreigners' serving the Meiji government's modernisation programme), Morse promptly signed up.

At first, he was little interested in the Japanese people, treating them with a sort of quiet respect. By the end of his life, however, his conchological obsession had drifted to a new delicate shell: that of Japanese ceramics, of which he came to amass thousands of specimens.[135] He also employed his brilliant draughtsmanship to introduce Western

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[131] Martin 1995, 91–92.
[132] Cited in: Wayman 1942, 251. Morse also met T.H. Huxley later in life. Martin 1995, 97.
[133] Cross 1995, 336.
[134] This section draws on the detailed account of Morse's trip given by his biographer, in: Wayman 1942 ch. 9.
[135] All meticulously documented in: Morse 1901. Morse's discovery of Japanese pottery is beautifully recounted in: Wayman 1942, 257–262.

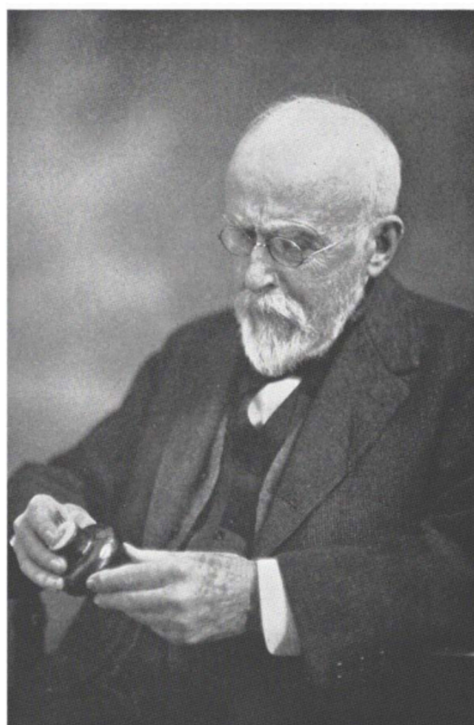
readers to Japanese society in a series of lavishly illustrated volumes—including on the style and interiors of Japanese homes,[136] and the texture of everyday life in Tōkyō as recounted in his memoir.[137]

At the Imperial University, Morse engaged in a range of scientific courses with his talented students. He was also drafted into what would be the crucial moment in the Darwinian story in Japan: on October 6th 1877, 'he delivered the first western-style public lecture ever sponsored in Japan, one of a series of four for which tickets were sold and advertising posters displayed.'[138] As Morse himself recounted the occasion:

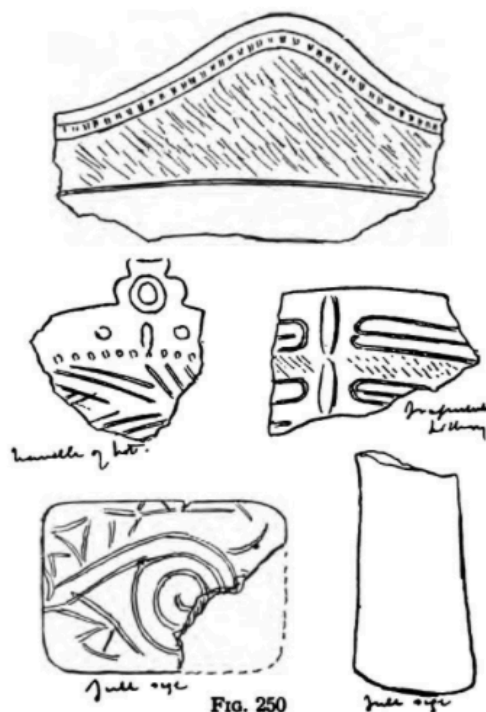
> The audience seemed to be keenly interested, and it was delightful to explain the Darwinian theory without running up against theological prejudice as I often did at home. The moment I finished there was a rousing and nervous clapping of the hands which made my cheeks tingle. One of the Japanese professors told me that this was the first lecture ever given in Japan on Darwinism or Evolution.[139]

This lecture—delivered in English like his earlier teaching, for the University required its students be literate in the language—was given at a time of great turbulence. That same year, the Satsuma Rebellion served as the final sustained uprising of the old order against the new modernising government, the eventual crushing of which signified the end of the venerable *samurai* class. The lecture's influence was in this context less biological—indeed, Japanese biology at the time lacked the conceptual apparatus to fully embrace Darwinian notions of phylogeny[140]—but political.

[136] Morse 1885.
[137] Morse 1917, vol. 1; Morse 1917, vol. 2.
[138] Wayman 1942, 255.
[139] Morse 1917, vol. 1, 339–340.
[140] Shimao 1981, 93–94.



Edward Sylvester Morse



Figs. 31. and 32. An elderly Morse musing over a piece of Japanese pottery, and some of the finds at the Ōmori mounds[141]

And embrace Darwin they did. Unlike in the West, once introduced by Morse 'the idea of evolution thrived in Japan and was accepted broadly and rapidly as an established theory among both laymen and specialists, without any strong resistance.'[142] As Kimitada Miwa puts it:

> In the field of ideas, the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of Darwinian-Spencerian ideas of evolution and the survival of the fittest that are found among Japanese intellectuals of the period, both in speculative professions and real politics, is striking. They seem to have taken to this Western philosophy with complete naïveté… they accepted [it] with the enthusiasm of a dejected man snapping back into action upon realising his own possibilities during a revivalist meeting. It was a ready-made philosophy which was fitted to Japan's needs in a most amazing manner.[143]

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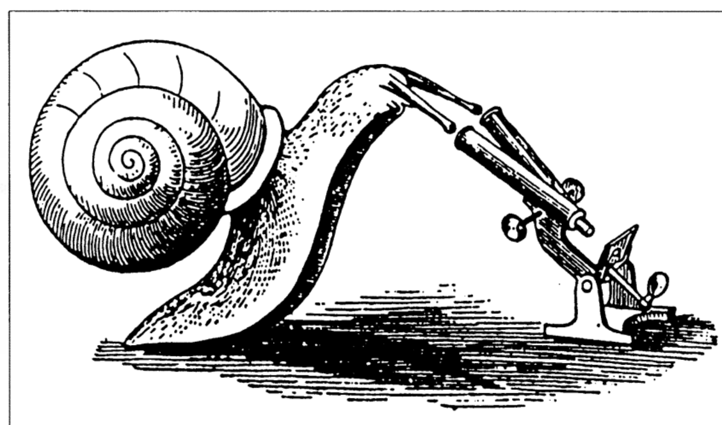
[141] Portrait in: Wayman 1942 frontispiece. Drawing in: Morse 1917, vol. 1, 310.
[142] Kijima and Hoquet 2013, 29.
[143] Kimitada 1968, 2.

Morse was, it should be noted, not the only Darwinian missionary to arrive from the outside. Another key figure was the American missionary and evolutionary theorist John Thomas Gulick (another conchologist!), who delivered lectures on natural selection at the religious Doshisha University in Kyoto. Yet compared to Morse's stridently anti-Christian bent—both in content and tone: Morse even deliberately lectured on Sundays to annoy the missionaries[144]—Gulick's Christianised take on Darwin[145] likely proved its inhibitor. The Christian faith (a tiny minority in Japan) was widely disliked, not least because 'Western religion had long been associated with the colonial intentions of Western nations, [and thus] materialism was [instead] the favoured philosophy.'[146] Thus Morse won out. Another key evangelist was Ernest Fenollosa, the American professor of philosophy, politics, and economics at Tōkyō and invited there by Morse himself, who lectured on Darwinian social theory.[147]

Fig. 1.—A View in Tokio, showing Shops and Houses. (Copied from a Photograph.)

Fig. 2.—A View in Tokio, showing Temples and Gardens. (Copied from a Photograph.)



Figs. 33. and 34. Morse's Tōkyō,
and his drawing of a snail peering through the microscope[148]

[144] Godart 2017, 28.
[145] Shimao 1981, 95.
[146] Cross 1995, 330. For a full discussion of the religious dimension of the reception story, see: Godart 2017.
[147] Kijima and Hoquet 2013, 28.
[148] Drawing of Tōkyō in: Morse 1885, 3. Snail drawing in: Martin 1995, 90.

Translations/transformations

Whilst the content of Morse's original lecture as delivered is sadly unknown, clues of its contents can be found in a draft of the lecture as translated by his student Ishikawa Chiyomatsu and later published in 1881 under the title *Dōbutsu shinkaron* ('Animal Evolution').[149] Like Yan Fu, Ishikawa brought Darwinism into the local vernacular, and his translation (if accurate) shows just how stridently anti-Christian Morse's take on Darwinism was, and furthermore just how much Morse emphasised not only the selectionist motif but ideas which anticipate the ideas of later geopolitical theorists. For example, according to the translation, Morse closed the first lecture as follows:

> If we were to close this public lecture hall, among you listeners, the weak ones would die in a few days; the healthy ones would die within one or maybe three weeks. If, similar to this hall, the whole world was a closed space with insufficient food, among the animals eating to survive, the weak ones would perish while the strong ones will remain. With humans and animals eating each other, and this situation continuing for years, the humans of the future would be very different from humans nowadays, and a powerful and fearsome human race would emerge.[150]

Ishikawa's translation of Morse was to be the first of many Darwinian translations.[151] As in China, it is notable that it was once more *Huxley* that was translated first, before Darwin—with Isawa Shūji's 1879 translation of Huxley's lectures.[152] The *Descent of Man* (rather than the *Origin*) followed in 1881, with this first translation of Darwin (in the woodblock style) completed by Kōzu Senzaburō under the title of *Jinsoron*.[153] (Both Ishikawa and Kōzu were pioneering modernisers, and some of the earliest students sent to the United States by the Meiji government.[154])

A gamut of Japanese translations soon followed of all of Darwin's works, from the *Origin* (first by Tachibana Senzaburō in 1896) through to the *Voyage of the Beagle*. Once again, the path in Japan taken was inverse to the Western experience: first came the

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[149] Reviews of Ishikawa's book give a further insight to the lecture's political edge: 'Watanabe [in his review] comments that Morse's lecturing on evolution was "a crude treatment of the subject", in which he "made no attempt to achieve a thoroughly scientific level." Further, writes Watanabe, Morse "applies examples from the animal and plant world indiscriminately to humans."' Cross 1995, 336–337.

[150] Cited in: Godart 2017, 29. Morse's 'fearsome human race' of course reminds one of the *Vril*.

[151] Incidentally, the first work of Western literature to be translated, in 1879, was *Ernest Maltravers* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, creator of the *Vril*.

[152] Shimao 1981, 97.

[153] It was however not a simple translation of the whole of the *Descent*. Kōzu's translation was actually 'a hybrid, which included a mixture of chapters of the *Descent* (namely, chapters 1–7 and 21) together with other texts: the *Historical Sketch* that Darwin appended to the third edition of the *Origin* (1861), and some sections taken from Thomas Huxley's *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature*.' Kijima and Hoquet 2013, 30.

[154] Shimao 1981, 97.

literary expositions of a social theory, before over time drifting to plain, factual discussions of a scientific theory proper.[155] Indeed, it is striking that 'early versions of translations were done not by biologists but by scholars in humanities and social thinkers.'[156]

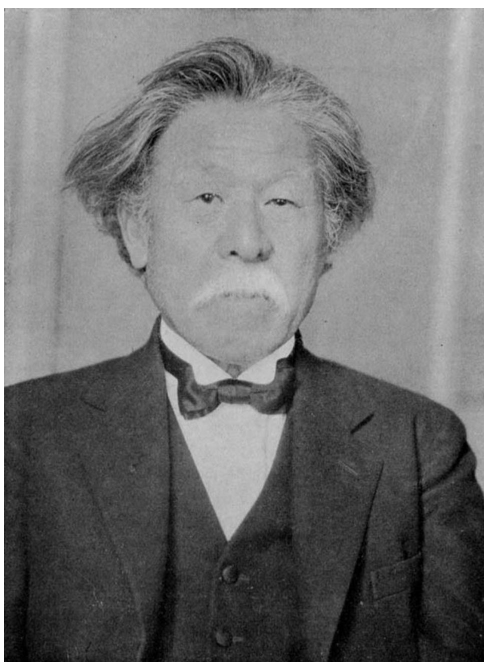
Thereafter, the biologist Oka Asajirō penned the first 'native' treatment of Darwinian science, in his bestselling 1904 work *Shinkaron kowa* ('Lectures on the Theory of Evolution'), published in the moments after the outbreak of war with the Russians (to which we will return to soon). Oka, like Ishikawa and Kōzu, was a man of Western learning—indeed, Oka and Ishikawa had both studied under the same professor in Germany, August Weismann.[157] Oka's rendering of 'evolutionary theory'—*shinkaron*—came to stand as the definitive translation after previous variations (such as *teishinron* and *hensenron*), as did his translation of the concept of the 'origin of species' into *shu no kigen*.[158] The term 'natural selection' similarly went through a range of iterations—as Kijima and Hoquet show, whilst 'natural' was consistently rendered as *shizen*, 'selection' went through multitudes of alterations from the 1870s onwards.[159]

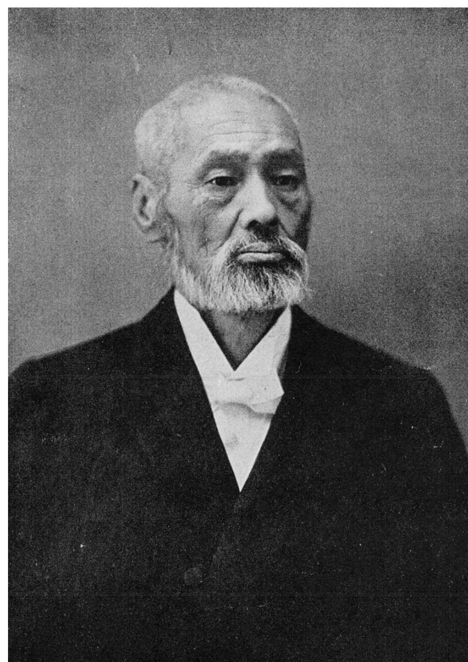
As in China, Darwinism's impact was widely felt in Japanese intellectual life, and the influence of the Darwinian idiom fell across the political spectrum.[160] Some followed the 'peace biology' route, like Ōsugi Sakae—a radical anarchist and Esperantist, who translated both the *Origin* and Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* within a few years of each other, and who sought to integrate Darwinism with Marxian socialism, 'convert[ing] the concept of struggle for existence into that of class struggle.'[161]

Others, such as the first president of the Imperial University, Katō Hiroyuki—who began as a defender of natural rights before turning against it (on Darwinian grounds

[155] Ibid., 100.
[156] Ibid.
[157] See respectively: Miller 2021, 50; Shimao 1981, 95.
[158] This combined the kanji for 'species', 'beginning', and 'fountain' with the connective particle *no* ('of'). Kijima and Hoquet 2013, 30.
[159] Kijima and Hoquet 2013.
[160] Also as in China, journalism became an important nexus of Darwinian influence. Morse himself had 'noted in his record of his stay in Japan… that translation efforts involved articles from the *Popular Science Monthly*, the Herbert Spencer mouthpiece in the USA. Possibly taken from the model of the *Popular Science Monthly*, a recurrent theme in the *Meiroku Zasshi*, the journal of the *Meirokusha* [a key Meiji intellectual society] was that immutable natural laws were a guiding force in human affairs.' Cross 1995, 328.
[161] Shimao 1981, 96.

that the 'fittest' deserved their inequality)[162]—took the Spencerian route of a struggle of individuals but rooted it in ideas of the heredity of favourable characteristics. (As we saw earlier, Morse himself embraced such notions and must surely have influenced Katō, who was closely acquainted with Morse at the university.) Thus the Emperor, Katō argued, was in his place because he and his ancestors had been the 'fittest' to survive.[163] Others still, such as the anti-Christian philosopher Inoue Tetsujirō, joined Katō in attacking the Meiji government's push for 'mixed residence' (allowing foreign residents to mix with the Japanese) for fear it would exacerbate the struggle for existence between races, with Inoue even citing Darwin's descriptions in the *Descent* of the catastrophic consequences of the Europeans' arrival on Pacific island populations.[164]





Figs. 35. and 36. Two 'Morseians':
Portraits of Ishikawa Chiyomatsu and Katō Hiroyuki[165]

[162] Here, Katō was responding to the call for egalitarian democracy made in the 1880s by *Jiyū Minken Undō* ('The Freedom and People's Rights Movement'). See: Cross 1995, 339; Hiroshi 1999, 240; Wijeyeratne 2020, 4. As Hiroshi outlines, many historians have viewed Katō's ideological flexibility as proof of him as a mere stooge for those currently in power; more usefully, he can be viewed as a bellwether for the changing *Zeitgeist*.
[163] Hiroshi 1999, 241–242.
[164] Ibid., 243.
[165] Portraits available under creative commons.

Yet most, as in China, utilised the idea of the struggle for existence above all in the *international* realm: to explain Japan's precarious predicament and the avenues it had to take to 'survive'. As Sherrie Cross argues, in this sense the 'civilisational' aspiration could be newly articulated, and Japan's self-esteem salvaged: 'If the attainment of civilization was an evolutionary process, then its embodiment at any given time could be seen as fortuitous and temporary.'[166] And attaining this evolutionary change of fortunes would come down ultimately to *power*.

This 'reformulation' of the aspiration to civilisation is evident in the writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi, a key Meiji-era moderniser gripped by an obsession with how to achieve Japan's 'strength and independence' (and, like Liang Qichao, crucial in the journalistic realm as the founder of the influential newspaper *Jiji shimpō*, 'Current Events'). Whilst Fukuzawa followed civilisational ideas of Western emulation,[167] he came over time to draw less on the emphasis on morality and culture and instead 'reasoned that although civilization resided in the West, it was not necessarily an inherently Western state. With accelerated economic and industrial development, Japanese society would eventually claim its place among "civilized" nations'[168] whilst still retaining its distinctive morality and culture.

Indeed, as Ian Jared Miller adeptly phrases it, 'Ishikawa's puzzle'—that is, the puzzle of Japan's astonishingly rapid and successful ascendancy—can be answered using Darwinian theory itself. In one way it might be seen as that of a successful *convergent evolution*: that '"strong Japan" [was] a result of autochthonous dynamics nurtured during the "feudal isolation" of the Tokugawa era (1603–1868)…[and] the development of analogous structures (a society capable of matching those found in the "civilized nations" of the West) in distinct environments.' Or, it may be a case of *coevolution*: that 'Japan's modernization [was] the result of borrowing and copying… that emerged through engagement with the West.'[169] For the Japanese Darwinian internationalists, their hopes

[166] Cross 1995, 330.
[167] Fukuzawa's large body of writings show a development of his ideas over time, from 1866's hugely influential *Seiyō jijō* ('Conditions in the West'), one of the very earliest Japanese analyses of Western superiority, to *Gakumon no susume* ('An Encouragement of Learning', 1866) and *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* ('An Outline of a Theory of Civilisation', 1875). For an excellent translation of the latter, see: Fukuzawa 2009.
[168] Cross 1995, 330.
[169] Miller 2015.

were placed in the convergent solution: that it could create its own means to survive without having to entirely sacrifice the Japanese way of life.

The test of this project of Japanese modernisation, in Darwinian logic, was *conflict*, which as an act of selection would vindicate or vanquish the Meiji programme. Would Japan survive or become extinct?

The test of fitness

This test arrived in the ten-year period of 1894–1905, marked by the First Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, which pitted the upstart Japanese nation into what seemed to be (in typically hysterical form) *existential* conflicts.

As we saw earlier, it was the First Sino-Japanese War that catalysed China's pursuit of the Darwinian idiom in the first place, with China's humiliating defeat in the war with its Eastern neighbour the impetus for Yan Fu's urgent exposition of Darwinian internationalism. In Japan, however, Darwinism had already taken root by the 1890s, and as such informed wartime discourse. (The pre-war work of Fukuzawa, which acted as something of 'a prelude to the Sino-Japanese War'[170] betrayed a Darwinian influence.)

Yet Darwinian themes were far more prominent in 1904, with the outbreak of war with the Russian Empire. The Russo-Japanese War—a relatively minor skirmish by military standards—received its significance from its outcome: the defeat of Russia by a non-European power but a few years prior in a state of feudal isolation. As such, the war (both then and now) has been pitched not as a strategic war of geopolitics (although it *was* primarily motivated by concerns over the status of Korea and Manchuria, both which Russia had it sights on), but as a war of civilisation. Japan's shock victory was thus widely acknowledged as a striking vindication of its 'civilising' process, and (to those in the West) as an ominous victory of the weak: of East over West; 'heathens' over Christendom; the 'yellow' race against the 'white'; the newly 'living' against the soon-to-be 'dying'.

In Japan, the war was also understood in such civilisational terms. Yet, as the historian Shimazu Naoko has argued, precisely echoing the core argument of this thesis, *two* discourses really prevailed in Japan at the time: a '*civilisational discourse*' which

[170] Kimitada 1968.

understood the war in moral-cultural terms; and a '*racial discourse*' which instead theorised the conflict as a race war, strongly influenced by biological Darwinism.[171] Whilst sometimes overlapping, these were nonetheless distinctive ways of understanding the conflict: as a war of morality, or as a war of racial selection.

The 'Morseians'—Katō, Oka, *et al.*—all reckoned with the Russo-Japanese War in their role as public intellectuals and all alike conceptualised it latterly as a war of selection. The strident nature of their Darwinian position was certainly exacerbated by the fact that the 'small but vociferous antiwar lobby… argued against the war from Christian pacifism, humanitarianism, and socialism'.[172]

One vivid example of this current of thought is Katō's *Shinkagaku yori kanatsu shitaru Nichiro no unmei*, or 'Observations of Future Russo-Japanese Relations from an Evolutionary Perspective' (1904), which claimed 'that Japan would undoubtedly emerge victorious from the current conflict because it boasted the more "evolved" polity—a homogenous state, united under the *tennōsei* [Emperor] system.'[173] This evolutionary perspective, as Wijeyeratne argues, was further developed by Katō in 1912's *Ronri to shizen* ('Logic and Nature'), wherein he argues that the success or failure of polities follows a strict biological law of organisation—'barbarians' like Russia fail because they organise like 'herds', whereas 'truly evolved' societies, like Japan, form states proper.[174] This had little to do with culture, and everything to do with power.

