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**Social Darwinism in the Era of Globalization through  
*The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca*: A Cultural  
Perspective**

**Thesis submitted in candidacy for the degree of “doctorate” in  
Civilization**

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## **Statement of originality**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work; it contains no material previously published by another person, nor material, which has been approved for the qualification of any previous degree or diploma of a University or other institution. Any ideas, theories, or findings from other authors have been appropriately acknowledged.

I also certify that the present thesis is the result of my own investigation.

BELMIMOUN Nesrine

## Dedications

First and foremost, to Allah, for the blessings, guidance and strength.

To my mother, SEDJELMACI Yasmine. The woman I am today is because of all the efforts and sacrifices you made. Your strength and wisdom have been my guiding light, and your belief in me has given me the courage to pursue my dreams. This work is dedicated to you, with endless love and gratitude.

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## Abstract

This research explores the concept of Social Darwinism in the era of globalization, examining its cultural and cinematic portrayals in *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *Gattaca* (1997). Social Darwinism, based on the notion of “survival-of-the-fittest,” has historically influenced social, political, and economic structures. Furthermore, globalization has further fuelled competition, reinforcing hierarchies rooted in genetics, wealth and social status. Moreover, this study provides a historical and theoretical overview of Social Darwinism and globalization, examining their intersections and impacts on modern society. The study then investigates the depictions of Social Darwinism in *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca*, highlighting issues of genetic determinism, systemic inequality, and the struggle for survival within dystopian contexts. This thesis ultimately examines the significant influence on culture and ethical ramifications of these films, emphasizing their reflection of real-world issues like social stratification, bioethics, and the ethics of genetic engineering. Thus, by analysing these cinematic narratives, this research elucidates the persistent relevance of Social Darwinism in the 21st century. It suggests that whereas globalization has generated opportunities, it has simultaneously reinforced survival-based competition, reflecting the themes explored in *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca*. This thesis essentially adds to the discourse on how popular culture mirrors and criticises modern societal structures.

Keywords: Social Darwinism, globalization, dystopia, The Hunger Games, Gattaca, genetic determinism, social inequality, bioethics.

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# **General Introduction**

## **General Introduction**

In an ever-changing environment and since the dawn of human thought, people have attempted to understand the forces and factors that shape life, society and progress. One of this endeavour's most significant intellectual frameworks is the theory of evolution. Evolution has long been studied, contemplating about the origin of life on Earth and how it changed and diversified over vast periods. Scientists have managed to explain how species of living organisms changes over generations, leading to the emergence of new species and the adaptation of existing ones.

While Charles Darwin is often recognized as the father of evolution, the foundations of his work were established by earlier thinkers whose contributions were largely overlooked. The study of evolution, in both biological and social contexts, has dramatically influenced societal perceptions of competition, survival, and human advancement. Evolutionary thought has profoundly shaped scientific and socio-political realms from pre-Darwinian evolutionary ideas to contemporary debates on genetic determinism.

The present understanding of evolutionary theory is deeply rooted in intellectual traditions that predate Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Before Darwin, scholars such as Thomas Malthus, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, and Alfred Russel Wallace presented several theories on the evolution of species over time. Malthus's work on population dynamics inspired Darwin's theory of natural selection, while Lamarck's ideas of acquired characteristics, albeit eventually discredited, provided an early attempt to elucidate evolutionary change. Wallace, who independently developed the theory of natural selection, played a critical role, although often overlooked, in evolutionary discourse. Darwin's combination of these ideas constituted a turning point in scientific history, sparking debates that would span biology to affect human society.

Social Darwinism is one of evolutionary thought's most significant yet controversial applications. This ideology, which arose in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, applied the principles of natural selection to human societies, claiming that competition and "survival of the fittest" governed social and economic structures. Herbert Spencer, a principal advocate of Social Darwinism, applied Darwinian ideas to the political and economic spheres, promoting laissez-faire capitalism and barely any government interference. Likewise, William Graham Sumner advocated that social inequalities were natural and unavoidable. These interpretations of Darwin's work justified economic inequality, imperialism, and even racial hierarchy.

