

MARXISM AND DARWINISM

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Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek

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ANTON PANNEKOEK

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DARWINISM**

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BY

ANTON PANNEKOEK

Translated by Nathan Weiser.

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"SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST."

In northern climes, the polar bear
Protects himself with fat and hair,
Where snow is deep and ice is stark,
And half the year is cold and dark,
He still survives a clime like that
By growing fur, by growing fat.
These traits, O bear, which thou transmittest
Prove the Survival of the Fittest.

To polar regions waste and wan,
Comes the encroaching race of man,
A puny, feeble, little bubber,
He has no fur, he has no blubber.
The scornful bear sat down at ease
To see the stranger starve and freeze—
But, lo! the stranger slew the bear,
And ate his fat and wore his hair;
These deeds, O Man, which thou committest
Prove the Survival of the Fittest.

In modern times the Millionaire
Protects himself as did the bear:
Where Poverty and Hunger are
He counts his bullion by the car:
Where thousands perish still he thrives—

The wealth, O Croesus, thou transmittest
Proves the Survival of the Fittest.

But, lo, some people odd and funny,
Some men without a cent of money—
The simple common human race
Chose to improve their dwelling place:
They had no use for millionaires,
They calmly said the world was theirs,
They were so wise, so strong, so many,
The Millionaires?—there wasn't any.
These deeds, O Man, which thou committest
Prove the Survival of the Fittest.

—Mrs. Charlotte Stetson.

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MARXISM *and* DARWINISM

I. DARWINISM.

Two scientists can hardly be named who have, in the second half of the 19th century, dominated the human mind to a greater degree than Darwin and Marx. Their teachings revolutionized the conception that the great masses had about the world. For decades their names have been on the tongues of everybody, and their teachings have become the central point of the mental struggles which accompany the social struggles of today. The cause of this lies primarily in the highly scientific contents of their teachings.

The scientific importance of Marxism as well as of Darwinism consists in their following out the theory of evolution, the one upon the domain of the organic world, of things animate; the other, upon the domain of society. This theory of evolution, however, was in no way new, it had its advocates before Darwin and Marx; the philosopher, Hegel, made it even as the central point of his philosophy. It is, therefore, necessary to observe closely what were the achievements of Darwin and Marx in this domain.

The theory that plants and animals have developed one from another is met with first in the nineteenth century. Formerly the question, "Whence come all these thousands and hundreds of thousands of different kinds of plants and animals that we

know?" was answered. "At the time of creation God created them all, each after its kind." This primitive theory was in conformity with the experiences had and with the oldest information that could be got. According to the information, all known plants and animals have always been the same. Scientifically, this experience was thus expressed, "All kinds are invariable because the parents transmit their characteristics to their children."

There were, however, some peculiarities among plants and animals which gradually forced a different conception to be entertained. They so nicely let themselves be arranged into a system which was first set up by the Swedish scientist Linnaeus. According to this system, the animals are divided into main divisions; these divisions are divided into classes, classes into orders, orders into families, families into species, each of which contain a few kinds. The more semblance there is in their characteristics, the nearer they stand towards each other in this system, and the smaller is the group to which they belong. All the animals classed as mammalian show the same general characteristics in their bodily frame. The herbivorous animals, and carnivorous animals, and monkeys, each of which belongs to a different order, are again differentiated. Bears, dogs, and cats, all of which are rapacious animals, have much more in common in bodily form than they have with horses or monkeys. This conformity is still more obvious when we examine varieties of the same species; the cat, tiger and lion resemble each other in many respects where they differ from dogs and bears. If we turn from the class of mammals to other classes, such as birds or fishes, we find greater differences than we find in the other class.