Oka Asajirō's *Shinkaron kōwa*—again, the first 'native' treatment of evolutionary theory—was also published in tandem with the Russian conflict, in 1904. The book itself, whilst primarily concerned with evolution in the 'natural' world, also extended its conclusions to the social world too, and 'Oka is explicit that what applies to animals also applies to humans. In his own colourful turn of phrase: "There are no points of basic difference between humans, dogs, and cats"… He later emphasizes bluntly that "humans are a variety of beast".'[175]

However, Oka was no triumphalist, and here we may end the Japanese story similarly to the Chinese. As Gregory Sullivan has shown, Oka's work on the eve of the

[171] Shimazu succinctly covers the diversity of domestic positions on the war in: Shimazu 2008. See also: Shimazu 2009.
[172] Shimazu 2008, 37.
[173] Wijeyeratne 2020, 9.
[174] As Wijeyeratne notes, this language echoes that of Darwin's frequent equating of 'savages' with animals.
[175] Wijeyeratne 2020, 8.

Great War—most explicitly in the piece 'The Future of Humankind' (1909)—instead sounded a warning-call about the internal development of Japanese society. Just as Yan Fu and Liang Qichao closed the century with a note of deep pessimism, so Oka came to believe that the development of Japanese capitalism—of which the Russo-Japanese War represented a crucial watershed[176]—actually heralded 'the nation's degeneration… [that] *laissez-faire* capitalism marked the moment when the state began to decline toward extinction due to the orthogenetic overdevelopment of hitherto subordinate individual egos.'[177] Here, Oka drew on the organicist motif:

> For Oka the various species comprising humankind had come to dominate the earth because each *minzoku* (ethnic nation) functioned as a single biological unit, a consummate group or super-organism that had employed the sophisticated brains and hands of its members to strengthen and organize itself.[178]

Industrial capitalism had severed this organic whole through destructive individualism; in the life-cycle of the organism, it was its decay. (The Western nations, ahead in their capitalist development, were a helpful forewarning of this downfall.) To this diagnosis, Oka prescribed statist eugenic measures to counteract the atomising effects of the onset of industrial capitalism. The vitality of the organism was crucial for its survival.

Oka's analogy here was to the gelatinous moss animal, a superorganism which he believed had a similar form of organisation to human social groupings.[179] For just as 'each moss animal colony was… an ego in its own right, and for this creature the struggle for existence took place at this level, the level of the colony or super-organism',[180] so too did human groupings engage in their competition at the level of groups (nations). On the eve of war, however, Oka saw little to cheer: this was the stage of the 'twilight struggle between doomed nations.'[181] Because nations were, in Oka's words, 'in a condition of an incurable illness… [and yet] because each race-nation which occupies the earth surface is at daggers with the others… [no nation could be] solely devoted to nursing its illness.'[182] The moment of respite was thus the moment of extinction.

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176 Katō 2007, 97.
177 Sullivan 2010, 367. See also: Sullivan 2011.
178 Sullivan 2010, 369.
179 This idea calls to mind: Wendt 2004.
180 Sullivan 2010, 373.
181 Ibid., 387.
182 From 'The Future of Humankind' (1909). Translation in: Ibid.

In both China and Japan, then—and just as we saw with Europe's paranoia—there was contained within the powerful idiom of Darwinian internationalism a note of deep despair. This was the fear of 'degeneration', to which we shall return in the following chapter on the colonial periphery, where we shall see how the prescribed 'remedy' to the 'disease' of degeneration was the same as Oka's: eugenics.

From liminality to purity

Whilst the Sino-Japanese story provides a good insight into the reception of Darwinian internationalism in the semi-periphery, before moving to the colonies it is worth answering whether it had comparable influence elsewhere in similar parts of the world, which pre-empts the question of just how representative China and Japan are.

Here, it is important to note that not all 'semi-civilised' states accepted the Sino-Japanese model of survival, which was rooted in nationalist state-building and unilateralism. Indeed, so far, we have seen how most tactics theorised by Darwinian internationalists fundamentally involved *states* as the primary actor of survival, even if these states represented broader racial/civilisational categories (e.g. the 'Yellow race' or the 'Anglo-Saxons').

In the Middle East, for example, a different strategy was mooted, one rooted in cooperation rather than go-it-aloneness, and in universalist religion rather than biology or race: pan-Islamism. As Cemil Aydin has argued, pan-Islamism (rooted in the notion of *ummah*) can thus be understood as a distinctly cooperative tactic for semi-civilised states in precarious positions in the struggle for existence: 'Against the dynamics of the power politics of imperialism and under the influence of the Darwinian idea that the weak will be eliminated by the powerful unless the weak parties cooperate and protect themselves, pan-Islamism seemed like a necessary defensive idea.'[183] Pan-Islamism thus represented a rejection of the Sino-Japanese model for semi-peripheral survival, embracing notions more fitting of the label of 'Darwinian *internationalism*': 'Instead of fighting which each other,' the Turkish politician Celâl Nuri İleri argued, 'China and Japan should cooperate, in accordance with the "second principle of Darwin," so that

[183] Aydin 2007, 60. Thanks to Sam Holcroft for directing me to Aydin's argument here.

they could both survive against the outside threats. Beyond Chinese-Japanese cooperation, Celâl Nuri also envisioned a larger solidarity of all Asians.'[184]

Oher semi-peripheral states took other routes. An instructive example here is Latin America, which offers further proof for just how flexible the Darwinian idiom proved for articulating diverse positionalities. Before moving to the periphery, this experience is thus worth brief comment as a kind of 'satellite case'.

Darwin's theory, as we saw earlier, in some senses *began* in the southern continent,[185] with the Fuegian encounter. As Jonathan Maslow puts it: 'Although the ideas originated in Europe, it was South America that was the crucible of Darwin's theory.'[186] Many have further noted the importance of Latin America more generally to scientific forerunners of Darwin's work, referring in particular to Alexander von Humboldt's research in Venezuela, which laid key intellectual foundations for Darwinian biology.[187] The great revolutionary hero José Martí himself even lionised the great man on the occasion of his death.[188]

Latin America was distinguished in this period by the basic fact that here was a non-European part of the world ostensibly free from direct European domination. Since the creoles overthrew the *peninsulares*,[189] the Latin American republics occupied the first wholly postcolonial continent (one partly shielded from European great power politics via the Monroe Doctrine, acclaimed in 1823). Despite this *de jure* freedom,[190] by the mid nineteenth century the southern republics were nevertheless still fundamentally defined *vis-à-vis* the preponderant West, even if they were not at any (perceived) existential threat of destruction by it—the usual powder-keg of Darwinism, as we have seen. That is, whilst their legal sovereignty was at least formally recognised by the European powers, the southern republics were not exactly welcomed into international society with open arms, neither by Europe nor its northern neighbour.[191]

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[184] Ibid., 102.

[185] 'Latin America' and 'South America' are, of course, not coterminous, the former designation also encompassing Mexico and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean nations. Here I stick to the former. 'Ibero-America' is another option, and is used by Thomas F. Glick, the leading scholar of Darwinism's reception there.

[186] Maslow 1996, 86.

[187] Brock 2014, 59.

[188] Martí 1882. An English translation of the obituary can be found in: Martí 1953.

[189] On which, see: Anderson 2006 ch. 4.

[190] Barring Haiti, that is, whose legal recognition was fraught even by other Latin American states (for fear of inspiring revolts by their own slave populations). Schulz 2014, 849–850. For the classic account of the Haitian Revolution, see: James 1938.

[191] On the U.S.-Latin American relationship more generally, see the classic treatment in: Schoultz 1998.

Fig. 37. Liminal lands:

Detail of the map of the *Beagle*'s voyage[192]

192 Detail from full chart in: FitzRoy 1839, vol. 2: Proceedings of the Second Expedition, 1831–36, Under the Command of Captain Robert Fitz-Roy, R.N. Appendix: 'Chart: Principal tracks of H.M.S. Beagle 1831-6'.

Rather, Latin America was widely classed (by statesmen, jurists, and theorists) alongside the Eastern states as 'half-civilised',[193] as 'between civilisation and barbarism',[194] as only part-members of international society.[195] This was all in spite of the republics' desires. After all, these were not states borne of radical revolutions (like in Haiti) but of a creole conservatism that changed very little about the socio-economic makeup of their societies—a quick switcheroo as the old viceregal boundaries became new sovereign borders (the principle of *uti possidetis iuris*), but little much changed internally (indeed, in the case of Brazil, it was simply a matter of changing Pedro I's title). In other words, whilst they rejected European rule, they did not seek to reject European recognition. As 'young' states not at risk of 'extinction' yet socially ostracised as outsiders, where the Eastern states sought survival, the Latin American states thus sought status.

By virtue of their awkward position of liminal 'in-betweenness'[196]—both internationally (stuck as neither great powers nor colonial subjects) and domestically (as per their plural racial mixtures, which drove fears both home and abroad of miscegenation)—the nascent states actively sought equal status for Latin America. Internationally, this would involve the creation of a more desirable milieu and regional cooperation, as articulated in Chile by the international legal theory of the conservative Venezuelan-born polymath Andrés Bello.[197] Domestically, one method for 'completing civilisation'[198] was, as in China and Japan, the classic project of state consolidation and modernisation, which would help to solve the outside perception of internal instability which marred the new states.[199]

However, another distinctive tactic for pursuing equal status was ideological. Central here was the attempt to challenge the perception of liminality through the renewed promotion of 'blood purity' (*limpieza de sangre*), an idea that was originally invoked by the Spanish after the *Reconquista* and expulsion of the Sephardim to 'protect' Christendom from the perceived threat of the remaining so-called Crypto-Jews and

[193] In the wording of Lord Palmerston in 1850. Cited in: Schulz 2014, 853.
[194] Obregón 2006a.
[195] Schulz 2014. See also the full treatment in: Schulz 2015.
[196] Schulz 2021. This liminality is one reason for the consolidation of the very *idea* of the 'periphery' in the work of the first wave of *dependencia* theorists.
[197] On Bello's international thought, see: Fawcett 2012. See also the wider discussion of the development of a 'creole legal consciousness' in: Obregón 2006a.
[198] Obregón 2006b.
[199] Indeed, Bello himself linked these two projects together, arguing that international and domestic order were interdependent. Fawcett 2012, 691.

Crypto-Muslims, whose religiosity was effectively changed from a matter of confession to one of blood.[200] True-blood 'Old Christians' (*cristiano viejo*) were thereby ideologically distinguished from the 'unclean blood' of the untrusted 'New Christian' *conversos* and their descendants, eventually as a pretext for further expulsion (which came for the Moriscos in 1609).

The revival of this idea of blood purity in the independent Americas provided an avenue for the creole populations to 'prove' their 'whiteness' to outsiders. This notion was given a huge boost by Darwinism's emphasis on lineage and heredity, which (for these creole descendants of the Europeans) helped to cement a racial definition of their 'civilised' status over a more difficult moral-cultural metric. Indeed, one might argue that the basic schism in early Latin American politics was precisely along such lines, which broadly corresponded to debates between over what the infant postcolonial states ought to look like: Europeanist or Latinist? Commercial or agrarian?

Take the example of Argentina. As Adriana Novoa has illuminated, in Argentinian political thought such debates raged around this central metaphor of blood. Darwinism here served to radically revive the idea of a blood-based politics which had previously defined the 'primitivist', indigenous *americanismo* tendency of Argentinian politics, which in turn opposed the civilisational, Europeanist liberals, who 'de-emphasized the idea of a nation that continued through blood/inheritance to develop an idea of the nation based on the fluidity of capital and merchandise.'[201] This latter liberal vision was briefly hegemonic in Argentina after the defeat of the leading primitivist in 1852: Juan Manuel de Rosas—a man who Darwin himself met and praised in 1833, later keeping a portrait of the man in his house under the caption 'General Rosas, friend and protector of Darwin',[202] and whose genocidal policies against the natives (a forerunner of the Conquest of the Desert) were praised by Darwin as a necessary act:

> Some months ago the government of B. Ayres sent out an army, under the command of General Rosas to exterminate the Indians… This war of extermination, although carried on with the most shocking barbarity, will certainly

[200] The 1492 expulsion famously coinciding with the Columbian 'discovery' of the New World itself.

[201] Novoa 2009, 214. Novoa's full discussion of the Darwinian moment in Argentina can be found in: Levine and Novoa 2012.

[202] As Darwin put it in the *Journal of Researches*: 'General Rosas intimated a wish to see me; a circumstance that later pleased me. He is a man of extraordinary character, and has a most predominant influence in the country, which it seems probable he will use to its prosperity and advancement. [This prophecy has turn out entirely and miserably wrong. 1845].' Novoa 2009, 216–217. See also: Shumway 2004.

produce great benefits; it will at once throw open four or 500 miles in length of fine country for the produce of cattle.

Figs. 38. and 39. 'Great benefits':
Two passages from Darwin's diary, August 1833[203]

Yet the attempt at a post-Rosas liberalism and its attendant idea of 'the dependence on a social body removed from nature… clean, and free from natural contaminants was short lived. Darwinism reinstated the importance of lineage and blood.'[204] The gentlemanly image of civilisation was accordingly challenged, for where 'the culture of the generation of '37 emphasized the reading of the body's exterior (appearance, manners, and all things affected by human desire), Darwinism posits that the secret of evolution inheres in the breeding process.'[205] The Argentinian Darwinians thus took up a strongly genealogical interpretation: 'For those who followed Darwin, the path to civilization could no longer be sought exclusively through the adoption of European ideas, but also through the natural genealogies that proclaimed the difference between the fit and the unfit',[206] which

[203] Images from: Darwin 1979, 338, 348.
[204] Novoa 2009, 215.
[205] Ibid., 215–216.
[206] Ibid., 221.

typically meant those of the 'right' blood. Thus, in reviving *limpieza de sangre*, after Darwin 'blood is once again an important trope in the understanding of civilization'.[207]

As in China and Japan, this vision took hold widely in élite circles, and 'the majority of those that constituted the *Generación del Ochenta* [the post-1880 élite] were avowed Darwinists or invoked it to some degree in their work',[208] in parallel with a widespread intellectual uptake.[209] In the campaigns of violence against the indigenous population, the idea of blood purity was linked to the selectionist motif which, as Glick argues, made 'it possible to rationalize the slaughter of Argentina's indigenous population by recasting it in Darwinian terms. The extinction of the Amerindians became a mark of progress, as if a less favoured race had lost out by virtue of a 'natural' law (the Darwinian struggle for life). The "culture of extinction" was pervasive, from government policy to the way in which museums were organized, history written, and nationhood conceptualized.'[210]

Such receptions, despite national idiosyncrasies, could be seen widely across Latin America. Indeed, the Latin American case differs from others precisely in its wide geographic span: 'in Europe nation states tend to be coterminous with ethnic boundaries, while the sixteen Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America share[d] an affine culture. All of the countries of Ibero-America have a Darwinian history, with the exception of Paraguay, where the absence of a debate over Darwin in the nineteenth century became, in the twentieth, a symbol that was appropriated politically as proof of the country's backwardness.'[211] The main point of local contingency, as Glick points out, concerned the degree to which pre-existing ideological frameworks were present, 'with national receptions differing according to the prevalence of Spencerian positivism (Argentina), Comtean positivism (Chile), and Darwinian positivism (Uruguay), the relative power of

[207] Ibid., 223.
[208] Ibid., 216.
[209] Novoa highlights one particularly amusing example in political debate which points to the idea of reception itself, when 'In a constitutional debate centred around the right to vote, José Hernández criticized those who answered questions either with silence or with a reference to "the theory of Darwin, Spencer, or Stuart Mill—theorists who say A on page 1 and B on page 20—adopting contrary views to accommodate either their theory, the object proposed in their book, or to the tendencies of their school".' Ibid., 224.
[210] Glick 2010, 697. This argument about the 'culture of extinction' refers to the argument in: Levine and Novoa 2010.
[211] Glick 2010, 696.

the Roman Catholic Church, and the ethnic and racial demography of various countries.'[212]

Yet most shared common themes, centrally that of miscegenation and racial mixing, although not always necessarily always *against* miscegenation. The main exception here was Brazil, which was distinguished from other Latin American states not only for its persistence with slavery until the *Lei Áurea* of 1888,[213] but also by its non-white majority (compared to the whiteness of Argentina and Uruguay), thereby lacking the same plausible notion of pursuing deliberate non-white extinction. As such, Glick points to the figure of Silvio Romero, a literary historian who instead argued (under the influence of climate theories) that 'in order to survive in the tropics the Europeans *had* to miscegenate, because the hybrid *mestizo* was better adapted to the environment.' Of course, racism was still present, for 'then the resulting *mestizo* society is in a bind, because it is culturally degenerate.'[214] This idea of degeneration we shall promptly explore in the following chapter, and it gripped South America too.

For brevity's sake, let us confine the discussion of Latin America here.[215] Suffice to say, this is further evidence of the flexibility of Darwinian internationalism, for we have seen that there was a diversity of views even just within the semi-periphery itself. The anti-revolutionary flavour of Latin American Darwinian internationalism differed greatly from that of the Sino-Japanese form: the former concerned itself with 'whitening' the native race in order to 'fit in' with the European great powers; the latter more dramatically emphasised the survival of the racial state itself.

Closing remarks

The events of this chapter did not occur in a vacuum, but had profound implications across the world. For one, Japan's victory in the war against the Russians rang a shot out into the world—and not just into the imperial core (which, as we saw last chapter, deeply feared rising non-European states) but also into the peripheries which, unlike the Japanese, *had already* succumbed to the fate of European domination. For many in the periphery, as we shall promptly see, the Russo-Japanese War thus signalled the potential

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[212] Ibid.
[213] Indeed, the Golden Law curiously uses the language of the 'extinction' of slavery within its succinct phrasing.
[214] Glick 2010, 697.
[215] For the full treatment, see the comprehensive treatment in: Glick, Puig-Samper, and Ruiz 2001.

for the weaker powers to rise up. Thus Rabindranath Tagore, upon hearing the news of Japan's victory against Russia, paraded with his students around his school in a joyous victory march.[216]

Even more specifically, the Japanese case proved the power *of the Darwinian idiom*: for if a non-white race could win out simply by adopting the logic of Darwinism, then the struggle for existence might, after all, be agnostic on those old moral-cultural categories. The embrace of Darwinism in these semi-peripheral polities, especially in Japan, would thus provide a clear model for even weaker polities in the colonial peripheries. Their embrace of Darwinism showed that native races need not suffer the fate of extinction. Instead of the doomed Fuegians or Tasmanians, it was the Japanese who pointed the way to a future of survival and independence.

[216] Shimazu 2009, 3; Mishra 2012, 2.

CHAPTER V.

The Colonial Periphery

> 'They were no colonists… They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force—nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others… The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.'[1]
>
> — Joseph Conrad (1899)

In the last of these three tales of reception, let us now turn to the influence of Darwinism in those parts of the globe suffering most acutely under the yoke of European power—to Darwinism in the colonial periphery.

As discussed earlier (in the methods chapter), this category of the 'colonial periphery' requires some immediate qualification. Categorisation *vis-à-vis* the colonial experience is a fraught task. As the vast volume of postcolonial theory attests, how exactly to describe the space and agents of colonial exploitation is fundamentally interwoven with acutely normative questions, central amongst which is how to give voice to the experiences of the colonised. As per the previous chapter, the temptation to see recipients in reception stories as merely passive here extends to the whole notion of 'the colonial periphery'.

'Colonial' requires little elaboration. Most studies of so-called 'social Darwinism' within this context focus on the broader category of 'imperialism', yet I want to focus on the specific dynamic of colonial occupation as a central feature of Darwinism's articulation and contestation. Indeed, it is striking how little literature on Darwinism in colonial contexts there actually is, certainly far less than might be expected. Often the influence of Darwinism in the colonies is gestured towards or asserted, but unexamined.[2] Rarely are colonial subjects themselves seen as active agents, nor is there much engagement with the subtleties of Darwinism even as espoused by the colonists (e.g. colonial administrators versus settler colonists, who, as we shall see, sometimes diverged in their views).

[1] Conrad 2002, 107.

[2] Crook 1999. More on this promptly.

The term 'periphery' requires more justification, precisely because it potentially welcomes the charge of passivity—for the term 'peripheral' might appear to present the colonised areas of the world as tangential, even irrelevant. Yet my use of the term simply refers to the empirical fact of such polities' degree of power and position in international social space.[3] Colonial subordinates *were* organised as the weakest actors and were accordingly treated as such; where China or Japan were at least permitted the indignation of the unequal treaty, colonised polities were instead forced to sign away their existence, to extinguish themselves in the act of contract.[4]

It is in this sense that 'peripheral' is used, as understood by contemporaries and following other historical legal scholars.[5] As with the previous chapter, I seek to focus on this category not to reassert its status, but to consider once more (through a turn to a pericentric lens in the close of the chapter) how weak subjects *themselves*—those supposed 'dying nations'—actually engaged with the Darwinian idiom precisely *vis-à-vis* this weakness.

Case selection

Once again, 'the colonial periphery' is far too wide a category to permit a comprehensive documentation of Darwinian internationalism therein. As in previous chapters, I have opted to focus on a specific case study. Here, that is Darwinian internationalism's influence in late-century southern Africa (and Africa more generally), as espoused and challenged by four distinct groups: metropole commentators; colonial administrators; settler colonists; and the indigenous population.[6]

Why this case? Since Southern Africa was largely under the control of the British Empire in this period,[7] this permits two practical advantages. First, there are no linguistic constraints compared to the previous chapter. This is important when, considering the

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[3] The category of the 'peripheral' also connotes the legal liminality of such spaces, as uncertain spaces of frontier governmentality. On this, see: Hopkins 2020; Pitts 2018; Benton 2009; Benton and Ford 2018.
[4] Anghie 2005.
[5] As again in: Ibid. ch. 2.
[6] The triad of (outsider)/administrator/settler/native is a common form of hierarchy in colonial settings, mapping on for instance to the Latin American categories of *peninsulares*, creole, and non-European natives (*mestizos*, *mulattoes*, Africans, and native Americans).
[7] I use the terms 'South Africa' and 'southern Africa' throughout this chapter: the former capitalisation is coterminous with the specific British colony known as the Cape Colony (1806–1910), then the Union of South Africa (1910–61), and as largely contiguous with the modern-day country; the latter refers to the broader geographical area of the southern part of the African continent, as used when also discussing Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), Zululand, etc.

scant secondary literature on this topic, this chapter relies more on primary material. Secondly, this case allows me to pick up the threads of chapter three, which also focussed on the British context.