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The implications of Social Darwinism were broad. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, its principles were used to justify eugenics movements in the United States and Germany. Eugenics aimed at "enhancing" human populations by controlled reproduction and sterilization, based on the belief that genetics influenced intelligence, behaviour and social achievements. In the US, forced sterilization programs focused on marginalized groups, while in Nazi Germany, eugenics emerged as a fundamental aspect of racial ideology, which eventually gave rise to the Holocaust. Social Darwinist ideology also influenced political doctrines, enabling the emergence of Fascism and Capitalism. These past events stress the dangers of misapplying scientific theories to social policy.

The rapid growth of globalization and mass media has allowed the concepts of Social Darwinism to remain visible in modern culture. Films, literature, and digital media are powerful instruments for reflecting and challenging these beliefs. Dystopian narratives often examine societal stratification, competition, and genetic determinism, core principles of Social Darwinism. Two films that explore these themes are *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca*. *The Hunger Games* depicts a brutal competition in which individuals from oppressed districts must fight for survival, highlighting class struggle, oppression, and rebellion. *Gattaca* explores a future society dominated by genetic engineering, where one's value is determined by their DNA instead of individual abilities. Both films provide insightful critiques of how Darwinian and Social Darwinist ideologies continue to shape modern societies.

As Leon C. Megginson (1963), paraphrasing Darwin's theory of natural selection, asserted, survival does not depend on strength or intelligence alone, but on the ability to adapt to change. This statement is the focal point of this research, as it emphasizes the need for adaptability over physical power or intelligence in determining success. The misinterpretation of Darwinian ideas, especially within Social Darwinism, has justified strict social hierarchies and oppressive structures. True evolutionary success lies not in dominance or genetic superiority, but in the ability to adapt to changing environments. Therefore, this research analyzes how historical and fictional narratives engage with these themes, challenging deterministic perspectives of social order and survival.

This research examines the historical development of Social Darwinism, its influence on political and social structures, and its portrayal in modern media. By tracing the evolution of these ideas from pre-Darwinian thinking to their influence on contemporary society, this study will explore the lasting relevance of evolutionary theory outside scientific discourse. By investigating *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca*, this work will illustrate how cinema acts as a

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medium for engaging with and challenging the implications of Social Darwinist ideas. The research questions to be tackled in the current endeavour are listed below:

How has the concept of Social Darwinism evolved from its origins to its current interpretations in the media and culture?

In what ways has Social Darwinism been implicitly or explicitly represented in contemporary global media?

How do *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* reflect and critique Social Darwinist themes, particularly about survival, genetic determinism, and social stratification?

This thesis has two analytical chapters that adhere to a coherent theoretical framework and methodology to address the research questions. This research will also use a multi-faceted approach to tackle these issues. Chapter One lays the foundation of this research by investigating the intellectual history of evolutionary theory and analyzing its socio-political repercussions. It provides an overview of the significance of pre-Darwinian evolutionary theories, focusing on key figures such as Thomas Malthus, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, and Alfred Russel Wallace, whose concepts influenced the development of Darwin's theory of evolution.

Furthermore, Chapter One explores the fundamental principles of Darwinian evolution, including Neo-Darwinism and the critiques that emerged in reaction to Darwin's theory. It then transitions to Social Darwinism, examining how individuals like Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner applied Darwinian principles to socio-political ideology. The chapter further covers the consequences of Social Darwinism, namely its influence on eugenics movements in the United States and Germany, as well as its associations with the emergence of Fascism, Nazism, and capitalism. Finally, a Marxist point of view is given to study class struggles fostered by Social Darwinist ideology. This chapter seeks to provide a thorough understanding of the enduring impact of Darwinian philosophy and its misapplication in society.

Chapter Two establishes the theoretical framework essential for examining the impact of media and globalization on the spread of Social Darwinist ideologies. It introduces media theory and cultural studies, focusing on the influence of media on cultural norms and socialization. It also examines fundamental media theories, such as the Hypodermic Needle Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which provide insights into media's effects and audience reception. The Second Chapter also explores cultural studies theories, focusing on Hegemony and Reception Theory, to assess power dynamics in media representation. It then

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transitions to the impact of globalization on the propagation of ideas, offering an overview of globalization's economic and cultural dimensions. Concepts like homogenization, heterogenization, and hybridization are reviewed to understand the influence of global media on cultural identities. The chapter also addresses the mechanisms of ideological dissemination, from traditional print media to internet platforms, showing the influence of technologies on modern ideological landscapes. This theoretical background establishes the foundation for the upcoming chapters, which would apply these themes in the cinematic representations of Social Darwinism.

