Shivam Gupta

Ryan Page

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Analysis Draft

The book War of the Worlds by H.G Wells introduces the idea of Social Darwinism and directly reflects as how people in the 19th century were mistaking social Darwinism thought for the Darwinism theory. In the book we see how Wells suggests the idea of survivalist nature of humans. He also shows the exploitive nature of humans on the nature and other subhuman species that have not evolved to the intelligence of humans yet. In the book we see that Martians are not just a destructive species but they have a need for humans to help with their survival. The idea of survival of the fittest or the idea of the evolving due to dire need are part of social Darwinism and not the ideas propagated by Darwin in his theory of evolution. Darwin’s theory was mainly a neutral theory which did not have an actual social application (Rogers). Wells writing directly reflects the ideas that were popular during that time as he incorporated the social Darwinism thought in his novel with the idea of a post human species that was far more evolved but yet mortal.

Wells starts the book with the narrator talking about the interest in extraterrestrial life within the scientific society and how new discoveries were being made in the field. Once the narrator knows about the Martian pods he is intrigued with the hope of the kind of knowledge that could be obtained from them. Furthermore he is contemplating the idea of Martians being superior to the human beings and compare what if this is true and how this might affect humans as a species. However, when the greeting party of scientist visits the landed pod they are surprised by the nature of Martians and how they are in an attacking front. The greeting party is killed in this confrontation and this reveals the superiority of Martians for the first time in the novel. Additionally this whole ordeal also reveals the nature of the bodies and the design Martians have most important being slimy, have a skeleton like a squid and features like tentacles. This intriguing design of the Martian by Wells is clearly his way of using Darwinism to show how they have evolved to a nature where they have lost useless properties and bodily functions. This idea by Wells of showing how evolution may lead to humans is directly in relation with the ideology where in the 19th century people were trying figure out how Darwinist evolution will affect the humans in the long run.

Wells also brings up specific examples of humans exploitations of species and how human activities lead to their extinction. During the 19th century the capitalist ideas were forming for the first time and the rise of industrialization had given many the ability to use resources and convert them into actual products. This image of using animals and plants and abusing them to feed the materialistic need of resources for the humans is how Wells shapes the Martians into. The narrator of the story brings up specific example of animals like the dodo and how the human hunger lead to its extinction. Another idea that originates from this relation is that of the survival of the fittest. This idea is a product of Social Darwinism and not the Darwin theory. However as this idea was also popular during the 19th century Wells incorporated it into the book. We see this idea in the form of relation of Martians being above humans and that they may be the force to lead humans to extinction. We also see from the narrator that the Martians have a need for humans correlating to how humans have a dependence on the resources provided from animals.

Finally we see that both the ideas of Darwinism and Social Darwinism are represented in the story. Wells represents evolution at its core being able to adapt which the Martians lacked showing that even when Martians were better in technology we as humans had the ability to survive due to our evolutionary nature. Wells also shows the presences of social Darwinism by introducing character in this story who had the idea that only the fit will survive the Martians and how this will give rise to a better humans. However the ability to use evolution in this format was never suggested by Darwin and these social applications are wrong which Wells justifies by making the Martians mortal and the human race surviving as a whole.

Sources

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