The structure of the chapter is broadly organised 'from the outside in', or 'from hub to spoke'. Where chapter three of the thesis considered imperial theoreticians *in the metropole*, here I start broadly in the metropole and move 'inwards'. To summarise what follows, the chapter begins by looking at Darwin's own engagements with South Africa, both during his time there and also later, in his work on his 'emotions theory' as well as his influence on South African scientists. I will then move to examine how journalists *in the metropole itself* characterised colonial wars as 'wars of extinction' against native populations, who were said, echoing earlier theorists, to be doomed to their fates. There, I focus in on the Anglo-Zulu War (1879), and the First (1880–1) and Second Boer Wars (1899–1902), where I analyse the Darwinian influence on discourses concerning this multipronged South African 'struggle for existence', which was thought be raging within and between both natives *and* white settlers.

The latter conflict leads to a full discussion of the idea of 'degeneration'—fears over which the Second Boer War brought to the fore. There, I unpack the arguments of what I term 'Darwinian *isolationists*', i.e. those theorists, influenced by eugenics, who argued that the practice of empire actually jeopardised the domestic 'breeding stock', thereby emphasising instead the need for isolated states governed by scientific eugenic policy rather than militarist states engaged in international struggle. In parallel to this discussion of degeneration, I also (in something of an in-text hyperlink) address the role of gender in Darwinian internationalism, which has been so far overlooked in the thesis but was an important aspect of Darwin's own work and the ideas of the degenerationists.

Thereafter, I turn to the figure of Cecil Rhodes as an archetypal case of the 'Darwinian colonial administrator', who espoused clearly a colonisers' vision of a struggle for racial (rather than strictly national) existence. However, I show also how Rhodes's vision came to be challenged by anti-imperialist settler colonists who, writing in the highbrow periodicals of the day, innovatively utilised Darwinism to argue that 'imperial Darwinism' actually undermined its own logic.

Finally, I turn to peripheral actors themselves—to native African theorists—where we shall see the intriguing expression of a massively overlooked form of black

anti-colonial 'Afro-Darwinism', a way of thinking which mimicked the Sino-Japanese embrace of Darwinism to explain and remedy the precarious existence of oppressed peoples. We shall there see how black African leaders (such as Richard Akinwande Savage of Nigeria) seized on Japan as an exemplar of the possibilities of weak, oppressed peoples reasserting their power, central to which was 'their instruction in the sciences'. This chapter thus moves beyond a simplistic 'Darwinian imperialism' model to introduce a wider diversity of thought in the colonial periphery—one that also includes the use of Darwinism for anti-imperial ends.

A note on sources, and Crook's 'bogeyman'

> 'During great moral, political, or social crises, certain great phrases are apt to become as household words in the mouths of men—phrases which… when examined, show both the sources and the tendencies of popular thought. Two such phrases, which have been much in vogue of late years, are "the survival of the fittest," and "natural selection".'[8]
> — Ramsden Balmforth (1901)

On which, before we dive into the empirics it is necessary to make a few comments on sources, and to address one central scholarly argument pertinent to this topic.

Empirically, this chapter draws somewhat less on the publications of abstract 'theoreticians', i.e. those incontrovertibly the stuff of 'intellectual history'. Here I turn also to the rough-and-tumble of everyday political discourse by looking at primary material in daily newspapers, periodicals, and the personal writings and correspondence of colonial administrators. In doing so, this chapter follows Hedley Bull's notion of 'the historical record of international society' as being found in the proclamations 'of philosophers and publicists, and present in the rhetoric of the leaders of states.'[9] Whilst we have surveyed the 'philosophers' (roughly defined) thus far, here I turn to the rhetoric of 'leaders of states' (or, rather, empires), as well as the utterances of less vaunted individuals on the ground (newspaper correspondents).

As 'the most ephemeral of all contributions'[10] to international thought, newspapers were nevertheless, as Keene notes, marked by a 'distinctively international

[8] Balmforth 1902, 1.
[9] Bull 1977, 23.
[10] Keene 2017, 349.

flavour',[11] with much of the contemporary discourse on colonialism, war, and trade operating in their pages. As such, they offer windows onto quotidian landscapes of international thought. Complementing these dailies were the highbrow periodical journals of the period (the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Economist*, the *Westminster Review*, etc.), which were an utterly central part of Victorian intellectual life. As Mark Francis argues, these journals operated at a different pitch:

> The examination of Victorian journals will elicit the climate of opinion among the English elite. If imperialism or racial policies were to receive justification it would have to be in reputable journals… It seems likely that an examination of newspapers would produce more lurid and violent accounts of race, but these would also be less likely to formulate justification or policy in a society which was still hierarchical, polite, and clubbable.[12]

Whilst Francis finds scant evidence for explicit discussions of Darwinism in such journals, I come to a different conclusion. In many such periodicals, as well as in the daily newspapers, a Darwinian register was prominent—certainly not the *most* frequent ideological lens deployed (liberalism, Darwinism's nemesis, takes that prize), but an important one nonetheless.

On which—and on the notion of Darwinism and liberalism as 'nemeses'—it is essential before I begin to address an important argument made by D.P. Crook concerning what he has called 'the myth of a Darwinized British imperial discourse'.[13] As he correctly notes, there is amongst historians[14] a widespread yet largely unexamined assumption of the causal connection between Darwinian ideas and the new imperialism, with 'imperial rivalries (and great power politics)… said to be driven, or reinforced at least, by biological imperatives.'[15]

Crook asserts (very confidently) that this truism is mythical. His argument—which runs in parallel with his revisionist account of Darwinism's influence on political thought, which he claims fomented more peaceable than bellicose theories[16]—is that 'Darwinian imperialism' was *an invention of liberals*. This bold claim rests first (echoing Francis's claim above) on an asserted observation of scant Darwinian speculation in the

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Francis 1994, 204–205.
[13] Crook 1999. The argument can also be found in: Crook 2007 ch. 12.
[14] He helpfully provides an overview of such works: Crook 1999, 634–635.
[15] Ibid., 634.
[16] Crook 1994.

'major periodicals and books on empire from the 1880s to 1914',[17] and, secondly, on the observation that any mentions of Darwinism often came from its liberal critics. Crook thus concludes that, beyond mere sprinklings of Darwinian ideas to support rhetorical assertions (what he terms the 'icing on the cake'),[18] 'Darwinian imperialism' was the invented bogeyman of anti-imperial liberals (and, secondarily, foreign critics of British imperialism on the continent). This 'new liberal myth', he argues, 'tended to be based upon assertion rather than exact documentation. The names of Karl Pearson and Benjamin Kidd… were among the select few—I am tempted to say they were the only—British thinkers who put forward serious Darwinian speculation on empire.'[19]

Reducing 'Darwinian imperialism' to a moral panic in this way is unconvincing. Indeed, Crook at least wryly acknowledges the conspiratorial tone of his argument.[20] Clearly, as we shall see in this chapter, Crook's theory of the 'Darwinian bogeyman' overstates its case and belies much evidence. There *were* numerous, unequivocal, *positive* invocations of Darwinism imperial discourse (in both newspapers and periodicals), including by senior colonial administrators. For some reason, Crook brackets these many examples as outliers or otherwise downplays the rigidity of their claimed commitment. Crook's argument must also confront the 'question of evidence',[21] as Gillian Beer terms it: that is, the problem of pinpointing the existence of something so deeply and widely infused in the age as to become an article of common sense. Again, whilst he does not allow it to sink his argument, Crook does acknowledge something like this problem.[22]

Where I *do* agree with Crook is that it is absurd to make grand causal claims about this matter. I want to be explicit here: I am precisely not making any crude causal claim in the vein of positivist IR, i.e. that 'Darwinism *caused* new imperialism'. Rather, the descriptive account in this chapter steers somewhere in between this Scylla and Charybdis: either that Darwinism was the leading cause of the new imperialism; or, in

[17] Crook 1999, 636.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 642.
[20] In his own words: 'if I were addicted to conspiracy theory I would be tempted to claim that the whole phenomenon of biologized imperialism was manufactured by "new liberal" enemies of expansionism. They in fact evoked much of the imagery of Darwinized jingoism.' Ibid., 637.
[21] Beer 1983, 3. This argument was also cited in the interlude.
[22] 'As James Sturgis rather wistfully remarked… "The overall difficulty is, of course, to bring something 'in the air' down to earth"… If, as we are told by linguistic scholars and post-colonial deconstructionists, silences are as important as presences in a discourse, then it is certainly worth noting that there was at times an almost deafening silence on the Darwin-imperial front.' Crook 1999, 636.

Crook's myth, that Darwinian imperialism is an invented mirage. I instead opt more humbly to recognise that Darwinian discourses of empire *were* an important feature of the intellectual landscape, as indeed was Darwinism in the articulation of an *anti*-colonial critique, as we shall now see.

Darwin in the Cape

Unlike those distant, isolated lands of the East, Darwin himself was no stranger to South Africa. On the return leg of the voyage, the *Beagle* landed at Simons Town in 1836, and Darwin visited the Cape Colony for three weeks from May to June.[23] During this time, Darwin met with local scientists and explored the local geography. He also gleefully observed, with a striking organicism, how 'all the fragments of the civilized world which we have visited in the southern hemisphere, appear to be flourishing: little embryo Englands are springing into life in many quarters.'[24]

Darwin's connection to South Africa was an important one. For one, his 'very first publication was a defence of missionary activity in Tahiti, and appeared in a local journal, *The South African Christian Recorder*.'[25] In later life, he remained in correspondence with many South African settler naturalists, such as J.P. Mansell Weale and Mary Elizabeth Barber.[26] He also drew on South African empirics in his later work—most notably in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), in which he refers to a 'curious document' sent in correspondence by the Xhosa leader Sandile, whose evidence for the universal applicability of his theory of emotions delighted Darwin, who expresses that he did not expect a 'native' to provide such proof.[27] His personal mark on the area can still be seen—the mountain Pfura and its local town in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) were renamed in his honour, to Mount Darwin, by the naturalist Frederick Courteney Selous.[28] One can even draw a connection between Darwin's brief

[23] All detailed in: Darwin 1839, vol. 3: Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836, 573–578.
[24] Ibid., vol. 3: Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836, 575.
[25] Lever 2002, 14.
[26] Johnson 2009, 403.
[27] Shanafelt 2003.
[28] Potgieter 1971, vol. 3, 567; Selous 1893, 286. As Mike Hawkins points out, 'Selous was deeply involved in the annexation of what was to become Rhodesia, which entailed some bloody confrontations with the warlike Matabele. In his description and rationalisation of these conflicts, Selous drew heavily upon Social Darwinism.' Hawkins 1997, 204. For Selous's own thought, see: Selous 1893; Selous 1896.

visit to a South African vineyard and its influence on contemporary South African winemaking practices.[29]

Fig. 40. The South African leg:
Detail of the map of the *Beagle*'s voyage[30]

By contrast, 'the [definitive] dating of *Darwinism's* arrival in South Africa is not as clear as was Darwin's physical presence there.'[31] With a language barrier absent for educated English-speaking settlers, we can be sure that it was not long after publication, and certainly by the early 1860s, that Darwin's theory arrived in South Africa. Darwinism soon became hugely influential, largely due to two basic facts about the country: its intense biodiversity, and its racial demographics. The former ensured that Darwinism would become a central plank of South African research science;[32] the latter, however, ensured that Darwinism would rapidly be absorbed into South Africa's political vernacular, with many keen to utilise Darwin to espouse visions of racial strife.

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[29] Moore 2009.
[30] Detail from full chart in: FitzRoy 1839, vol. 2: Proceedings of the Second Expedition, 1831–36, Under the Command of Captain Robert Fitz-Roy, R.N. Appendix: 'Chart: Principal tracks of H.M.S. Beagle 1831-6'.
[31] Lever 2002, 14.
[32] On which, see the overview in: Johnson 2009. Later in time, South Africa's most significant contribution to evolutionary theory would be Raymond Dart's stunning discovery of the Taung Child specimen in 1925, which is widely acknowledged as one of the most significant fossil finds of all time, as per its proof of the common ancestor *Australopithecus africanus* and the origins of human descent in Africa.

Of course, science and politics (as per the basic argument of this thesis) were far from siloed, but rather existed in a state of co-influence. Even Darwin's closest South African correspondents strayed from his master's voice, as for example with the amateur naturalist Mary Elizabeth Barber, who 'readily incorporated Darwin's concept of natural selection into her own settler ideology of race. In several of her letters, she expressed views that made it clear that she considered the dominant position of Europeans in the colony to be a consequence of a natural biological hierarchy.'[33]

Many of the classic examples of South African Darwinians fall, however, outside the temporal lens of this thesis. These include Harold B. Fantham and James E. Duerden, both English settlers who held the post of Professor of Zoology (at Witwatersrand and Rhodes University respectively), and both of whom espoused a Darwinian vision of state eugenics. However, they were most active in the years *after* the First World War,[34] as well as being largely concerned with domestic politics through the lens of 'white nationalism'. Another typically discussed is Jan Christian Smuts, the towering figure of mid-twentieth century South African politics and Prime Minister between 1919–24 and 1939–48. Darwinism was, as many have noted, an important influence on Smuts, who was unusually familiar with Darwin's scholarship; for example, he 'immediately appreciated the significance of Dart's announcement of the fossil *Australopithecus*'[35] compared to the wide scepticism over the discovery. Further, and in contrast to the domestic flavour of much Darwinism in South Africa, Smuts was an internationalist,[36] and would therefore appear an ideal candidate for consideration here. However, in again not wishing to stray outside of the nineteenth century, I want to focus elsewhere.

Let us therefore turn to South African Darwinian discourses within the relevant timeframe. A useful place to start is to consider how the metropole spoke of war and foreign policy in the periphery more generally and in southern Africa more specifically. How did Darwinism inform such quotidian international thought?

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[33] Ibid., 404.

[34] Important anti-eugenic Darwinians, who critiqued figures like Fantham and Duerden, included Raymond Dart himself, as well as Simon Biesheuvel (who argued that black Africans scored 'worse' on intelligence tests not because of their race, but because of their environment), I.D. Macrone (author of 1937's *Race Attitudes in South Africa*, which attacked the racial ideology) and John David Rheinallt-Jones (founder of the South African Institute of Race Relations). Lever 2002, 18.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Many scholars have noted Smuts's influence on the constitution of international society in both the interwar and postwar periods. For a good discussion, see: Heyns and Gravett 2017.

Extinction wars in the periphery

> 'When civilised nations come into contact with barbarians the struggle is short…'[37]
> — Charles Darwin, in the *Descent of Man* (1871)

In the extra-European world, the same existential fatalism as reigned in Europe was expressed, albeit in a more racialised form. As discussed prior, this crystallised into an 'extinction discourse'[38] which prophesised the inevitability of native peoples' destruction: the Tasmanian tragedy writ large, the violent emptying of the colonised lands. In Salisbury's credo, such savages were the most extreme case of a 'dying nation'—the ones beyond help (unlike, European nations, or even China or Japan).[39] Their destruction was to be expected, even ushered on.

In the daily register of metropole opinion, a sharp distinction between intra- and extra-European wars thus appeared a recurrent theme of the period, with the latter wars figured even more explicitly as 'wars of extinction'. For instance, following a Japanese attack on Britain in October 1861, the *Economist* (in an echo of Darwin) asserted the maxim that: 'Wherever a superior race comes into close contact with an inferior one, or a highly-civilised race with a semi-civilised one, or a thoroughly European with a thoroughly Oriental race, it seems *inevitable* that there should be cruelty, oppression, and subjection… At least *it has always been so*, with every people and in every quarter of the world. The relations of the Spaniards to the Mexicans, of the Dutch to the Hottentots, of the Americans to the Indians, have ever been fatal to the weaker tribes.'[40] So the same for Britain's colonial endeavours:

> It would seem that even our own higher morality and our own more scrupulous sense of justice… have not been able either to prevent the feeble and wretched Australian from gradually dying out before us, or to save the more capable and energetic Maories from ceaseless quarrels with us or from the imminent prospect of

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[37] Darwin 1871, vol. 1, 238.
[38] Brantlinger 2003.
[39] As Brantlinger shows, a common response to this belief in imminent extinction was the genre of the 'savage catalogue'. An interesting example is Reverend John George Wood's 1871 encyclopaedia of the *Uncivilized Races of Men in All Countries of the World*, which aimed to urgently document 'the manners and customs of uncivilized races of man in all parts of the world' in one single volume, before their inevitable disappearance. Echoing Darwin's equation of 'savages' with wild animals, Wood asserts for instance that the Australian aborigines 'occupied precisely the same relative position toward the human race as do the lion, tiger, and leopard toward the lower animals, and suffered in consequence from the same law of extinction.' Cited in: Ibid., 7. Another example of this genre was Robert Brown's *The Races of Mankind* (1873).
[40] The Japan Outrage 1861 emphasis mine.

> ultimate extermination. In both cases we believe that we have really done our best to exempt these unfortunate people from the usual fate of savages brought into collision with European superiority; but in both cases our efforts have been in vain.[41]

The Māories, as here, were often a focus of extinction discourse.[42] At the outbreak of the Second Māori War in 1863, for instance, the *Telegraph* prophesised again their inevitable destruction against their colonial occupiers: 'Thus the war opened; and we read with sorrow that the wounded were bayoneted, for there is bitterness enough now all over the northern island between the settlers and the natives, without making this new struggle for existence on their part more savage than it must become.'[43] Or, again, in another piece: 'For our own parts we do not see how such wars can be wholly avoided. They are the inevitable condition of the collision of an indolent and ignorant with a better trained and more energetic race… And we do not know any way more certain to aggravate the evil on both sides, than for an aggressive civilisation to show anything like fear or entreaty in the presence of barbarism.'[44]

One can almost hear the exhalation of a patronising sigh, one that says: '*We all know how this is going to end, but we have to go through with it anyway*.' The 'civilised' nations are asked to show resolve in wars with an inevitable outcome (not unlike the Marxian struggle for 'inevitable' revolution). The British government's tactics were accordingly framed as necessary short-term solutions: 'Sir George Gray wishes to draw a frontier of like kind round the Waikato country… It is one of those bold measures which would neither be desirable nor justifiable in *a regular war between civilised countries*, but which offers perhaps the best and most natural way of securing the borders of civilisation in a country not yet reclaimed from the dominion of savages.'[45]

The Anglo-Zulu War

Such an extinction discourse could also be frequently seen when discussing the fate of the indigenous populations of southern African—most strikingly so in 1879, when Britain engaged in a war with the independent Bantu state of Zululand.

[41] Ibid.
[42] Another example is Dilke's parable of 'the two flies', cited back in chapter three.
[43] The second Maori war has broken out, to the deep sorrow 1863. See also: Brantlinger 2003 ch. 7.
[44] The Fresh War in New Zealand 1863.
[45] The War in New Zealand 1863.

The war followed a failed attempt, spearheaded by the High Commissioner Henry Bartle Frere, to bring the Zulu kingdoms into a British imperial federation and was ignited by a calculated unrealisable ultimatum to Cetshwayo, the Zulu King.[46] Prior to this, the Zulus had gained their reputation in the European imagination almost as African Spartans:[47] a warring people that had proven their might against other, competing Bantu groups. One missionary, for instance, spoke of the Zulus as physically stronger than even 'the Indian and average European'.[48] King Shaka kaSenzangakhona, who reformed the warriors' military in the early nineteenth century, was valorised as the 'Bonaparte of South Africa'.[49] Extinction discourse was thus spoken of *between* these Bantu tribes, and 'explorers noted of apparently defeated groups (here the Mashona in their struggles with the Zulu) that: "Respecting these people, the impression left upon my mind is that they are a declining race, exemplifying strongly the Darwinian doctrine of the survival of the fittest."'[50] In contrast to the Māori or native Americans, the Zulus (and indeed 'most sub-Saharan African "tribes" or "races"') were thus unusually 'not usually viewed as slated for extinction.'[51] They were an exceptional case.

That was, until the Europeans came into the picture. At the outbreak of the Zulu War, the confidence of the British press was high, with the sharp asymmetry between the British and Zulu warriors presumed to guarantee British victory: 'That a savage nation possessing the highest military organisation that has ever yet been attained by a savage nation is [nevertheless] powerless before British troops armed with weapons of the greatest precision will, I trust, be fully demonstrated',[52] one correspondent shrugged. The

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[46] A war much to the surprise of the metropole, which was at the time planning for war in Afghanistan when it learned that 'without their knowledge or the authority of Parliament, the British Army in South Africa [had] invaded Zululand.' Greaves 2005, 11. For a discussion of the historiography of the causes of the war, and which argues against the common 'Frere's war' interpretation, see: Etherington 1981.
[47] For a contemporary invocation of this comparison, see: Ferguson 2007.
[48] Tyler 1891, 188.
[49] Ibid., 212.
[50] Claeys 2019, 172. The quote comes from another colonial classic, the travel narrative: Kerr 1886, vol. 1, 119.
[51] Brantlinger 2003, 9. As Brantlinger notes, others also marked out the Cape as exceptional in its capacity for survival, including the novelist Anthony Trollope, who 'travelled to all the major outposts of the British Empire and wrote several hefty travelogues, in which he repeated the claim that most aboriginals were inevitably perishing, not so much through violence and disease as apparently through mere proximity to civilization. The one exception, Trollope thought, was South Africa, which "is a country of black men,—and not of white men… and it will continue to be so."' Outside South Africa, Trollope argued that 'throughout the lands the native races have perished by their contact with us. They have withered by commune with us as the weaker weedy grasses of Nature's first planting wither and die wherever come the hardier plants, which science added to nature has produced.' Ibid., 10.
[52] (FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.). The Zulu War 1879.

leaders of the British forces completely and 'fully expected an early and easy victory over the Zulu army.'[53] As the war rolled on—and despite the striking British defeat at the Battle of Isandlwana—this confidence waned but remained strong: 'For the first time in their history these dusky warriors have discarded the usual fantastic costumes in which it has hitherto been their habit to fight. Doubtless they feel the desperate character of the struggle in which they are engaged.'[54]

The descriptions of the Zulus throughout this conflict (and their drawn contrast to the 'gentlemanly' British) would also mirror Darwin's dehumanisation of 'savage' peoples. As with Darwin, this was in one sense a moral-cultural disgust—as with the horror at the Zulu practice of *qaqa* (the ritual mutilation of bodies in war) which appeared to the Europeans the epitome of heathen immorality.[55] Yet whilst these civilisational comparisons were common, others too saw the Zulus more in terms of 'race as a matter of biological definition… There are a few very specific instances where the Zulus are treated not as less advanced equals but as a subject for zoological study'[56] and in accordance with the polygenic notion of fixed, innate racial differences.[57] Among examples, 'the most graphic of these is that as retold by [Colonel Henry] Harford':

> "I came across a body of a very fine specimen of a Zulu in the skeletal stage, which I took the Surgeon Reynolds out to have a look at. He too was impressed with the statue and splendid proportions, and brought away one or two bones of scientific interest, and the soles of the feet which had become detached and were just solid pieces of horn. I also took one of the collar bones and the lesser bones of one of the arms, which I intended some day to give to the Durban museum."[58]

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[53] Greaves 2005, 97.
[54] (FROM OUR CORRESPONDENTS.). The Zulu War 1879.
[55] Dodman 2008, 8.
[56] Ibid., 10.
[57] Augstein 1996.
[58] Dodman 2008, 10. Harford's account comes from his Zulu War journal. However, Dodman stresses that this vivid example is perhaps explained by Harford's particular interest in biology.

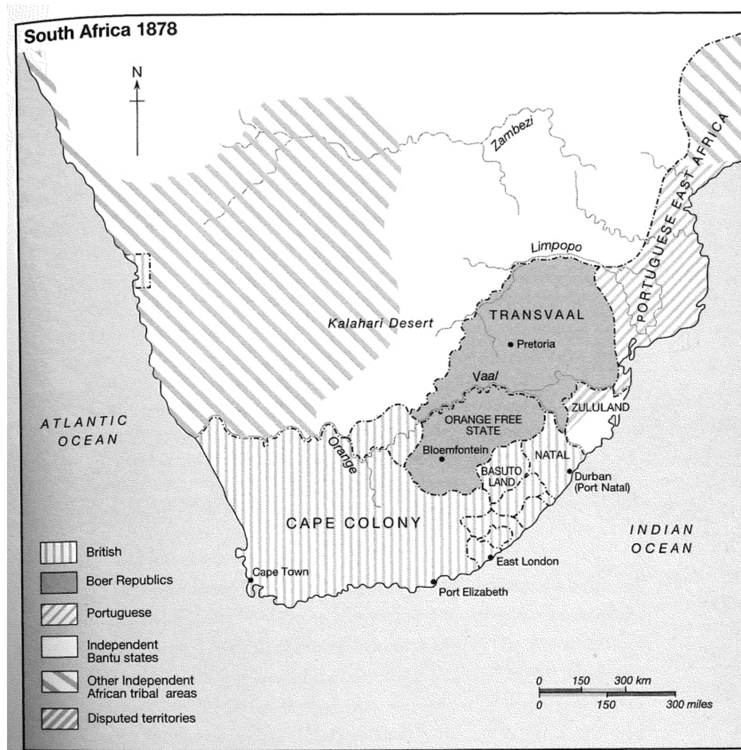

Fig. 41. The state of play: Southern Africa, 1878[59]

In the middle of the conflict in June, a despatch from High Commissioner Frere himself to the Colonial Secretary was reported in the *Times.* In his official recommendations, a Darwinian flavour to his remarks is evident. The worry, for Frere, was to leave 'large masses of uncivilized natives… within our own dominions to fester in idleness.' The British ought to be well aware of the 'danger and inhumanity of leaving them [the Zulus] untaught, untrained, and unimproved, to multiply in their original savagery, with none but indirect influences to lead them to civilization, and *deprived of such slender elevating impulses as the struggle for existence* and supremacy under a savage ruler may indirectly have afforded them. Our guiding rules in dealing with them must not be Zulu traditions, but European principles.'[60]

Frere's contrast here was that of Darwin's: restrained civilisation on the European side; a bitter struggle for existence for the natives. For Frere, the natives left 'idle' (i.e.

[59] Image from: Greaves 2005, 9. This map shows the lay of the land the year prior to the Zulu War and two years prior to the First Boer War.
[60] The Affairs of South Africa 1879 emphasis mine. As he continues: they must not 'be kept as an alien race separate from and subordinate to a superior white race, but as fellow-subjects entitled to the same rights and laws as ourselves, and able to raise themselves by industry and probity to equal rights and responsibilities in the State.'

simply left in chains) was the worst of all possible worlds, lacking *even* the productive, 'slender elevating impulse' of competitive struggle. At the war's conclusion, the need was thus for a civilised benevolence: 'there is a very general feeling that the occasion of the conquest of the country should have been taken advantage of to introduce a strong, wise, and kindly government, which by its control and supervision of the natives would guide them in the course of improvement and gradually lead them up towards civilization.'[61]

The Boer wars

> '"You shall submit! We are masters and we will make you acknowledge it!" These words express the sentiment which sways the British nation in its dealings with the Boer republics; and this sentiment it is which… pervades indefinitely the political feeling now manifesting itself as Imperialism.'[62]
>
> — Herbert Spencer (1902)

Britain's problems in southern Africa were not confined to the Zulus, however, but spread to the white Boer settlers too. Whilst Britain had inherited the Cape Colony in 1806 as a prize from the Napoleonic Wars (acknowledged at the Congress of Vienna), it struggled with how to deal with the Dutch-, German-, and Huguenot-descended settlers, known the 'Boers' (deriving from the Dutch for 'farmer'). At first, the British granted some basic recognition to the settlers' independence: in 1852, for the Transvaal (later the South African Republic), and in 1854, for those in the Vaal-Orange rivers area (later the Orange Free State). Yet they retained functional control over the region, with ambitions for future domination.

This failed to settle the problem. In tandem with the Zulu war, the intractability of the Boer question led to a common image of South Africa as an area of multi-pronged existential struggle: 'some British imperialists tended to see the struggle for survival in South Africa not only as one between the white and black races, but also as one in which the British or Anglo-Saxon race had demonstrated its superiority to the Afrikaners [i.e. Boers] as an indolent, inert, and unenlightened people.'[63] Or, as one contemporary put

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[61] (FROM OUR CORRESPONDENTS.). South Africa 1879.

[62] Spencer 1902, 157.

[63] Giliomee 2003, 287. Indeed, Darwin's cousin, the eugenicist Francis Galton had, like Darwin, travelled to South Africa in 1850–2 (for precisely two years, from April 5th to April 5th), and noted that: 'The country was suffering the atrocities of savage warfare when I arrived—tribe against tribe and race against race, which had to be stopped before I could proceed.' Cited in: Blacker 1952, 35.

it: 'Deeper than all other convictions, there is the certainty in our souls that the great future is involved in the struggle of to-day! That South Africa is the small battle-ground on which world issues are faced. That we, for some reason which to us is obscure, are the chosen champions of our race… It is not only a "struggle of existence," it is that, but not that chiefly, it is "the struggle for the existence of others"… Though we die, our children will reap the harvest of the struggle.'[64] In this struggle, the Boers, like the Zulus, were feared for the martialist nature of their society. As a correspondent for the *Times* put it:

> In the struggle for existence among the States of South Africa the Boers have survived, then, mainly because of their capacity for military co-operation; because every man among them fought—members of their Parliament, Judges of their Law Courts, everybody—and because the women who could not fight helped the men who could. The Boers thus became a nation of soldiers. The army was the whole people and the whole people were an army… The military gathering has been the political gathering, and the successful military leader the head of the State. The first President was a man who had led the people in many a fight.[65]

In 1880, just one year after the Zulu War, the First Boer War broke out in the Transvaal: for the Boers, the result of resentment against the British; for the British, the officially cited cause was Kruger's treatment of the *uitlanders*, or British white settlers. Whilst the war was swift, ending in just three months with Boer victory at the Battle of Majuba Hill, it elicited much discussion within the British chattering clashes, with many transfixed by the Boers themselves as white farmer-soldiers with a cause that seemed eminently reasonable. Where the Zulus were impressive but culturally aberrant, the Boers were thus seen as beaten down but culturally reasonable. In a spirit of concession, in 1881 the British therefore granted self-government to the Boer republics under the Pretoria Convention (although insisting on British suzerainty).

Yet the struggle for existence in southern Africa did not abate. Indeed, following the first war, Colonel Stanley signalled storm clouds on the horizon: 'We will not say that the Africander [*sic*] is *une quantité négligeable*, but his prospect for survival in the South African struggle for political existence does not at the present moment seem to be very brilliant.'[66] Whilst the independence of the Boer republics had been largely recognised by the British in the years following the first conflict, expansionism became too tempting.

[64] Vicarious Suffering 1909.
[65] (FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.). The Transvaal 1879.
[66] COLONEL STANLEY finds it a difficult matter to 1885.

In 1899, the Second Boer War erupted in a new pursuit of hegemony, but ostensibly again in defence of the (voting) rights of *uitlanders*—those British immigrants living in the South African Republic (the Transvaal) who were ostracised from the citizenry by the Boer state.[67]

This second war elicited significant commentary and was to be profound in its effect on the British public consciousness[68] which, despite initial wide support, became beset by a deep pessimism as the controversial conflict rolled on and expanded. As such, this second war was often reported in eschatological terms, with genuine fear of national destruction, as expressed early on in January 1900: 'They say it is a life and death struggle for the existence of the Empire. We have got stoutness enough, unity enough, spirit enough, wealth enough, I think, to give a very good answer to any enemies who may withstand us in the way of aggression.'[69] Worries of the militarist Boers' willingness 'to face *a war of extermination* rather than submit'[70] were at least momentarily abated after the surrender of General Cronje in March 1900, which followed the collapse of Boer fronts:

> The surrender proves that the Boer farmers, or rather herdsmen, splendidly brave as they are, and enduring as they have shown themselves to be, are not prepared to fight "to the last ditch," or to be slain in heaps rather than become free subjects of Her Majesty… they will, it is evident, fight like reasonable human beings, and not like lunatics let loose… The war, in fact, *is a war, and not a struggle to destroy a nation.* The previous history of the Boers clearly suggested this, but the resistance on the Modder and on the Tugela had been so desperate that many usually cool judges began to apprehend a defence of Saguntum on a colossal scale.[71]

The Boers, then, compared to the fierce 'savage' Zulus, were marked by their 'civilised' capacity to wage war in a configurative, rather than existential, way. The fact that the Zulus had survived was due only to British charity; the Boers, descendants of Europeans, had instead recognised war as a tit-for-tat, rather than zero-sum, game. In the 'khaki election' of September 1900, won by Salisbury and the Conservatives, it was thus widely assumed that the war was essentially over.

However, fears of a 'war of extermination' soon rebounded when the war not only did *not* end but rather moved into a second, horrifically escalated phase, as the British

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[67] For a full historical account, see the treatment in: Farwell 1976.
[68] It is also the conflict to which 'the Boer War' in the general term still connotes, with the first conflict instead termed the Transvaal War.
[69] Mr. Morley on the War 1900.
[70] The Surrender of Cronje 1900 emphasis mine.
[71] Ibid. emphasis mine.

shifted to scorched earth policies (especially farm burning) in response to resistant Boer guerrilla tactics. Revelations of the forced internment of civilians in the infamous British concentration camps,[72] which quickly gained a 'terrible notoriety',[73] further intensified the war's unpopularity and the sense of existential threat. Sympathy for the Boers accordingly increased at home and abroad, for again, unlike the Zulus, these were not 'savages'. Such extreme measures were thus thought improper. At the height of this second phase, the Liberal leader Henry Campbell-Bannerman summed up the anti-war opposition's critique: 'When is a war not a war? When it is carried on by methods of barbarism in South Africa.'[74]

Fig. 42. The 'Boer Lilliputians' vs. the 'British Gulliver': Political cartoon from *Puck* magazine (1900)[75]

[72] It is for this reason that the war has been emphasised by historians as a genuinely modern war, one that anticipated the genocidal and total wars to come. As Iain R. Smith puts it: 'This war took place on the hinge between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but, in all sorts of ways… it was a harbinger of the twentieth century, and of the many anti-colonial wars which Britain and other European colonial powers were then to find themselves fighting elsewhere.' Smith 1996, 5.
[73] Judd and Surridge 2002, 194.
[74] Cited in: Judd and Surridge 2002 ch. 12. Such accusations of 'British barbarism' we shall see echoed in the anti-imperialism of settler colonists.
[75] Image from: Pughe 1900.

Many liberal critics of the war (such as Walter Blease) explicitly identified the British belief in Darwinian internationalism—and its vision of 'international politics… [as] a system of perpetual antagonism'[76]—for the escalation of war, and indeed for Tory foreign policy more generally. The result of this belief, Blease argues, was that 'large tracts, including the territories of two self-governing races of white men [the Boers] were annexed to the Empire by force, [and] morality was frankly struck out of the list of national virtues'.[77]

Such views would be posited outside Britain and even outside Europe. As with the Russo-Japanese War, the Boer War was closely tracked by semi-peripheral nations as a canary in the coal mine: 'Chinese commentators', for example, 'followed the Boer War (1899–1902), seeing it as another struggle of a weak people for freedom from the West.'[78] This included Liang Qichao, who saw the British treatment of the Boers as typical of the Western powers and another reminder of the urgent need for national independence: '"To those who claim", Liang wrote, "that opening mining, railroad, and concessionary rights to foreigners is not harmful to the sovereignty of the whole, I advise you to read the history of the Boer War."… As he saw it, the Boers, a strong people saddled with a weak state, had nevertheless been pushed back by the British.'[79]

A degenerative war

> 'I venture to advise you not to carry the degradation principle too far…'[80]
> — Charles Darwin, in correspondence with Anton Dohrn (1875)

As opposition to the war became widespread, it came to encompass a wide political spectrum, including liberals, socialists, and even some Tories (famous anti-war activists included J.A. Hobson and Emily Hobhouse). Yet others still critiqued the Second Boer War from a *Darwinian* perspective.

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[76] Blease 1913, 313. Blease's argument is highlighted in: Crook 1999, 638.

[77] Blease 1913, 305. Whilst Crook uses such liberal critiques to support his 'bogeyman' thesis, one ought to remember that the Boer War broke out under Lord Salisbury's leadership and one year after his prophetic vision of the 'living and dying nations'. It is therefore not entirely rhetorical on Blease's part to identify the two together.

[78] Mishra 2012, 158.

[79] Ibid., 159.

[80] Cited in: Pick 1989, 192.

Widely associated with horrendous conditions for poorly prepared and unsuitable British soldiers—indeed, 'more than one-half of recruits failed military fitness exams'[81]—the war appeared to many not as a means for selecting the 'fittest' nation, but the very inverse. The marketing strategy of Bovril[82] convinced nobody: these were not superhuman *Vril* fighting the Boers, but the British industrial urban poor in squalor. War for Darwinian internationalists was supposed to be productive, yet this war appeared very different: it was a *degenerative* war.

This idea extended Darwin's own comment in the *Descent* (and discussed in chapter two) that war in the modern world actually had contra-'fitness' consequences, for it destroys 'the finest young men [who] are taken by the conscription or are enlisted' and instead preserves 'the shorter and feebler men, with poor constitutions, [who] are left at home, and consequently have a much better chance of marrying and propagating their kind'.[83] Eugenicists embraced this idea, in the process often coming to be critics of modern warfare *in general*. The Boer War was even worse, for it not only killed the strong but also placed them in pollutive conditions. Indeed, it was not even clear that Britain's industrial poor were properly 'bred' to be soldiers in the first place.

Eugenicists therefore emphasised policies that preserved *domestic* fitness (the 'good breeding' of the 'local stock') over *international* struggle, thus becoming what we might call 'Darwinian *isolationists*' rather than 'Darwinian internationalists', lacking as they did the central motif of national selectionism.[84] To make a simplistic but helpful comparison, 'Darwinian isolationists' were thus to 'Darwinian internationalists' what in American foreign policy 'exemplarist' isolationists are to 'missionary' internationalists[85]—in the pursuit of greatness, the former turn their gaze inwards and the latter outwards. Instead of emphasising international struggle, Darwinian isolationists came to the central conclusion that 'national fitness… had previously been ensured by natural selection, but under the conditions of modern civilization a replacement for natural selection had to be

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[81] Phillips 2016. The poor state of Boer War soldiers was revealed fully by the British Government's comprehensive Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904) led by Almeric Fitzroy, the findings of which led the Liberal government elected in 1905 to enact a range of social reform legislation—including the Education (Provision of Meals) Act (1906), and the Housing and Town Planning Act (1909).
[82] Kingstone and Lister 2018, 251–252.
[83] Darwin 1874, 134.
[84] This is one of the less estimable variations of D.P. Crook's idea of 'peace biology'. Of course, as Richard Weikart argues, 'some eugenicists' opposition to war was paper-thin, disappearing completely once World War I broke out.' Weikart 2003, 281.
[85] Brands 1998.

found in conscious eugenic selection.'[86] Mirroring the semi-peripheral Darwinians, Darwinism was thus used by the isolationists as description and solution, a diagnosis of the disease and a proposed remedy.

The disease

The idea of 'degeneration' had a pre-Darwinian pedigree, with the polygenists of the eighteenth century (notably Buffon) theorising distinct races as having undergone processes of 'degenerative' differentiation because of the influences of climate. It was, however, widely popularised in the late nineteenth century by the zoologist Edwin Ray Lankester's 1880 tract *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism*.[87] Lankester and other Darwinians essentially inverted Darwin's theory to argue, as D.G. Ritchie put it, that 'we cannot be sure that Evolution will always lead to what we should regard as the greatest perfection of any species. Degeneration enters in as well as progress.'[88]

Degeneration in this *fin de siècle* sense thus signified, on the one hand, the threat 'to lose the properties of the genus, to decline to a lower type' and, on the other, 'to lose the generative force' of production itself.[89] In Darwinian terms, it came to denote the reversal of evolutionary complexity into a simpler, less fit forms. Its influence as an idea was enormously broad, encompassing not only biology, racial pseudoscience, and zoology, but the physical sciences (especially thermodynamics), criminology, psychiatry, literature, and aesthetics.[90]

As applied to the social world, the fear was a degeneration of the whole of 'civilisation' itself: of rot, decay, and death. The Whately-Lubbock-Campbell debate's concern with the idea of savages as 'degraded' humans (as we saw in chapter three) was one such example of this vision of evolutionary progress's perverse inverse. Salisbury's prophecy of the 'dying nations' was another, as was Oka Asajirō's critique of the corroding effects of capitalism on the Japanese nation. It was thus that 'a variety of

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[86] MacKenzie 1976, 516–517.
[87] Lankester 1880.
[88] Ritchie 1889, 16. Whilst Lankester's discussion is largely confined to matters of biology, he did also apply the idea fleetingly to social and political matters. See: Pick 1989, 216–218.
[89] Chamberlin and Gilman 1985 ix.
[90] Ibid.; Pick 1989. Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race*, which opened the thesis, was one amongst many degenerationist fictions, alongside more famous examples such as H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the latter of which is explicit in its reference: 'The Count is a criminal, and of criminal type, Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him.' Wells himself muses on the phenomenon of 'zoological retrogression' in: Wells 1891.

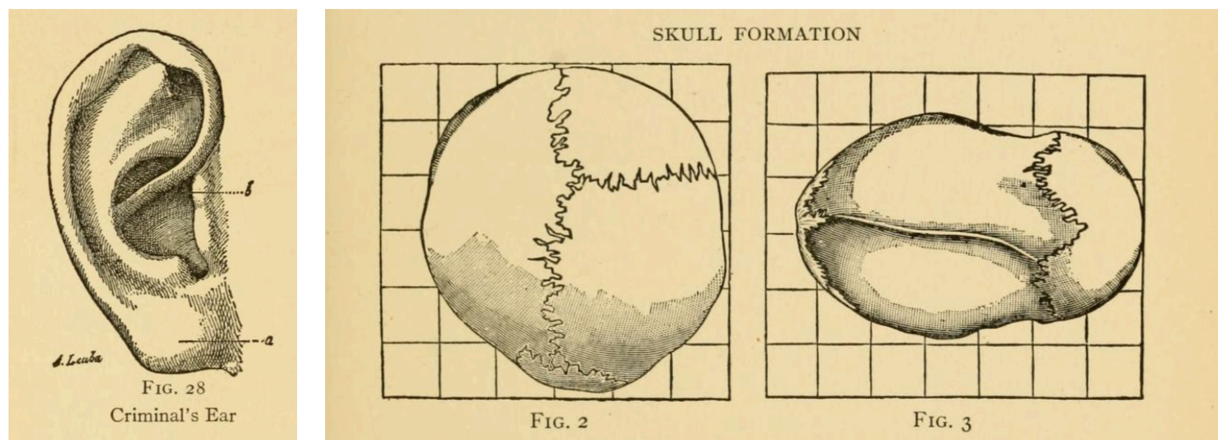
Victorian commentators in the late nineteenth century began to fear the spectre of degeneration. It was a word filled with connotations of decline, decadence, deviancy, disruption, disarray, and pessimism… Instead [of positive evolution], it predicted the rise of disease, insanity, feebleness, idiocy, sterility, and extinction.'[91]

In Britain, influential theorists of the phenomenon included: the eugenicists Francis Galton (Darwin's own cousin) and Karl Pearson; the psychiatrists Henry Maudsley and Bénédict Augustin Morel; the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso; and the Zionist leader Max Nordau, whose 1892 tract against the 'degenerate art' of Tolstoy, Wagner, Ibsen, and Nietzsche was widely read. Ultimately, 'just as the nature of evil has always had always had a more compelling appeal to the imagination than the nature of goodness, so the idea of degeneration engaged the nineteenth-century mind with a troubling sense that here, perhaps, might be found the essential reality.'[92]

At the domestic level, the individual manifestation of the process of 'degeneration' was said to be '*the degenerate*':[93] a term of abuse which, as Nancy Stepan puts it, came to signify 'races out of their proper places'. With the abolition of slavery and the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation, 'the urban poor, prostitutes, criminals, and the insane were being construed as "degenerate" types… as "races apart," interacting with and creating degenerate spaces near at home.'[94] Racial biology thus emerged as an attempt to ascribe and demarcate the boundaries of groups in their 'proper places', precisely to identify and ultimately extinguish transgressive elements which threatened the organic whole. The Darwinian belief in heredity,[95] emphasised by Galton, made this task yet more urgent. Criminologists became particularly obsessed with the problem of recidivism, since it seemed to prove the self-reproducing character of transgression.[96] Even the 'ordinary' individual was liable to degeneracy. Psychologists, alienists, and physicians widely linked industrialisation, modernisation, and urbanisation

[91] Degeneration n.d.
[92] Chamberlin and Gilman 1985 x.
[93] On the history of 'the degenerate', see: Walter 1956; Scull 2015 ch. 8.
[94] Chamberlin and Gilman 1985, 98. On urbanisation, see the physician James Cantlie's rich evocation of the sickly hues of industrial London and his remedial prescription of fresh air, in: Cantlie 1885.
[95] For a broader history of the idea of heredity, see: Jacob 1973. On the connection of heredity to genetics and eugenics, see also: Kevles 1985.
[96] It was as such that many came to see 'insanity' as innate and therefore incurable, as in: Maudsley 1871.

to a new common anxiety: the widely diagnosed *fin-de-siècle*[97] affliction of 'neurasthenia' or 'Americanitus'.[98]



Figs. 43. and 44. The mark of heredity:
'Criminal features' identified by Cesare Lombroso[99]

At the international level, the threat was that such backwardness would come to infect the body politic *as a whole*—that the state-organism itself, as per Salisbury's prophecy, would begin to deform, decay, and die.[100] The fear, as summarised by Hugh Percy Dunn in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*, was that 'our downward course has begun, and that within a measurable distance of time we shall become, as a nation, an effective nonentity in the world… that the high-pressure conditions of life in the present century as so

[97] The whole idea of the '*fin de siècle*' is discussed at length in the opening pages of Nordau's *Degeneration*—a notion which, he argues, has an 'extreme silliness' in its 'clumsy idea that the century is a kind of living being, born like a beast or a man, passing through all the stages of existence, gradually ageing and declining… to die with the expiration of the hundredth year, after being afflicted in its last decade with all the infirmities of mournful senility… But however silly a term *fin-de-siècle* may be, the mental constitution which it indicates is actually present… a compound of feverish restlessness and blunted discouragement, of fearful presage and hang-dog renunciation. *The prevalent feeling is that of imminent perdition and extinction*.' Nordau 1896, 1–2 emphasis mine. For a classic analysis of the *fin de siècle*, see: Schorske 1979.
[98] Horwitz 2013, 64–68. The diagnosis of neurasthenia can be seen widely across European culture. To cite but one example, on recounting the details of the 'Guermantes way' of his childhood, Proust likens a water lily forever dragged by the river's current from one bank to the other as 'always in the same helpless state, suggesting certain victims of neurasthenia'. Proust 2001, vol. 1, 166.
[99] Images from: Lombroso-Ferrero 1911, 224, 11. This is a classic in the genre of 'guidebooks' to degeneracy. For Lombroso, such criminal types were marked by such 'atavistic' features, i.e. reversions to primitive eras in evolutionary history, which he says have been passed down through inheritance thereby creating a class of 'born criminals'.
[100] Many tied such notions to a reactionary conservatism, not only in their romanticisation of the pure and clean pastoral past but also in their vision of 'the masses' as an irrational body led to socialism. This was expressed particularly by Maudsley, whose *Organic to Human* (1916) 'tapped a broader social-organicist conception of the crisis of civilisation' to theorise the Great War as an inevitable process of national decay. Pick 1989, 210.

exacting that the race must deteriorate in consequence… [in] the all-pervading struggle for existence.'[101] This age of decay, in Nordau's phrasing, thus appeared as:

> A Dusk of the Nations, in which all suns and all stars are gradually waning, and mankind with all its institutions and creations is perishing in the midst of a dying world.[102]

The Boer War became a focal point for such fears precisely because it perfectly married these two aspects: domestically, the poorly trained British urban poor fighting in conditions of squalor; and, internationally, Britain's humiliating failure to deal with an uprising of mere 'farmers' in a colonial backwater. As Karl Pearson put it: 'We can… admit the truth now. We had been defeated, I may even venture to say badly defeated, by a social organism far less highly developed and infinitely smaller than our own'.[103]

Degenerative explanations were thus 'perceived to provide a catch-all explanation' for a bundle of ills: 'for the nation's ailing industrial sector, lacklustre middle class birth-rates, urban and rural poverty, and the apparently lethargic performance of troops against the Boer soldiers (often dismissed in turn as simple farmers and herdsmen) during the South African war of 1899–1902.'[104] The problem of the working poor was particularly salient: 'A low type of humanity, it was sometimes said, could survive and multiply in the modern city, in the same way that maggots thrived and multiplied in putrefying substances; hence, to quote one contributor to the *Eugenics Review*, the development of "a race of men, small, ill-formed, disease-stricken, hard to kill."'[105] As such, the 'solution to the problem of the urban residuum [became] a prerequisite of imperial survival. The basis was thus laid for *social imperialism*, the linking of imperialism and social reform that loomed large in British politics between the 1880s and 1914.'[106]

Understanding the 'disease' of degeneration became key: to catalogue its effects to ascertain its aetiology. Tabulation and descriptive statistics were typical methods. Thus, again in *Nineteenth Century*, one commentator just after the Boer War's conclusion baulks in fear at a range of medical figures concerning the British military recruits and notes

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[101] Dunn 1894, 301. Dunn however argues that there is no evidence to support the theory.
[102] Nordau 1896, 2. Here one also recalls the turn of phrase of Oka Asajirō from last chapter, who spoke of the 'twilight struggle between doomed nations.' Sullivan 2010, 387.
[103] Pearson 1901, 9–10.
[104] Degeneration n.d.
[105] Searle 1976, 25.
[106] MacKenzie 1976, 516 emphasis mine.

worryingly 'that the figures take no account of the [recent] South African War'[107] which were likely to be even worse, concluding with 'the truth emphasised by Lord Rosebery at Liverpool: "It is no use having an Empire without an Imperial race."'[108] As the Earl of Rosebery himself put it: 'In the great cities, in the rookeries and slums which still survive, an imperial race cannot be reared. You can scarcely produce anything in those foul nests of crime and disease but a progeny doomed from its birth to misery and ignominy… Health of mind and body exalt a nation in the competition of the universe. The survival of the fittest is an absolute truth in the conditions of the modern world.'[109] (Like Salisbury, his predecessor as prime minister, 'Rosebery's speeches had a sub-text of anxiety about possible world war',[110] of the cataclysm to come.)

Birth rates were another obsession. Even the Bishop of Ripon waded in: 'The nations that are fittest to survive will survive, and the fittest nation,' he argued, 'will be that which can beget the largest number of active, vigorous, intelligent, high-minded sons, strong in frame, clear in brain, and great in soul. Bearing this in mind, we may note that the decline of the birth-rate in the British Empire synchronises with the increase in the birth-rate of the East. I have no statistics of China, but it is worthy of notice that in the sixteen years between 1891 and 1907, when the birth-rate in the United Kingdom fell from 32.5 to 26, the birth-rate in Japan rose from 25.6 to 33… Are we witnessing the decline of the West and the rise of the East?'[111] Britain was threatened with being supplanted by those rising Darwinian powers.

Many thus came to attack the Boer War and (more rarely) even colonisation itself—which was, after all, another 'race out of place', and thereby threatened the creation of a degenerate, 'tropicalised' white race.[112] (Indeed, why were two white races, the English and the Boers, even fighting each other in the first place?) The crucial feature of these degenerationist explanations was their *holism*. It was easy for Europeans to cast

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[107] Shee 1903, 800.

[108] Ibid., 805.

[109] Rosebery 1921, vol. 2, 250–251. As ever, Rosebery's Darwinism was not entirely coherent. Elsewhere in the book he draws on other metaphors, including the assertion that 'a State is in essence a great joint stock company with unlimited liability on the part of its stockholders.' (240)

[110] Crook 1999, 648.

[111] The Bishop's remarks here are from a talk entitled 'Birth-Rate and the Unfit', delivered to a Church Congress, and recorded in: The Bishop of Ripon on the Fit Nation 1910.

[112] Chamberlin and Gilman 1985, 99. This fear was widespread. Just one example is espoused by Karl Pearson: 'If you bring the white man into contact with the black,' he says, 'you too often suspend the very process of natural selection on which the evolution of a higher type depends. You get superior and inferior races living on the same soil, and that co-existence is demoralizing for both.' Pearson 1901, 20.

non-Europeans as 'degenerates' and 'savages', yet to make the white Europeans themselves the 'degenerates'—and to impose the same pseudoscientific violence onto them as put on non-white bodies, as with Lombroso's phrenology—was another thing entirely. This is evidence yet again of Darwinism's radical potential to cut across the old civilisational divides.

A detour

Another perceived force of degeneration relates to an important yet so far undiscussed aspect of Darwinian internationalism, one which is worth a quick detour to address: its gendered nature.

By virtue of women's exclusion from the public life of states, the international struggle for existence is conceptualised as a thoroughly gendered process. Women were often included (alongside the working poor and social outcasts) in the 'weak and feeble' who stay home in wartime—the domestic space of 'home' being itself the feminine space[113]—thereby contributing nothing to the process of selective war. Of course, the mythical construction of the brave, male fighter out in the world has long contrasted with the dutiful, waiting wife, or what Jean Bethke Elshtain dichotomises as 'just warriors' and 'beautiful souls'.[114] At the level of the state too, Salisbury's fearful prophecy of falling moribund was widely associated with the fear of the state being 'feminised' and the achievement of the 'living nations' connected to the pursuit of masculinity in its various forms.[115]

In Darwin's own work, women are frequently placed in an inferior state of evolutionary development. This is most clear in the exposition of his theory of 'sexual selection' in the second half of the *Descent*, where 'Darwin's willingness to credit discrimination and choice to *females*, with the suggestion that women evinced tastes similar to those of birds… [was] a particular irritant'[116] to feminists. Yet he goes further than this: 'If two lists were made of the most eminent men and women in poetry,

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[113] Amongst a vast literature on which, see especially: Elshtain 1993. On the visual representation of this feminised domestic space in the Western imagination, see the discussion in: Bryson 1990 ch. 4.
[114] Elshtain 1995.
[115] Rhode 2017 ch. 3. Rhode discusses the 'ideal manhood' essential for national power as consisting in the balance of three types of masculinity: an industrial machine-like efficiency; a primal masculine fighting spirit; and a classical moral sense of duty. Roosevelt's valorisation of the 'strenuous life' discussed in chapter three was one such version of this masculinist vision.
[116] Donald and Munro 2009, 19.

painting, sculpture, music—comprising composition and performance, history, science and philosophy', he proposes, 'the two lists would not bear comparison.'[117] This intellectual superiority, he argues, must be the result of the evolutionary selection of 'patient males': men who would win out in the process of sexual selection, a quality he bizarrely associates with the category of genius.[118] 'Thus man has ultimately become superior to woman.'[119]

Despite this, and even whilst accounting for the basic problem of the erasure of women's thought in the historical record,[120] female Darwinians did exist. In this chapter, Mary Elizabeth Barber (Darwin's correspondent and ardent racist) and Sybil Gotto (co-founder of the Eugenics Education Society) are mentioned. Not only were there female Darwinians, but even feminist Darwinians, most prominently: Eliza Burt Gamble (in her 1893 work *The Evolution of Women*), Antoinette Brown Blackwell (in 1875's *The Sexes Throughout Nature*), and Charlotte Perkin Gilman (throughout her corpus).[121] Such theorists saw in Darwinism's rejection of traditional moral-cultural categories a basis for radical feminism:

> For Gilman, evolutionism was a revolutionary resource for feminism, one of its greatest hopes. Gamble and Blackwell revisit Darwin's data with the aim of locating, amidst his ostensive conclusions to the contrary, his implicit "defence" of either the equality (Blackwell) or the superiority (Gamble) of women.[122]

Central to such arguments was the dynamic of reception, which was enormously wide in this case: these 'white feminists who were intensely excited about the Darwinian material… considered [Darwin's] text [as] manipulable and eloquent beyond the author's intent.'[123] Indeed, Gamble—who argued, contra Darwin, that women were the superior, procreative gender in evolutionary terms—even makes the striking argument that 'the so-called savage is [actually] more advanced, more civilized than the civilized European'[124] and that 'degeneration' in the West was occurring *not* because of the conditions of industrialisation or colonial racial mixing, but rather because of the

[117] Darwin 1871, vol. 2, 327.
[118] Deutscher 2004, 38. See also the discussion in: Sayers 1982 ch. 3.
[119] Darwin 1871, vol. 2, 329.
[120] Both literally in terms of poor preservation and in the wider structural mechanisms which have precluded women from the 'male' enterprises of scholarship and science. See especially: Owens and Rietzler 2021.
[121] Gilman also drew on Darwinism for socialist ends. For a summation, see her poem 'The Survival of the Fittest', reproduced widely but available in: Gilman 1918.
[122] Deutscher 2004, 35.
[123] Ibid., 37.
[124] Ibid., 43.

patriarchal nature of these societies: 'Her references are [thus] to "primitive people" who worshipped "the Great Mother" "under various appellations, namely, Cybele, or Astarte, in Asia Minor, Athene in Greece, Minerva in Rome and Isis or Neith in Egypt". The beginnings of degradation are associated with the replacement of worship of a Great Mother with paternal figures of the divine.'[125]

Still, other women did engage with Darwinism on more critical terms, even if not directly *vis-à-vis* its dubious gender politics. One example is the philosopher, women's suffrage campaigner, and anti-vivisectionist Frances Power Cobbe, who knew Darwin personally (and even encouraged him, from his end somewhat reticently, to read Kant)[126] and was a particularly fierce opponent of his theory of the evolution of the moral senses, which she vigorously attacked in her essay 'Darwinism in Morals' (1871).[127]

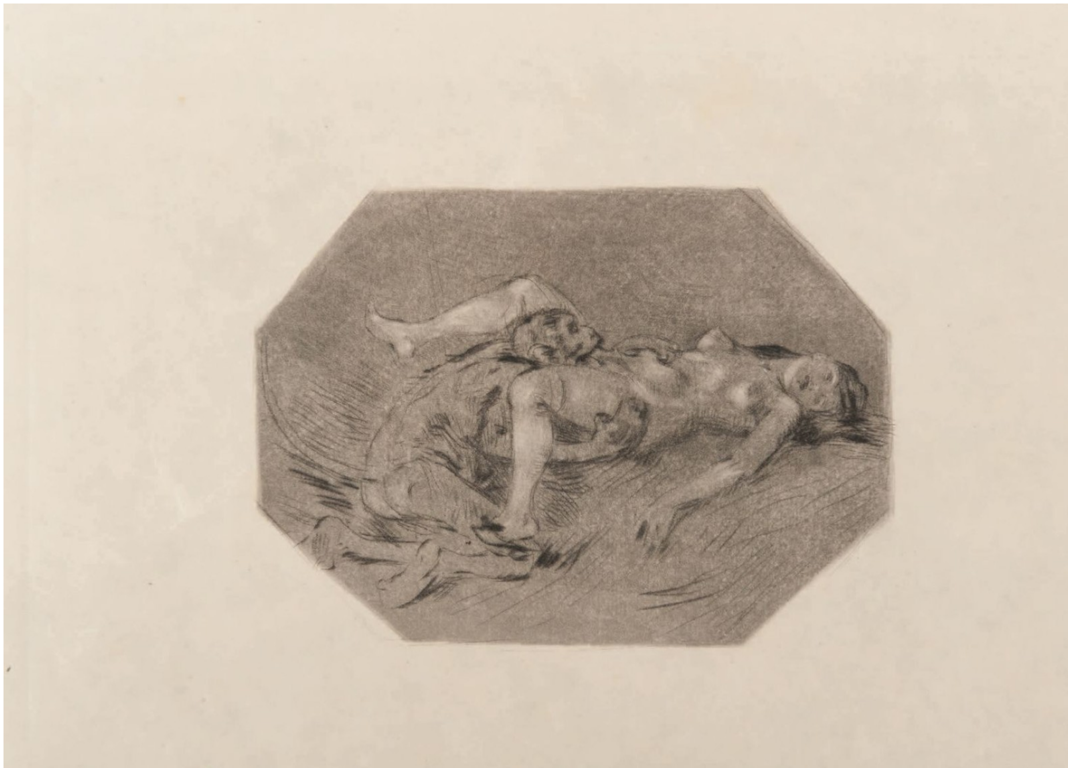

Fig. 45. Simian male fantasies:
Félicien Rops, *Transformismes (Les Darwiniques)*, No. 3 (c.1879)[128]

[125] Ibid., 44.
[126] Browne 2002, vol. 2, 297.
[127] First published in the *Theological Review* and reprinted in: Cobbe 1872.
[128] Image reproduced in: Donald and Munro 2009, 284. Rops' image—a play on Hokusai's famous woodblock 'The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife' (1814)—was 'prompted, so he wrote in an accompanying commentary

Male authors also broached the issue of gender and its role in degeneration. Consider Henry Sumner Maine, the most prominent[129] legal evolutionist[130] most known for the *Ancient Law* (1861), which proposed in standard evolutionist form that all 'progressive societies' uniformly pass through various historical stages of development. Yet Darwin's influence on Maine has long been questioned. Superficially, the influence seems obvious: the *Ancient Law* appeared just two years after the *Origin* and in its account of historical legal development appeared to aim 'to do to jurisprudence' what Darwin had 'done for biology'.[131] Maine even chose the same publisher as Darwin, which some have interpreted (somewhat tenuously) as a deliberate choice.[132] Nevertheless, others have sought to dispel Darwin's influence as conjecture,[133] a family resemblance without evidence—pointing in particular to Maine's drafting of the book prior to the publication of the *Origin*—and emphasising instead the influences of philology and mythology.[134]

However, many have missed Darwin's influence on Maine by focussing on the *Ancient Law* alone. Later work clearly shows Darwin's mark all over the place, even if it was not the original spark. For instance, in the *Dissertations on Law and Custom* (1883), which updated his earlier theory, Darwin is invoked no less than eight times in the discussion of 'primitive' societies. Most pertinent to our discussion here, he uses Darwin explicitly to defend his patriarchal theory of the state and to repudiate the alternative: 'the

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in a notebook, by having come across "an odd volume… by one very savant clerk of the country of Grande Britain called Darwin"; it made, he added, "a horrific dream".' Ibid., 285. This is the third of a series of three *Transformismes*, which together show sexual relations between increasingly evolved creatures: the first shows a mermaid of sorts being fellated by a strange fish creature; the second between a woman and an unusual being made of sexual organs; and, this, the third, between a woman and an ape.

[129] As well as being a towering intellectual figure of the age: 'If, around 1880, an educated person in Britain had been asked to list the most important intellectuals of the previous generation, he or she might well have mentioned, alongside Darwin and John Stuart Mill, the name of Sir Henry Maine.' Bayly 2011.

[130] On which, see: Stein 1980; Elliott 1985.

[131] As his intellectual ally Paul Vinogradoff noted in his *Festschrift* of Maine's work: 'Again and again he draws illustrations in his special domain of jurisprudence from natural science… Rudimentary legal ideas are likened to the primary crust of the earth which forms, as it were, the basis for the geologist's investigations. Of the celebrated exponents of natural science and inductive philosophy Darwin seems to have impressed him most.' Vinogradoff 1904, 11–12.

[132] Feaver 1969, 41. This is something of a flight of the imagination. John Murray was also the prestigious house of Jane Austen and Lord Byron, amongst many others.

[133] As Koskenniemi bluntly puts it: 'There is no evidence that Maine's *Ancient Law*… was influenced by Darwin or Spencer. Its evolutionary outlook can perhaps better be accredited to the historical school and its enthusiastic reception to a *Zeitgeist* that looked for assurance about evolution being on the side of the West.' Koskenniemi 2001, 75.

[134] Vinogradoff too recognises these influences as more important: Vinogradoff 1904, 15.

matriarchal model [which he found] repugnant to basic facts of human nature',[135] yet to which more recent anthropological scholars (such as Morgan and McLennan) had shown to exist. 'Calling on the authority of Darwin,'[136] Maine boldly reasserts his patriarchalism:

> "What were the motives," I asked in my *Ancient Law*, "which originally prompted men to hold together in the family union?" "To such a question," I answered, "Jurisprudence unassisted by other sciences is not competent to give a reply." This anticipation of aid to be expected from biological science has been fulfilled, and it is remarkable that, while the greatest luminary of ancient science invented or adopted the Patriarchal theory, the greatest name in the science of our day is associated with it. Mr. Darwin appears to me to have been conducted by his own observations and studies to a view of the primitive condition of mankind.[137]

Maine then cites at pages length passages from the *Descent* for the idea of the dominant promiscuity of primitive males.[138]

The remedy

But let us return to the Boer War. Beyond the identification of the 'disease' of degeneration in all its manifestations, many also sought to find lessons in the South African catastrophe, and accordingly began to derive their own practical remedies.

The anti-Semite eugenicist Arnold White, for instance, published a comprehensive handbook during the war—the widely influential *Efficiency and Empire* (1901), which aimed to show how to 'fix' the British Empire ahead of the inevitable European general war. If 'degeneration' was the disease, White's remedy was what he called 'national efficiency', which became a widely used buzzword.[139] His recommendations—one package amongst many mooted after the War[140]—ranged through the entirety of British domestic and colonial governance structures and focussed

[135] Feaver 1969, 167.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Maine 1883, 206.
[138] Maine also 'enlists the support of Darwin for his criticisms of mass democracy'. Feaver 1969, 322. He argues for instance that '*Aristocracy, translated into scientific language, is the same thing as the survival of the fittest.* If there be any fragment of truth in the most famous of modern scientific theories, it must mean that the government of the future belongs not to all mankind, but to a portion of it; not to the whole of a community, but to a part selected naturally from the among the rest; not to the Many, but to the Few.' Maine 1881, 1075 emphasis mine. Note that Maine's contributions to the *Gazette* were unsigned, as noted by his biographer: Feaver 1969, 335–336. Feaver again notes that such invocations of Darwin are likely *post hoc* justifications: 'Maine did not strictly speaking *owe* his ideas as a political thinker to Darwin, as we know he was writing similar things in the *Saturday Review* before the appearance of the *Origin of Species* in 1859 or the *Descent of Man* in 1872.' Ibid., 322.
[139] Searle 1971.
[140] Ibid. ch. 2.

on the bourgeoisification of empire by applying a 'business mindset' to élite governance (*à la* New Public Management).[141]

White makes consistent reference to the Boer War as a catalyst for this project: its 'stupidity and incapacity [which] occasioned the loss of thousands of valuable lives',[142] of the need for 'an efficient governing class [which] has been revealed in the failures of the Boer War… the humiliations and failures… [which] will be repeated on a scale immeasurably greater'[143] without action. In White's assessment, while 'colonial statesman… received a severe shock by the revelations of Boer War', to him and other analysts 'nothing has happened during the struggle in South Africa that was not already foreseen by those who had taken to trouble to examine the state of our Departments. These evidences of degeneracy in our Administration were [long] apparent to foreigners (especially to Germany) and to our kinsmen beyond sea.'[144]

Beyond such technocratic fixes, the central remedy for degeneration was to be found in the new 'science' of eugenics. White himself reiterates his earlier calls for radical eugenic solutions to ensure British national fitness.[145] As he put it: 'Navies and Armies are neither better nor worse than the nations that produce them.'[146] This was a fact that could be *learned*. German militarism that one exemplar to follow,[147] however White also draws on another interesting case: 'Although Turkey has been ranked among the dying nations and England nominally occupies the highest pedestal of civilisation, qualities are to be found among the Ottoman peasantry which are rare or wanting in the slums and the insanitary villages of Britain.'[148] Others still looked to 'another paragon of National Efficiency [which] was thought to be *Japan*', whose success against Russia led to 'an extravagant cult of Japan in Britain'[149] and a veneration of *samurai* militarism.

At the Boer War's conclusion, other eugenicists similarly turned their attentions inwards with numerous proposals mooted for 'enhancing' the English imperial race, all

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[141] This demand was common since at least the Crimean War. Ibid., 86–92.
[142] White 1901, 43.
[143] Ibid., 290.
[144] Ibid., 30.
[145] As in another of his 'handbooks' focussed on the city of London: *The Problems of a Great City* (1886), which advocated a range of policies broadly focussed on the policy of the 'sterilization of the unfit', as well as his other argument for the expelling of Jewish populations to a territory carved out of the near East. White 1886; White 1899.
[146] White 1909, 105.
[147] Searle 1971, 54.
[148] White 1909, 105.
[149] Searle 1971, 57.

driven by the belief, as the Oxford philosopher F.C.S. Schiller later put it, that 'the nation which first subjects itself to a rational eugenical discipline is bound to inherit the earth'.[150] Precisely *which* policies should be adopted to this end, however, varied—not only whether 'positive' or 'negative' (i.e. whether to restrict the growth of the 'unfit' or increase the growth of the 'fit'), but also how these policies would should be understood *vis-à-vis* other nations.

Some, like the Bishop of Ripon above, crudely 'advocated population growth [and] argued that, all other things being equal, the Power with the greater manpower resources would have the advantage in international rivalries, and also both the means and the incentive to promote ambitious colonizing ventures… Pearson [for instance] could recall "no case of a race with a very low birth-rate maintaining or creating a position for itself in the assembly of nations".'[151] Here then was the basic eugenic argument for colonisation: to geographically spread the 'superior race'. This populationist position was thus still basically internationalist. *War* would have its role here in the classic Darwinian way: as a productive mechanism, a pressure to keep the breeding stock in its fittest shape. So far so standard.

However, it was also believed by some that over-population might not only increase the 'degenerate' classes, but also 'increased the possibility of war' itself (as Montague Crackanthorpe argued).[152] Here, then, was a 'Darwinian isolationist' view: that modern war *in general* was destructive to the breeding stock, that war was 'dysgenic' (in the eugenic terminology). This was the majority view in British eugenics, and a crucial dividing line that elicited significant debate.[153] The mainstream consistently remained pacifist.[154]

Despite the difference on this question of war, all had as their aim the creation at what Schiller termed 'the Eugenical State': one rooted in 'national *self-selection*' and one so meticulous in design that 'being aware of its liability to err, will guard against error in advance'[155] and thus be impossible to defeat in any international struggle for existence.

[150] Schiller 1910b, 150.
[151] Searle 1976, 117–118.
[152] Ibid., 36.
[153] Ibid., 37. Pearson's bellicosity was the most significant exception. One can see typical selectionism in: Pearson 1901.
[154] Of course, eugenics was a very broad church, encompassing also liberal and socialist elements. This is where we stray into the terrain of Crook's 'peace biology'. Crook 1994.
[155] Schiller 1910a, 24.

The goal was the creation of a technocratic state with a particular view of society 'from above',[156] a perspective that Pearson would later summarise:

> The garden of humanity is very full of weeds, nurture will never transform them into flowers; the eugenist calls upon the rulers of mankind to see that there shall be space in the garden, freed of weeds, for individuals and races of finer growth to develop with the full bloom possible to their species.[157]

Institutionalisation was key to spreading this vision, with Galton (after the lead of Sybil Gotto) founding the Eugenics Education Society in 1907. (Arnold White was one of its members.)[158] These campaigning efforts were extended on a global scale in 1912 with the First International Eugenics Congress, led, no less, by Leonard Darwin (the great man's son) and Winston Churchill.[159]

Such fears over degeneration following failed wars were not confined to Britain alone, but other European states. To refer briefly to but one other example, after its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, France was also rocked by its own crisis of bourgeois self-confidence (compounded by the Paris Commune), which similarly drove fears of national degeneration. These fears were given their most startling visual form[160] in a series of surreal lithographs by the Symbolist artist Odilon Redon, entitled *Les Origines* (1883). Although its individual plates were originally untitled, Redon later affixed the series of eight images, depicting strange embryonic beings, with gnomic titles which together tell a chronological and 'very anxious'[161] tale of humanity's emergence from the murky depths:

> When life was awakening in the depths of obscure matter (1)
> There was perhaps a first vision attempted in the flower (2)
> The misshapen polyp floated on the shores, a sort of smiling and hideous Cyclops (3)
> The Siren, clothed in barbs, emerged from the waves (4)
> The Satyr with the cynical smile (5)
> There were struggles and vain victories (6)

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[156] On this notion more broadly, see of course the classic: Scott 1998.

[157] Pearson 1930, vol. 3, 220. This widely used late-century horticultural metaphor is highlighted in Zygmunt Bauman's discussion of the Holocaust, where he connects the 'gardening' rational-state to industrialised murder: 'Modern genocide, like modern culture in general, is a gardener's job. It is just one of the many chores that people who treat society as a garden need to undertake. If garden design defines its weeds, there are weeds wherever there is a garden. And weeds are to be exterminated. Weeding out is [however] a creative, not a destructive activity… Stalin's and Hitler's victims were not killed in order to capture and colonize the territory they occupied. Often they were killed in a dull, mechanical fashion with no human emotions—hatred included—to enliven it. They were killed because they did not fit, for one reason or another, the scheme of a perfect society. Their killing was not the work of destruction, but creation.' Bauman 1989, 92. Discussed in: Brantlinger 2003, 11–12.

[158] For a good discussion of the institutionalisation of British eugenics, see: Searle 1976 ch. 2.

[159] Geulen 2017.

[160] This is the contextual interpretation of Redon's images in: Larson 2005.

[161] Lucy 2009, 18. See also the discussion of Redon in: Donald and Munro 2009, 154–158.

The impotent wing did not lift the animal into that black space (7)
And man appeared, questioning the earth from which he emerged and which attracts him, he made his way toward sombre brightness (8)

Fig. 46. Surreal beginnings:
Odilon Redon, *Les Origines* (1883), Plates 1–8[162]

In their contorted and ambiguous morphologies—half-nature, half-human—Redon's fantastical creatures show not only a reckoning with the primordialism which Darwin's theory foisted onto the European imagination, but also the anxiety of a *renewed* deformation: of the curse of degeneration.

Suffice to say, the idea of degeneration and its influence reveals two key things. First, as already argued, it is again evidence of the profound holism that Darwinism implied. Even the British Empire—the undisputed world-superpower—was riven by a

[162] Reproduced in: Donald and Munro 2009, 156–157. Very similar forms to Redon's can be seen in the work of the Austrian Symbolist Alfred Kubin, discussed *vis-à-vis* Darwinism in: Hollein and Kort 2009 ch. 4.

paranoia that a small war in the colonies might signify a broader national decline into a cadaverous state. Secondly, the diverse reception of this idea in eugenic thought—which included what I have called 'Darwinian isolationists'—further exemplifies the diversity of the Darwinian idiom in international thought, and of the complex influence that it had on British imperial thought far beyond the crude 'Darwinian imperialism' caricature.

Rhodes's 'Darwinian spectacles'

> 'I would annex the planets if I could…'[163]
> — Cecil John Rhodes

Of course, some individuals *do* exemplify this caricature, and it is worth considering them too. So far, I have drawn considerably on journalistic accounts, but what of the actual day-to-day exercise of empire?

Here, let us turn to Cecil John Rhodes, whose infamous role in colonising South Africa and 'Rhodesia' (now Zambia and Zimbabwe) is well-known. Yet Rhodes's justificatory invocations of evolution is certainly worth comment. As Galbraith argues: 'Rhodes was not a thinker; he was a doer. He appropriated the ideas of others rather than conceiving ideas himself',[164] with his most significant appropriation that of Darwinism.

As the *Review of Reviews* editor William T. Stead (one of the founders and leaders of the pro-Boer Stop the War Committee)[165] commented in a volume of Rhodes's last will and testament (based on his own conversations with Rhodes, as well as information others who knew Rhodes well), Rhodes was by character 'a Darwinian in search of God… He was a Darwinian; he believed in evolution… He did not surrender his agnostic position, but he decided it was at least an even chance that there might be a God… [Yet] he believes in the gospel of evolution, of the survival of the fittest, of progress by natural

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[163] Recounted in: Rhodes and Stead 1902, 190.

[164] Galbraith 1973, 173.

[165] Stead's friendship to Rhodes is an interesting one. His anti-imperialist politics were initially in strong antithesis to Rhodes's, which ought to render his account of Rhodes fairly reliable, or at least not hagiographic. Yet, at the same time, Stead was attracted by Rhodes's magnetic pull and began to think of Rhodes 'almost as a Nietzschean superman, bursting the usual bonds of convention and morality.' As a result, Stead then drifted 'to a view that only a morally managed empire was guarantee against the world's white adventurers slavers and confidence-men… grabbing everything in Africa and the South Seas.' Crook 1999, 650. On Stead's desire to 'save Rhodes from himself' *vis-à-vis* the Boer War, see: Baylen 1959.

selection.'[166] Indeed, Rhodes's conception of providence was *through* Darwinian mechanisms:

> What Mr Rhodes was after was something older and more universal. He found it in the doctrine of evolution… What is the distinctive feature of that doctrine? The perfection of the species, attained by the elimination of the unfit… The most capable species survives, the least capable goes to the wall. The perfecting of the fittest species among the animals, or of races among men, and then the conferring upon the perfected species or race title-deeds of the future; that seemed to Mr. Rhodes, through his Darwinian spectacles, the way in which God is governing His world, has governed it, and will continue to govern it.[167]

For Rhodes, 'the struggle for existence being recognised as the favourite instruments of the Divine Ruler, the question imminently arose as to *which race* at the present time seems most likely to be Divine instrument in carrying out the Divine idea over the whole of this planet.'[168] The reader ought not to be surprised that he considered the 'white race' to have been chosen by the divinity of natural selection, on the rather gerrymandered criterion of geographical command:

> There are various races of mankind—the Yellow, the Black, the Brown, and the White. If the test be numerical, the Yellow race comes first. But if the test be the area of the world and the power to control its destinies, the primacy of the White race is indisputable… the White exclusively occupies Europe, practically occupies the Americas, is colonising Australia, and is dominating Asia. In the struggle for existence the White race had unquestionably come out on top.[169]

Rhodes's central idea was thus a struggle for existence between *races* (rather than 'nations' or states). This drew on the central fact in Darwin's theory (most emphasised by Spencerians) that 'competition existed within a single species and not just between distinct species'.[170]

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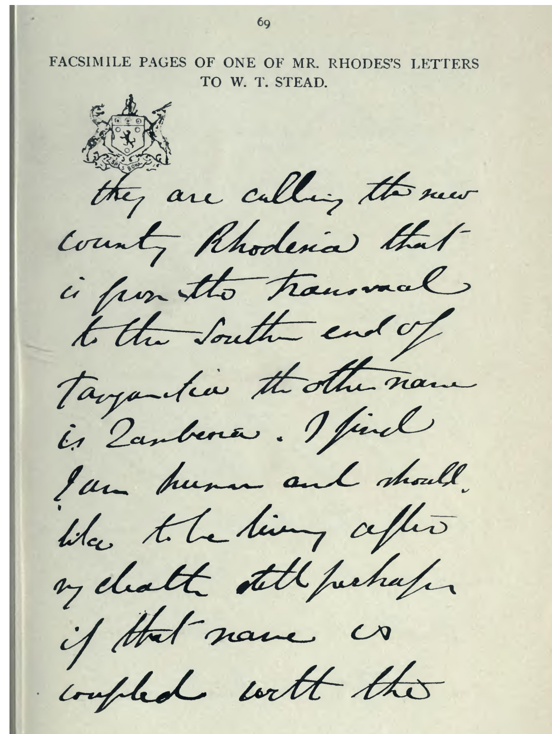
[166] Rhodes and Stead 1902, 88–93. The term 'agnostic' was coined in 1869 by that great Darwinian, Huxley.
[167] Ibid., 95.
[168] Ibid. emphasis mine.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Harlow and Carter 2003, vol. 2: The Scramble for Africa, 86.



69

FACSIMILE PAGES OF ONE OF MR. RHODES'S LETTERS TO W. T. STEAD.

they are calling the new
country Rhodesia that
is from the transvaal
to the South end of
Tanganika the other name
is Zambesia. I find
I am human and should
like to be living after
my death still perhaps
if that name is
coupled with the

Figs. 47. and 48. 'Rhodes the Colossus', and a letter from Rhodes to W.T. Stead: 'They are calling the new country Rhodesia…'[171]

The imperial project for Rhodes, then, was on the one hand a liberal, civilising one, by 'the most cultured specimens of the civilised race'[172] for the less: 'Progress will consist in bringing mankind up to their level.'[173] Yet this was also a Darwinian conception, for as Rhodes himself put it: 'the African natives, as weaker races manifestly unfit to govern the land they hold, must sooner or later give way before the irresistible advance of the stronger white people. It is the old doctrine of the survival of the fittest—a brutal theory, no doubt, but *one impossible to alter or amend*.'[174] In the mechanics of empire, Darwinism offered perfect ideational fuel.

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[171] Cartoon from: The Rhodes Colossus: Striding from Cape Town to Cairo 1892. Letter from: Rhodes and Stead 1902, 69.

[172] Rhodes and Stead 1902, 95.

[173] Ibid. For Rhodes, their defining superior characteristics were, as per Darwin in the *Descent*, their moral faculties, with the destiny of 'the English race' down to its commitments to the principles of 'justice, liberty, and peace'.

[174] Cited in: Hensman 1901, 110 emphasis mine.

Anti-Darwinism in the *Westminster Review*

> 'O Evolution, what crimes are committed in thy name!'[175]
> — C.O. Ovington (1900)

Many South African settler colonists shared this Rhodesian vision, including earlier mentioned names such as F.C. Selous and Mary Elizabeth Barber, who both stressed notions of intra-racial colonial competition. Many accordingly hailed the spread and triumph of the 'Anglo-Saxon' race.

Yet Rhodes's project was also met with opposition from other settler colonists, many of whom explicitly invoked the mantle of Darwinism in their critiques, and whose polemics can be found across the periodicals of the day. These, then, are those main characters of 'Crook's myth' (although, as we have seen, they *were* arguing against an existent Darwinian discourse and not merely shouting at a mirage in the mist). As we shall see, it was precisely these liberal *opponents* of British policy in South Africa who drew most on the 'intra-/extra-European' distinction of the civilisational standard; they were liberal civilisationists arguing against a Darwinian naturalism.

One example is the anti-imperialist journalist and Manchester School adherent Goldwin Smith, who compared Britain's South African behaviour with Britain's historical policies in Ireland, thereby claiming that the Empire was more 'savage' than 'civilised'. In Ireland, as elsewhere, there was 'a perpetual border war, as savage as that between the settlers of the Cape and the Kaffirs, or that between the American frontier-man and the red Indian. The religious quarrel was and has always been secondary in importance to the struggle of the races for the land.'[176] Such was the same in that space of endless existential competition between Britain, the natives, and the Boers.

Responding in the *Westminster Review*—that nexus of Victorian conversation and central to the spread and popularisation of 'Darwinism', the very term of which was coined in the *Review*'s pages[177]—the Irish nationalist politician William Joseph Corbet drew out Smith's argument more explicitly: 'What is happening at the present time in South Africa [indeed] bears so strong a family likeness to what happened with regard to

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[175] Ovington 1900, 411.
[176] Smith 1878, 139. This use of historical analogy was typical: 'Obsessed with decoding historical experience, the Victorians endlessly scoured the past for lessons about how best to comprehend and navigate their world.' Bell 2016, 119.
[177] In Huxley's substantial review of the *Origin*: Huxley 1860.

the so-called conquest of Ireland that the latter may be regarded as the progenitor of the African horror.'[178] In such cases, it is 'the usual fate of the dwarf who goes to battle with the giant':[179]

> Nature, to a great extent, fore-ordained the highest destiny of the larger island [England]; to at least an equal extent she fore-ordained the sad destiny of the smaller island [Ireland]… That the stronger nation is entitled by the law of force to conquer its weaker neighbour and to govern the conquered in its own interest is a doctrine which civilized morality abhors. But in the days before civilized morality, *in the days when the only law was that of natural selection*, to which philosophy by a strange counter-revolution seems now inclined to return, the smaller island was almost sure to be conquered by the possessors of the larger.[180]

Darwinian rules, in this argument, had a role to play in *past eras* of colonial conquering, but it was not fit for justifying the bellicose behaviour of modern, supposedly 'civilised' powers.[181] This was an argument that seemed to echo Bagehot's, but one that rejected his acceptance of war even within the industrial age. Whilst Smith and others were willing to concede the scientific truth of Darwinism, they maintained its indignity as a moral code—calling 'for the recognition of the whole nature of man, including that part of it which has hitherto been deemed spiritual, as well as the bodily part, which Darwinian Evolution explains.'[182]

A similar argument was presented by Ramsden Balmforth, a Unitarian minister from Huddersfield who spent most of his life in South Africa. Also in the *Westminster Review*, in a piece entitled 'Darwinism and Empire' (1901), Balmforth co-opted the Darwinian idiom against imperialism.[183] Despite the fundamental ambiguity of Darwinian concepts when applied to ethics and politics, he argues, these had become so widespread that, 'while on the Sunday evening, after Church… [the everyday man] will amiably approve the doctrine that we must do unto others as we would have do unto us, on the Monday morning, *especially in time of war*, he will boldly affirm that Might is Right, and that in business every one must take care of himself… the fittest only surviving. *And so Darwin and the revolutionists are fathered with a doctrine which they would have been the first to*

[178] Corbet 1901, 279–280.
[179] Smith 1878, 140.
[180] Ibid. emphasis mine.
[181] Indeed, the very existence of war itself was to be lamented: 'Alas! after nearly nineteen centuries of Christianity, we have war, apparently on a larger scale than ever'. Smith 1889, 230. See also: Smith 1869. Despite Smith's anti-imperialism and pacificism, it ought to be noted that he was also an anti-Semite.
[182] Smith 1907, 195.
[183] Indeed, was fond of using the Darwinian metaphor widely, as in explaining the history of religion: Balmforth 1898.

repudiate.'[184] This notion of wartime as a kind of 'state of exception' to typical Christian morality is a common attack of Balmforth's: 'in times of conflict, you will say, morality goes by the board. Then strength, cunning, intelligence are the determining conditions.'[185]

Yet, contra Roosevelt, when it came to nations, unlike individuals, extermination was, he argued, impossible: 'a nation—in this stage of the world's history—can never be exterminated.'[186] The only remit of the Darwinian, then, was to prove that imperialism tended to lead to the cultivation of superior *individuals*, not nations (and, in this way, his argument aligns with the eugenic isolationists). 'Can it be said', he asks, 'that either in South Africa or in China our policy is such as will promote the survival of the highest type of character? Can it be said that the oppression… of the Transvaal Government was a greater evil than the war itself has turned out to be?… We have to justify our aggression, or we stand condemned before the world as attempting to promote the survival of a low filibustering type of character.'[187] His answer is conclusively in the negative: 'that our war-policy in South Africa will not stand the test of fitness which natural selection itself imposes',[188] but rather 'is a decided set-back to the moral development of the race.'[189]

Co-opting the Darwinian idiom, Balmforth thus asserts that the British are themselves actually working against nature: 'unless we can justify ourselves if we continue our aggressive policy, we shall be condemned by nature also, for her laws will now allow the low and unjust type to survive. We may say we have now got so far that we cannot turn back; but nature will not allow no excuses of that sort.'[190] Success, he contends, again with the isolationists, was domestically Darwinian but internationally pacific: 'It is surely better for humanity, far better for the reputation for the reputation of our own civilisation, that we should restrict ourselves to purely peaceful and persuasive methods of policy, letting each national or race ideal win its way by its own inherent fitness to survive.'[191]

Again in the pages of the *Westminster Review*, in 'War and Evolution' (1900) C.O. Ovington argued in a similar vein to Balmforth, lamenting the new fashion:

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[184] Balmforth 1902, 1 emphasis mine.
[185] Ibid., 3.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid., 4.
[188] Ibid., 6.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid., 4.
[191] Ibid., 10. On his contrasting Kantian ethical position, see: Balmforth 1911.

> Now, in England, at the end of the nineteenth century, in the name of that Evolution which science has made plain, some of our literary "Jingoes" are writing of war as being not simply a passing affliction, but a glorious and inevitable mode of progress, sanctioned of old and for ever by a law of nature. People such as these have heard the already trite expressions "battle of life" and "survival of the fittest"; perhaps they have read Darwin's works… and then they hastily assume that because *even among men calling themselves civilised* the fierce fight with gun and bayonet has been waged in past and present times, it must and ought to be so waged throughout the future. Consequently here we find one who ventures to write that "the day of universal peace will be the day of universal death" because "war, as every student of evolution is aware, is the law of the universe".[192]

Against this Ovington argues, again with Corbet and Bagehot's historicism (he rehashes Spencer's 'militancy to industrialism' argument), that such unfiltered Darwinism is empirically false: 'Evolution… has no doubt necessitated frequent wars *in the past*, and does now necessitate severe economic competition; but it does not necessitate everlasting war of the military type.'[193] 'Competition' in 'civilised' society is thus, in classic liberal form, confined solely to capital, not to interstate war;[194] 'the struggle for existence among nations' is the preserve of 'primitive times'.[195] Ethically, full-throttled militarism is 'more than ghastly, it is preposterous… worthy only of schoolboys',[196] and 'though defensive war is justifiable as a last resort, offensive war… can be justified no longer.'[197]

Smith, Balmforth, and Ovington's arguments thus all exemplify the utility of the civilisational category not (as is often assumed) for Darwinian imperialists, but for *anti*-imperialists. By equating Darwinian principles with a bygone barbarism, they sought to manipulate the idiomatic features of Darwinian internationalism *against itself*—to prove that natural selection selected the peaceable, not the warlike.

Afro-Darwinisms

This manipulability of Darwinism is even more obvious when we look at the periphery through a properly pericentric lens. The largest oversight in all work dealing with this topic is, after all, the lack of attention to how native populations in the colonial periphery

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[192] Ovington 1900, 411 emphasis mine.
[193] Ibid., 411–412 emphasis mine.
[194] Indeed, with Spencer, he argues his Kantian argument that war can be eradicated by the cultivation of 'higher ethical feelings'. Ibid., 412.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.

themselves engaged with Darwinism. So far, we have focussed only on metropole commentators, colonial administrators, and settler colonists. It is thus worth closing the chapter by turning to colonial subjects themselves. These were those closest to the theorised 'extinctions' of a Darwinian world, a precarity which black Africans were fully cognisant of—so how did they respond to the Darwinian idiom?

There is an obvious challenge in recovering these discourses, which is that natives' writings are scant and poorly preserved compared to the publications of settler colonists (a similar dynamic to the poor preservation of women's international thought). As earlier, I focus here on newspaper sources—this time, those local newspapers in which the writing of native leaders (if not the genuine opinion of the whole local population) can be found.

As elsewhere, there were of course many who attacked Darwinian internationalism as an ideology that was equated with the Rhodesian vision of racial struggle, imperial dogma, and the 'extinction discourse'. Such critics, again as elsewhere (e.g. in China and Japan), espoused a plurality of alternative competing ideologies.

However, worth closely looking at are those black thinkers who instead *embraced* Darwinian internationalism, but re-pivoted it for anti-colonial ends. Some did so by adapting aspects of its racialised interpretations. Others still fully embraced the logic of Darwinian internationalism precisely to articulate the precarious condition of a distinct 'black race' against their oppressors, just as the Japanese and the Chinese in the semi-periphery did. Indeed, as we shall see, such peripheral Darwinians drew precisely on the Japanese as a model exemplar for the project of black emancipation.

An unlikely alliance?

The embrace of Darwinism by some black anti-colonial leaders might appear surprising, yet it was a phenomenon mirrored in the reception of Darwinism by black intellectuals beyond the periphery. For example, despite what one might expect, many late-century black intellectual leaders in the United States had a rather ambiguous relationship to Darwinism. As Eric D. Anderson has pointed out, whilst they did not make it a central plank of their thought, most of the black theorists of the period (such as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. Du Bois) not only 'did not find Darwin's

ideas particularly threatening',[198] but actually employed some Darwinian concepts in their work. Many aspects of Darwinism stood out as powerful for these theorists' articulations of black emancipation. One was its emphasis on the 'struggle' between groups, an idea which could easily describe the situation of black peoples in the Americas *vis-à-vis* their white oppressors. Linked to this was Darwinism's emphasis on the *progress* of these groups over time, which allowed for an optimistic articulation of non-whites being not, as the polygenists had argued, 'stuck' as contemporary remnants of 'degenerated' peoples, nor doomed to extinction, but rather capable of development and improvement. Further appealing was the monogenic aspect of Darwin's theory, which not only mooted a human common descent, but one that actually began in Africa.[199]

In the periphery, others made similar moves to use Darwinism to describe the fate of the native peoples in terms other than inevitable degeneration, exploitation, or destruction. One tactic, as with Silvio Romero in Latin America, was to reject the whole idea of miscegenation as a form of 'ethnic pollution' (*à la* the degenerationist fear of a 'tropicalised' white race) and to instead re-pitch it as a phenomenon of beneficial evolutionary adaptation, thereby neutralising the perceived threat. Thus, as one commentator in *Indian Opinion* wrote:

> We do not need to recall the remarkable number of geniuses who have been of mixed-blood. The very fact that the human race has advanced in the last few thousand years, as all anthropologists are agreed, strongly reinforces the belief that the most general race mixture is beneficial to humanity and leads, not to reversion of ancestral type, but to the maximum of progress.[200]

The reason for the dire condition of non-whites across the world was thus, in this view, not some innate or natural fact—'science… denies the existence of any *rational* basis for a fundamental differentiation of human varieties'—but rather the result of deliberate institutionalised exploitation: 'where considerably different and clearly marked varieties of mankind and living side by side (as in America), the temptation for the more developed to keep the more backward in permanent subjection seems, indeed, to be almost irresistible.'[201]

[198] Anderson 1999, 247.
[199] Ibid., 248.
[200] Race Prejudice 1909.
[201] Ibid.

Others went further than just arguing that racial mixing was desirable (i.e. the erasure of racial difference through combination), instead accepting the notion of a distinctive 'black race' but seeking to articulate through Darwinism the means for its *separate* survival and independence. Such theorists thus accepted a kind of Rhodesian logic of inter-racial struggle—or, as Du Bois himself put it, the premise that 'the history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history'[202]—yet argued that the '*black*' and not the 'white' race might nevertheless come out on top.

This response was at the heart of a kind of resistant, anti-colonial 'Afro-Darwinism', one which echoed the Eastern variations in the semi-periphery. The central impetus here, as in China and Japan, was to use Darwinism both to offer a description of the precarious condition of the so-called 'black race', and also to provide a solution to this precarity.

Thus, in 1911, the anti-colonial African nationalist publication *The Lagos Weekly Record* (under John Payne Jackson's leadership) ran a series of editorials asserting that 'the West African' is not somehow threatened to extinction, and that 'those who are so keen on the colour question and would draw the inference that the colour of a man's skin denotes superiority of some sort, have [n]ever considered the matter from the standpoint of adaptation or as to what colour signifies as far as physical endurance and the survival of the fittest is concerned.'[203] In such terms, the natives' fate appears more sanguine: 'Seeing that the colouration imparted to the skin through the tissue cells serves as a protection to man against climatic effects, we would suppose that the merits of such coloration would be judged by the measure of its usefulness to man rather than by the complexion itself. It is well known that the Negro with his deeply dyed skin can thrive in any climate… And in spite of all that may be urged to the contrary, such colour equipment spells the fittest to survive.'[204]

[202] Anderson 1999, 250.
[203] The Colour Question 1911.
[204] Ibid. See also: The Relation between Climate and Racial Skin Colour 1911.

Akinwande Savage and the Japanese polestar

> 'She would admonish me not to let my mind fly too far, too fast into such things, lest I couldn't bring it back down to earth, because, as she was fond of saying and my father was too, "Outside the most exalted leaders of our race what sort of life do you think there is for us if our heads stay too far up in them clouds?"'[205]
>
> — John Keene, in 'The Aeronauts'

Perhaps the most vivid example of this anti-colonial Afro-Darwinism can be seen in an address (delivered *in absentia*) by a Nigerian schoolteacher—a certain Dr Richard Akinwande Savage, also eminent physician, journalist, and conservative Nigerian politician[206]—to the pupils of the New High Class School 'on the occasion of their (September) Quarterly Function 1912'[207] and published in the pages of *The Nigerian Chronicle* for all to read.

The address begins with an ominous valediction: 'My Dear Boys, I must congratulate you and your Principal on the headway your school is now making in Lagos. It is a great work your Principal has undertaken… to train and prepare youths in Southern Africa *for the struggle in the battle of life*.'[208] The theme of the talk, a classic commencement theme, is 'the question of OUR DUTIES—the duties we owe to ourselves, our country, our people, and our race'.[209] Black Africans, Savage concedes, are facing enormous difficulties: 'We natives of West Africa are never more in need than we are at present of leaders—men of character who will apply themselves diligently and seriously to the solution of the many difficult problems that now confront us as a race… We depend on you boys to take up the cause and advance the interests of our race.'[210]

For this leadership, there was a model for the boys to follow, one to be found in a distant land. Just as Tagore was seen dancing on hearing of the events of 1905, so too could Africans take heart from a familiar tale: 'You, no doubt, have been told a lot about the [success of the] Japanese… There are persons who no doubt will tell you that you must never compare yourself with the Japanese; that they are different from you in

[205] Keene 2016, 221.
[206] Akinwande Savage was a key figure in the People's Union, established in 1908 as a conservative civic organisation which campaigned to stop the Water Rate Act, which they argued would benefit wealthy Europeans whilst being paid for by poor natives.
[207] Savage 1912, 4.
[208] Ibid. emphasis mine.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid., 5.

everything—in their history, system of government &c.'[211] Such cultural-civilisational comparisons, however, cloud the truth of the matter:

> There are differences, I admit, between us and the Japanese in certain respects; but we resemble them in one or two essentials. The Japanese are a coloured race with peculiar customs and manners of their own as we have and were confronted some 60 years ago with difficulties similar to those with which we are now confronted viz: how to meet the ever advancing march of European civilization and preserve without being submerged or emasculated our individuality as a race. The Japanese have solved that problem for themselves. They remain an Eastern race with their own peculiar customs and manners to which they hold tenaciously; but THANKS TO HER SONS EDUCATED IN THE WAYS OF THE WEST *Japan has learnt to woo and win Science*; and by her aid has marched to the foremost place among the progressive races of the world.[212]

'What', Savage then asks, 'is the secret of Japanese success?':

> Mr. Henri Bovel, a Dutch author tells us what the secret is in his recently published book. "About three years ago" says M. Bovel, "I, with a Chinese friend, visited a private Chinese school somewhere in Java, and opened the desk of an urchin scarcely ten years old. I picked up his exercise book of compositions and what I read there I may copy here without any comment, so exact does it reflect the actual situation. He wrote:—'Small Japan defeated big China. Afterwards small Japan defeated big Russia. How was it able to accomplish this? You think by its ships and soldiers. But that is not so. It defeated Russia by its knowledge, by its education. It defeated the stupid Chinese and Russian soldiers because education is so good in Japan; because the Japanese people are instructed in the sciences, and are no longer ignorant…'"[213]

The Japanese exemplar thus becomes a model for the peripheral peoples of Africa to follow. They should emulate the emulators, central amongst which was to similarly seize the Promethean flame from their oppressors: 'WHAT WE NATIVES OF WEST AFRICA WANT is, in my opinion, INSTRUCTION IN THE SCIENCES, and when we are instructed and know, there will be no limit to our possibilities and no power on earth can stop our progress. *We natives of West Africa have not yet learned to devote attention to the study of Nature as she exists around us…* Science is ever advancing and the treasures of truth to be extracted from Nature are endless. We depend largely on the white races of mankind to labour and discover and supply for us the facts of Nature and until we rouse ourselves from our lethargy we shall ever remain, in my opinion, one of the backward races of mankind.'[214]

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[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid. emphasis mine.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid. emphasis mine.

For now, the students must brace: 'What shall our boys do for their living? This is a difficult question now-a-days for us black people. The world is not free and open for us black people to roam. The white race alone possess [*sic*] that privilege…'[215] Before the future could open up, before the project of liberation, the first step was to at least face the sober reality: 'I should be satisfied if you boys in beginning life will realize that you have fearful odds to face in the struggle for existence even in your own country. To my mind it serves no useful purpose bewailing and bemoaning our fate all day long. We must make up our mind TO ACT.'[216] One first action for the boys must be to take up their vocations with vigour—for 'efficiency is the keynote of European success and we Africans must make it our duty to learn and to use the knowledge gained to extract for ourselves more and more from the inexhaustible store of the treasures of nature'[217]—which was to be determined in their attitude to life: '[to] make it our serious duty, handicapped in many respects though we be*, to engage strenuously in the struggle for existence…* With our faith and trust in the Almighty and our brains and muscles active and devoted to work, we should be able to command respect, demand and take our proper place under our own African Sun.'[218]

In Savage's address, then, we see the espousal of a form of resistant anti-colonial Afro-Darwinism, one led by a driven, educated African élite. (These were also the two main 'themes of [Booker T.] Washington's mature ideology—the necessity of struggle and self-help.'[219]) Central to this vision was the Japanese experience, which was to be a

[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid., 6.
[218] Ibid. emphasis mine.
[219] Anderson 1999, 249. It was not only native leaders who embraced such notions of 'self-help' but some white colonists too, often as an excuse for a lack of relent in their exploitation, and as a form of victim-blaming and respectability politics. Thus, as one commentator in the *Nigerian Chronicle* sneeringly put it: 'The West African must be brought to realise the seriousness of the position that is developing around him, steadily and remorselessly simply and *solely because of his apathy*… To us Europeans it is disgusting to observe the way in which the West African invariably begs for help or kindness from the other races who are beating him in the struggle for existence… desperate cases require desperate cures… Why does not the West African *cure himself*? Correspondence originally from 'Mr Maye', and cited in: Self-Cure as a National Ideal 1915, 2 emphasis mine. As with Savage, this 'self-cure' was to be élite-led, but in a negative sense: 'There are rich Africans in plenty. There are clever Africans—who have helped themselves—in plenty… Why do not those men constitute themselves as leaders in a great national crusade for raising the standard of their own race rather than… ask superior races of today to show a more forbearing spirit…? …We Europeans in spite of our part in the great struggle for existence frequently come across instances showing how far behind even we are compared with you Africans—but we don't whine to you for help or forbearance or elevation!' Ibid. It is therefore the victims who were to blame: '…why can't you Black men stop playing yourselves and your own people into our hands; stop your wickedness to one another; stop your selfish habits; wake from your sleep of ignorance… So long as

model or template for the weaker nations to follow. They were a kind of mirror image to the Fuegians or Tasmanians, and a potent exemplar for the possibilities of peripheral power. Japan had proven was that it *was* possible to survive as a distinctive race: as a (white) commentator put it in 1921, 'in everything that she borrowed from Western civilisation she possessed a peculiar method of *Japanising*… she is [still] intensely native or Japanese to the core. Thus it will be seen that she has borrowed from Western civilisation only such things as would ensure respect to her from the great world-powers or render her immune from foreign aggression: but in all other respects she is decidedly native… In short, she has imposed the veneer of Western culture upon an underlying strata of old Japanese culture.'[220] What the natives of Africa had to realise was that they could do the same: that the 'Africanisation of things Western and not wholesale adoption of Western civilisation or the Westernisation of things African is the key to progressive development in West Africa.'[221] Indeed, 'there can be no question that… the aspirations of the educated natives to realise the law of social expansion are identical with those very motives that fired the ambition of Japan.'[222]

Many white colonists were profoundly aware of this valorisation of Japan, with another noting fearfully that: 'Specially since the defeat of Russia by Japan, Asiatics have come to feel that their lot may not be always in obscurity and subservience…'[223] This is why the colonists themselves sought to seize upon the Japanese example, as we saw earlier in the veneration of *samurai* militarism as a means to stave off degeneration. Others desperately tried to shake off the fear of a rising Africa by pointing out the differences between the colonies and Japan: 'it has been objected in some quarters that it is not possible for the West African colonies to progress after the manner of Japan because the latter is an independent state and the former are merely subject dependencies.'[224] Yet this notion, the author concedes, could not be entirely accepted, 'for, excluding the case of India, which is similarly situated as the West African colonies, it is quite possible for eclecticism [in political forms] and progressive development to proceed side by side.'[225]

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you persist in these practices we cannot help beating you down in the struggle for existence… All you have to do is first stop your own part of the game.' Ibid., 6.

[220] Social Evolution in West Africa 1921, 6.

[221] Ibid., 7.

[222] Ibid., 6.

[223] The Race Problem 1909.

[224] Social Evolution in West Africa 1921, 7.

[225] Ibid.

It is for this reason that the author—a white colonist—argues for re-emphasising 'the function [that] Imperialism [plays] in the evolution of society in West Africa',[226] *viz.* the liberal ideal of imperial paternalism.

Yet, to turn to 'the case of India', it is important to close by noting that *not all* peripheral thinkers accepted a vision like Savage's. Let us return here to Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet whose celebration of the Japanese victory over the Russians closed the previous chapter. Based on this, one might expect Tagore to be enthused by the Japanese experience. In order to ascertain his feelings on the matter, Tagore visited the Japanese countryside in 1916, 'to study the people of Japan'[227] and assess their newfound freedom. In a concluding address at Osaka, the poet begins by noting surprise at his warm reception in the country:

> I had a dismal idea that poetry could have very little expectation from young nations who have to compete with others having a longer start and a more hardened conscience, who have to make up for their lost time for having come late in the arena of the modern age… Surely natural selection has a vigorous contempt for all poets—who are born neither with the protective convenience of a tough skin nor canine teeth of formidable ferocity. The traditional harps of the poet are an encumbrance in the race of life, and the struggle for existence runs its course triumphantly trampling upon all rhymes and rhythms under its ruthless feet. Therefore it was a great relief to be treated in a manner that convinced me that your hearts still have room for the green of the earth and the blue of the sky—and your cherry blossoms will still have their chance in their competition with shrill machines and brand new inventions of this age of the corrugated iron sheds, gramophones, and cinematograph shows.[228]

Whilst Tagore admits the genius of their success in the struggle for existence, what he ultimately learnt from the Japanese was the potential costs at which this independence had been secured (and here he echoed the fears of many Japanese, including Oka Asajirō). The problem, Tagore argued, was that while cherry blossoms and their ilk might *for now* 'still have their chance in their competition with shrill machines', this was not guaranteed forever. In the long run, the traditional way of life may well have to be sacrificed in the embrace of a mechanised, homogenising urban modernisation, against which Tagore contrasted a more desirable pastoral, rural, authentically 'native' form of life.[229] The Japanese had secured their position only in exchange for:

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[226] Ibid.
[227] Tagore on His Visit to Japan 1916, 173.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Mishra 2012, 224. This commitment to a primitive pre-industrialism was also famously pushed by Gandhi in *Hind Swaraj*. Ibid., 226–229.

> …the stupendous unreality of this modern civilisation, always changing its shapes and shifting its course, furiously riding upon the dust-storm of unmeaning restlessness, scattering it about in the wind shreds, of things torn and mangled, decaying and dead… The whirlwind of modern civilisation has caught Japan as it has the rest of the world, and a stranger like myself cannot help feeling on landing in your country that what I see before me is the temple of the modern age.[230]

A mechanised modernity thus threatened to erase the very distinctiveness which independence ought to secure: the organic nation. As Marx had argued, industrialisation threatened to flatten all locality, a fear that Tagore shared: 'This is not Japan. Its features are the same as they are in London, in Paris, in Berlin, or in the manufacturing centres of America.'[231] This was the paradox for the peripheral Darwinians: it was only through emulation of their oppressors that the oppressed could escape their condition. Was this good enough? Should they not wish for better than a mechanised horror, a horror which was, by then, in 1916, already engulfing the world?

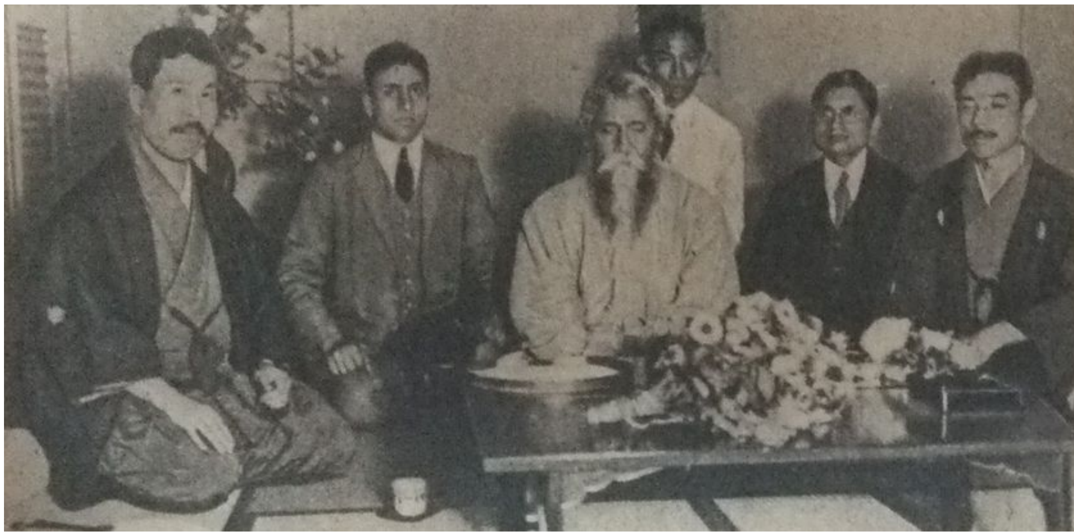

Fig. 49. Tagore in Japan, 1916[232]

[230] Tagore on His Visit to Japan 1916, 173.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Image from: Wikimedia Commons.

Closing remarks

The reception of Darwinian internationalism in the colonial periphery further reinforces the basic argument of this thesis. Namely, that this was a highly flexible idiom indeed. In the colonial periphery, there was no single, simple version of Darwinism, no 'imperial Darwinism' as Crook and others monolithically construct. Instead, the forms of Darwinism espoused by outside commentators, colonial administrators, and settler colonists varied widely, being in turns confident and paranoid, holistic and dualistic, imperial and anti-imperial.

Indeed, as we saw, neither was Darwinism merely the preserve of the white Europeans, but also proved an idiom worthy of embrace by anti-colonial theorists too, who saw in Darwin's theory and the case of Japan the promise of an imminently better future for the oppressed peoples of the world. Ultimately, such hopes were in vain. As we shall now close with, all would go under as Darwinism's very vision of universal existential destruction was finally vindicated.

CONCLUSION

> 'Every human generation has its own illusions with regard to civilization; some believe that they are taking part in its upsurge, others that they are witnesses of its extinction. In fact, it always both flames up and smoulders and is extinguished, according to the place and angle of view.'[1]
>
> — Ivo Andrić (1945)

> 'But other historians said that the twentieth century actually started earlier, that it began with the industrial revolution that disrupted the traditional world and that all this was the fault of locomotives and steamships. And yet others said that the twentieth century began when it was discovered that people come from apes and some people said they were less related to apes because they had developed more quickly…'[2]
>
> — Patrik Ouředník (2001)

And so, the longed-for existential moment arrived, in the coda to this story, with the unimagined yet utterly foreseen catastrophe of 1914. The pursuit of selective war did *not* lead to the refinement of the species and the emergence of a new superhuman *Vril*, but rather to humanity's debasement and destruction. Whilst the First World War was by no means simply a 'Darwinian war'—its causes are some of the most complex in history—Darwin's great idea was certainly part of the picture, at least in that it both described and imaginatively produced the 'struggle for existence' and destruction of civilisation.[3]

Whither Darwinism, then? There was certainly a hope that Darwinism would be the author of its own annihilation. As Dr John Randle (a compatriot of Dr Akinwande Savage and founder of the People's Union) noted in the midst of war, perhaps the British empire had finally come to its senses, 'had unsheathed the sword in Liberty and Justice in defence of a weak nation… to show that in the Government of the Universe it is a moral fallacy to say that Might is Right… [this] Darwinian doctrine of the survival of the fittest, the weakest going to the wall, let the strongest live, let the weakest die… [this] materialism which has obsessed the world for more than 50 years… Sad as it is, I think that this European cataclysm has come for the distinct purpose of giving a stunning blow to [this] materialism.'[4]

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[1] Andrić 2021, 284.
[2] Ouředník 2001, 4.
[3] The internal logic here is not unique to the ideology of Darwinism—we see it today, for instance, in the Thanatos of the accelerationists, who very deliberately seek to push us over the cliff edge of the coming 'singularity', just as the Darwinians actively sought out the struggle for existence. Shaviro 2015.
[4] Randle 1916, 3.

Many certainly recognised the cataclysm in such terms, and promptly gave up their hopes in Darwinian internationalism—at least, in the semi-periphery and periphery. As we saw earlier, by 1914 Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, and others had already had their hopes eclipsed by the shadow of war. As Liang concluded:

> Since Darwin's discovery of the principle of the evolution of the species, a great revolution has occurred in intellectual circles of the whole world. His service to learning must be acknowledged. But afterwards his theory of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest was applied to the study of human society and became the core of thought, with many evil consequences. This great European war nearly wiped out human civilization; although its causes were many, it must be said that the Darwinian theory had a very great influence.[5]

The greatest tragedy was just how much harder it would be to shift Darwinism in the imperial core. Neither Ypres nor the Somme would suffice to finally repudiate its logic; only the horrors of Auschwitz and Belsen would work. The story of the short twentieth century and its attendant crimes—in the hinterlands beyond this thesis—is the further, more familiar story of Darwinism's final ascendancy and sudden abolition.

Fig. 50. The storm approaching:
Max Ernst, *La horde* (1927)[6]

[5] Translation from: Levenson 1953, 203. As Levenson goes on to discuss, Liang's abandonment of Darwinism led him to fall back into a somewhat reformed Chinese traditionalism: a 'new syncretism'.
[6] Reproduced in: Hollein and Kort 2009, 24. This image is representative of Ernst's prophetic work of the late 1920s, which depicts strange coral-like beings in a kind of violent intermingling.

Rethinking through Darwin

For now, though, let us reflect on what this thesis has shown, and suggest some potential further avenues of scholarly exploration.

As I have sought to demonstrate, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection not only revolutionised the sense of 'man's place in nature', but also 'states' place in the international'. Incubated in a voyage across an ever-shrinking world, Darwin's theory espoused a novel vision of the natural world which was soon fleshed out by theorists and practitioners into an idiosyncratic vision of international relations: what I have called in this thesis 'Darwinian internationalism'.

As we have seen, the spread and influence of this idiom across the world was deep and multifaceted, its reception marked by its fundamental flexibility—proving capable of explaining the international fortunes of all polities, whether the largest empires, the most liminal emerging states, or the most violently oppressed peoples. It was applied *to* the perceived Other by the Europeans, and it was utilised *by* the Other in radically resistant ways. In the core, it was a defined by a deeply pessimistic and paranoid tone, and in the peripheries, it provided a promise of change. Such is a neglected history that has largely been left off the map of international thought, a *terra incognita* which I have attempted to sketch but a few areas of topographical detail.

Methodologically, this thesis has thus aimed to practically demonstrate the promises of global intellectual history in International Relations, despite its challenges. By expanding this topic beyond the typical focus on Europe, it has sought to show how the utilisation of a global lens can yield profound interpretive consequences—in this case, by showing just how the narrow the folk story is regarding what 'social Darwinism' looked like in this period.

In its interpretive consequences, the re-inclusion of Darwin(ism) into the history of late nineteenth-century international thought changes our understanding its international order. It challenges the commonly held notion of this period as one consisting of 'two orders', clearly demarcated: of 'tolerant civilisation' on the one hand, and 'exploitative empire' on the other. It instead shows how contained in Darwinism was a profoundly holistic yet asocial vision of international order, one defined by a 'standard of nature' encompassing all empires, states, and peoples.

The genetics of IR

What are the potential avenues for future research? Where might other scholars take this project in future?

One obvious avenue would be to 'fill out' the empirical substance. Throughout I have referred to a more 'encyclopaedic' endeavour and this remains to be completed—to map Darwinism's contours in all its detail. The obvious next task is therefore to expand the *geographical* scope of this research: to look at the reception of Darwinian internationalism in the Islamic World, in North America, in the Russosphere, in Australasia, and so on. All would surely present us with fascinating further examples of the idiosyncrasies of this idiom.

The other option is to expand the *temporal* scope: to go beyond 1914 into the terrain of the short twentieth century. As above, we know it took longer for Darwinism to perish in the imperial core than elsewhere, so how did it develop in the years after the Great War? Obviously, one aspect of this is well-known: Darwinism's influence on National Socialism. But there are far more fascinating questions to ask of Darwinism's development in the interwar period. How, for instance, did Darwinians think about the League of Nations, the Great Depression, and the rise of new nation-states?

One further area of inquiry to which I had originally hoped to venture is the question of Darwinism's influence on the early discipline of International Relations, i.e. to connect this intellectual history to a critical disciplinary history.[7] As John Hobson's dissection of the Eurocentric foundations of IR theory demonstrates,[8] the historical crucible of ideas often contaminates in perpetuity. The same 'legacy effect' of Darwinism thus merits attention, especially *vis-à-vis* realist notions of inter-state competition and state-of-nature notions of international anarchy. Thematically, the intuition here is obvious—both Darwinism and realism are concerned with 'natural' conditions of international disorder, be it the struggle for existence or the competitive condition of anarchy. The 'descent of realism' may thus have been Darwinian. As Jan-Stefan Fritz has argued, early IR theorists were deeply influenced by developments in science in the

[7] Again in the sense of: Schmidt 2013; Vitalis 2015.
[8] Hobson 2012.

nineteenth century.[9] Further exploration of this inter-connection of early IR theory, academic institutions, and Darwinian internationalism is thus certainly worth closer analysis.

Rethinking with Darwin?

Beyond matters of international *thought*, is also worth considering if there is anything we might actually learn from Darwin in terms of international *theory*. Is Darwinian internationalism totally 'dead' and repudiated, or might we salvage something 'living'[10] from it? In Quentin Skinner's sense of using the history of political thought for 'archaeological' purposes, is there some 'buried intellectual treasure' hidden in Darwinian internationalism that we might bring 'back to the surface'?[11]

As stated in the introduction, I am wholly against positivist attempts at using a neo-Darwinism to create a 'theory of everything' in the social sciences. Barring the obvious intellectual flaws of sociobiology,[12] on ethical grounds alone any humanist should baulk at attempts at reheating the bleak amoralism which we have seen in this thesis. As I shall outline below, one of the main takeaways of this thesis is precisely to resist the urge towards the valorisation of 'science' as a demarcation line of theoretical sophistication in IR.

Nevertheless, there are *parts* of the Darwinian assemblage (if not the whole) which can prove useful in shedding light on contemporary puzzles in international relations. Central amongst which is its organicism, which as we saw in the interlude has been largely abandoned in favour of a now-hegemonic understanding of the state as an artificial 'person' (or, as in rationalism, of the state as a utility-maximising agent). Whilst the impulse behind the repudiation of the organic metaphor of the state makes sense (its apparent 'irrationalism' and metaphysical obscurantism), we might nevertheless ask—again following Skinner and other practitioners of genealogy[13]—what the consequences were in taking this path, rather than the 'path not taken'? What, if anything, has been *lost*

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[9] Fritz 2005.
[10] My wording here echoes: Dunn 1990.
[11] Skinner 1998, 112. On Skinner's use of intellectual history in this way, and how his practice of 'archaeology' differs from Foucault and others, see: Lane 2012; Vucina, Drejer, and Triantafillou 2011; Kjellström 1995.
[12] As pointed out extensively by its original critics: Richard Lewontin, Stephen Jay Gould, and Ruth Hubbard.
[13] For a good overview of genealogy as a method in intellectual history, see: Bevir 2008.

as a result of the widespread repudiation of the earlier organicist way of thinking about the state?[14]

State death

Thinking about the state organically—as a temporal body, with cycles of growth and decay—does make legible certain problems in contemporary politics. One such problem is that of state death, which IR has long failed to properly grasp with.

'There are only two things certain in life', so the old saying goes: death and taxes. Whilst we might plausibly avoid the imposition of taxation through an escape to the wilderness, natural death remains beyond human control (at least until the transhumanists achieve their strange dreams). Such mortality is a feature of international society, too. As international social space has constantly reconfigured over time, this ever-shifting kaleidoscope has seen polities falling in and out of existence. It is therefore curious that the phenomenon of state death has been of little direct interest by scholars of International Relations. Where the death of states *has* been studied, it has typically been from an Archimedean vantage-point—as in the realist stop-motion elimination game of the perennial balance of power,[15] or in the positivistic pursuit of generalisable explanatory causes of state destruction (i.e. 'why states die').[16] State death can therefore be explained away in the eternal material game of geopolitics, where 'the weak suffer as they must'.[17]

This reticence to seriously engage more directly with the phenomenon of polity death—to actually look at the ways in which the destruction of states has been understood—is striking.[18] States are posited by realists to be engaged in a constant struggle for their material security, yet there is a squeamish tendency to actually gaze upon the corpses of those polities which fail the test. State death is similarly approached as a Gorgonian concept in international law, with legal scholars (possessed by a legal

[14] Here, I am echoing the phrasing used by Skinner in: Skinner 2009, 361.
[15] Most obviously representative by: Waltz 1979.
[16] Fazal 2007. Fazal's work remains (to my knowledge) the only monograph on this topic within IR. For a revision of Fazal's work, again from a positivist angle, see: Valeriano and Benthuysen 2012. Similarly inclined is: Maass 2014. The Correlates of War Project was the impetus for this way of theorising state death from a systemic perspective and whose data scholars like Fazal still use. For the classic statement of the Correlates of War, see: Singer and Small 1966.
[17] Or, in Fazal's study, that 'the buffer state suffers what it must'.
[18] We might observe, for instance, the fact that IR has a journal named *Survival* but not *Extinction*.

positivist's *horror vacui*) terrified to think directly about the moment when a state no longer exists. It is telling that the term 'state succession'[19] is instead used for this moment, highlighting continuity rather than destruction.[20] This is why the personhood model of the state is so appealing: the responsibilities and obligations of the preceding polity can be organised and inherited, just as a person's estate is in Roman private law, thus avoiding the legal abyss of state disappearance.[21] 'The state is dead; long live the state.' The language of 'failed states' offers a similar route out the problem by simply putting the state in a coma, keeping its legality at least theoretically alive.[22] As the legal scholar J.H.W. Verzijl puts it, it is true that, 'just as a new State may be created by a collective international treaty or resolution, it is conceivable, but only in very unusual conditions, that an existing State is extinguished by such a treaty or resolution. This process is [however] much more objectionable than that of a collective creation because the victim is, after all, a living entity and its suppression might, therefore, amount in many instances to *juridical murder*.'[23]

Even within the history of international thought, the phenomenon of polity death has been remarkably understudied.[24] This may appear due to a poverty in the empirics themselves, as Norman Davies suggests: 'Political philosophers… have been thinking about statehood for millennia, though state demise has seldom been at the forefront of their preoccupation.'[25] Even Hobbes, that great theorist of strife, distinguished between a domestic and international state of nature on the grounds that 'annihilation, or "death", of one whole nation is… hardly conceivable unlike individuals whose death means

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[19] O'Connell 1956.
[20] Another orthogonal term invoked by international lawyers is 'the extinction of states' *as a species* (rather than individual states), an idea that was in vogue in the cosmopolitan halcyon days of the 1990s. Davies 2011, 731. Thus we find prophecies that 'the nation-state will regress into extinction… as its traditional characteristics become dysfunctional in serving the needs of global life. The gradual extinction of the nation-state, meanwhile, will create favourable conditions for the evolution of Free State… Just as the widespread reptile extinctions coincided with the rise of mammals, the universal degeneration of nation-states will provide an environment for Free States to flourish.' Khan 1992, 201–202. For the full discussion of this idea of state extinction, see: Crawford 2007.
[21] See for instance the discussions of state succession in regards to public debt and treaties, as in: Feilchenfeld 1931; De Muralt 1954.
[22] As Aznar-Gómez puts it: 'The "pure" extinction of a state has been scholarly refused due to some terror of sovereignty vacuum, hence labelling the state as "failed". States have also preferred a somehow cynical *presumption of statehood* instead of admitting the disappearance of a state.' Aznar-Gómez 2012, 26.
[23] Verzijl 1969, vol. 2: International Persons, 130 emphasis mine.
[24] One recent exception, at least in terms of seeing states in dynamic and temporal terms, is: Edelstein, Geroulanos, and Wheatley 2020.
[25] Davies 2011, 730.

physical annihilation… for the vanquished of a war, there shall always be another chance to fight against the vanquisher.'[26] Nevertheless, there is a hidden history of state death to be investigated.

Re-engaging with the organicist idea might thus propel us towards a proper post-mortem of state death, one increasingly important as climate change and ecological collapse genuinely raises the spectre of the wholesale destruction of states.[27] Thinking about international relations ecologically also explains why some polities survive *without* amassing the traditional metrics of state survival.[28] Thus micro-states and territories like Monaco or the Cayman Islands survive today precisely because they fill certain niches in the global capitalist system, namely as tax havens and sites for money laundering.

Radical organicism?

Beyond clarifying issues of body-politic mortality, I also believe organicism can theoretically be salvaged for radical ends, despite its widespread repudiation.[29] Compared to the hierarchical Hobbesian state-person, the organic metaphor by contrast provides a route into a more egalitarian conception of political life.

To come back to speculative fiction, this notion is best recognised by the utopian anarchist community of Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974): the Anarresti, whose egalitarian anarcho-syndicalism philosophy is rooted in 'the ideal of complex organicism',[30] with their society's founding text entitled *The Social Organism*. Against this anarcho-organicism they contrast the mechanical philosophy which governs 'the State-Machine'[31] of the original society from which they were exiled as revolutionaries. Indeed, in one sense the novel is the story of the contestation of Darwinian internationalism with a more radical Darwinism, with our protagonist finding himself constantly arguing against the capitalist militarists of A-Io who acclaim that 'the law of existence is struggle—competition—elimination of the weak—a ruthless war for survival.'[32] In one exchange, the dialectic is clear:

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[26] Akashi 2000, 212.
[27] Ker-Lindsay 2016.
[28] Thanks to Sam Holcroft for pointing out this idea to me.
[29] For a leftist defence of the concept, see also: Cheah 2002.
[30] Le Guin 2019, 81.
[31] Ibid., 92.
[32] Ibid., 120.

> "Life is a fight, and the strongest wins. All civilisation does is hide the blood and cover up the hate with pretty words!"
> "Your civilisation, perhaps. Ours hides nothing. It is all plain… We follow one law, only one, the law of human evolution."
> "The law of evolution is that the strongest survives!"
> "Yes; and the strongest, in the existence of any social species, are those who are most social. In human terms, most ethical."[33]

Here, we thus return to the spectre of D.P. Crook's 'peace biologists'.[34] Whilst I have bracketed these radical Darwinians throughout this thesis, it is worth closing by acknowledging, with Crook, that Darwinism fomented not *only* the statist forms of politics seen in this thesis, but a more radical tradition too. Again, I am not wanting to plant the flag for Darwinism, yet nevertheless I do want to make the case for organicism as a potential model for 'thinking through' a more egalitarian conception of political life.

In an age of urgent ecological crisis, rethinking society in organic rather than mechanical terms also helps us to rethink humanity's need for equilibrium within the limits of the natural world—as we see with the recent revival of the Marxian organicist notion of 'social metabolism',[35] or more esoterically in the urban planning visions of Paolo Soleri, whose 'arcology' aims to synthesise architecture and ecology.[36] Whilst it is not the job of this thesis to provide a fully-fledged theoretical vision of a radical organicism, I do at least want to intimate towards its potential and to suggest that its deep burial might be worth disinterring.

[33] Ibid., 182–183.
[34] Crook 1994.
[35] For a recent lengthy discussion of Marxism and Darwinism's co-influence in an age of ecological crisis, see: Foster 2020.
[36] Indeed, mainstream biology is increasingly turning to 'ecological' ways of thinking to explain phenomena (such as parasitism or mycorrhiza) which traditional evolutionary notions of competition between clearly demarcated individuals fail to adequately explain. Historically, such notions of collaboration or altruism were met with scepticism and outright hostility within evolutionary science—as with the mycologist Albert Frank's coining of the idea of 'symbiosis', which had a rocky reception in the late 1870s. Martin and Schwab 2012.

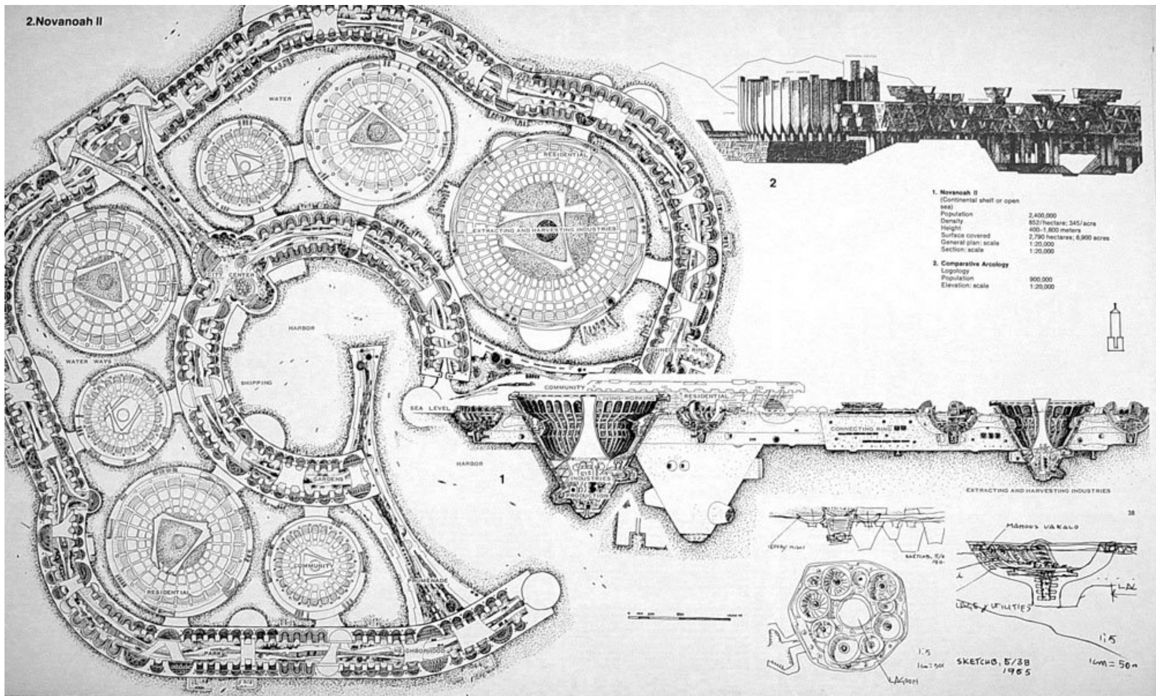

Fig. 51. The organic city:
Paolo Soleri, *Novanoah II*[37]

Beyond 'science'

The final takeaway from this thesis is in its interrogation of the place of 'science' in contemporary International Relations.

Much ink has been spilled on the follies and foibles of the scientisation of International Relations and the social sciences more generally—of those attempts to make the study of the social world not just analogous but *equivalent* to the study of the natural world. Many such critiques have drawn on critical theory's emphasis on the sharp distinction between the sorts of theory appropriate for the natural sciences and those appropriate for the social sciences.[38] Despite such critiques, positivism not only persists in IR today as a hegemonic discourse, but is heading down paths of increasingly elaborate quantification, modelling, and micro-level analysis of so-called 'causal mechanisms'.

[37] Image from: Soleri 1970.
[38] Geuss 1981.

The historicism of this thesis is *qua* itself further contribution to the subfield of Historical International Relations.[39] It also more substantively provides historical weight to theoretical critiques of positivism, precisely by excavating an earlier period in which historical agents were similarly ensnared and seduced by the promise of clothing their ideological doctrines in the legitimating garb of 'science'. It is patently obvious to us today, from our historical vantage-point, that such invocations of Darwinism were mere varnish for underlying political objectives. Let us also see how inclinations today towards scientisation and quantification are similarly motivated—with scholars serving as handmaidens to the technocratic state.

This thesis thus serves to remind us once more of the promises of intellectual history as a means of helping us rethink current predicaments, to show once more that thinking historically does not trap us in the ways of the past but rather reveals the possibilities of radical transformation. It reminds us to play the role of Rorty's 'Ironist' and to willingly confront the contingency and historicity of our beliefs—not in a spirit of postmodern defeatism, but confident, future-facing pragmatism.[40]

[39] Again see the overview in: Carvalho, Costa Lopez, and Leira 2021.
[40] Rorty 1989.

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