Chapter Three scrutinizes the representation of Social Darwinist themes in modern film, focusing on *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca*. It begins with introducing the concept of Social Darwinism in film, elucidating how survival, competition, and genetic determinism shape cinematic narratives. The chapter then covers *The Hunger Games*, dissecting its themes of social stratification, the ruthless competition in the arena, and the characters' struggle for survival. The rebellion against tyranny is also discussed as a rejection of Social Darwinist ideology. The focus then shifts to *Gattaca*, which depicts a society shaped by genetic engineering and eugenics. It also examines the social hierarchies rooted in biology, the current discriminatory structures and the protagonist's rebellion against a system that demeans naturally born humans. This chapter aims to showcase how both films analyze the implications of Social Darwinism, indicating the ethical and social challenges linked to the survival of the fittest ideologies in contemporary society.

Chapter Four focuses on the substantial impact of cinematic representations of Social Darwinism, it examines how films like *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* influence public perception and enhance global discourse on social and ethical matters. It introduces cinema's role as an influential instrument for social commentary, highlighting the international appeal of dystopian narratives among audiences. The chapter then examines *The Hunger Games* as a criticism of economic and social stratification, drawing connections between the film's depiction of class conflict and real-world capitalist inequalities. The theme of resistance against tyranny is explored within the context of globalization, showing how the film mirrors the contemporary struggle for justice and equality. Similarly, *Gattaca* acts as a warning narrative on the ethics of genetic engineering, stressing apprehensions about genetic determinism, eugenics, and the illusion of meritocracy in contemporary society. It then shifts to the role of globalization in spreading these dystopian concepts, examining how transnational media and streaming platforms enable the extensive distribution, reception, circulation and reinterpretation

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of such narratives across different cultural contexts.

# **Chapter One: Laying the Foundation**

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## **1.1 Introduction:**

The quest to comprehend the origins of life and the mechanisms that drive and fuel human progress and advancement inspired countless theories and discussions. Throughout human history, humankind has sought explanations and clarifications for the diversity of life and the frameworks of society. This journey of discovery and knowledge has altered our understanding of nature and redefined our social thought.

This chapter lays the foundation of this work by tracing the intellectual heritage that introduced the fundamental ideas and historical context of Charles Darwin's ideas. A thorough examination of the core concepts provided insights into the perspectives on human advancements and societal structure that led to the evolutionary theories and, ultimately, the idea of Social Darwinism and its significant and profound influence on modern ideologies.

Starting with a review of pre-Darwinian theories, highlighting overlooked yet significant thinkers such as Thomas Malthus, whose work on population dynamics paved the way to Darwin's theory of evolution, explaining that the expansion of a population will always surpass food supply and that the advancement of humankind is unachievable without rigorous reproduction limitations. Moving on to the Jean-Baptiste Lamarck theory of evolution, often referred to as Lamarckism, which first proposed that organisms evolve through the inheritance of acquired characteristics. And Alfred Russel Wallace, whose independent work on natural selection paralleled that of Charles Darwin, and despite being overshadowed by Darwin, his findings on natural selection were essential to the progress of evolutionary biology.

Once the foundational concepts are established, the discussion shifts to Darwin's theory itself, scrutinizing its core principles and exploring Neo-Darwinism which expands Darwin's ideas to incorporate modern genetic understanding. It moves further to acknowledge the controversies and critiques Darwin endured, showing how other scientific perspectives influenced and reshaped his work.

Darwin's influence extended past the realm of biology, giving rise to social Darwinism. The theory that applied the notions of "survival of the fittest" and "natural selection" to social and political fields. This chapter focuses on two prominent figures, Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner, to explore such doctrine, enabling movements like eugenics, which gained popularity in the United States and Germany. Furthermore, the impact of social Darwinism on political ideologies like Nazism and Fascism reveals the unsettling consequences of merging the "survival of the fittest" paradigm with socio-political agendas. It also covers the

role of social Darwinism in shaping capitalist ideas and laissez-faire policies.

This foundational chapter paves the way for the reader to fully engage with the subsequent chapters, allowing them to build on the far-reaching ramifications of the evolutionary theory as it intertwines with social and cultural paradigms.

## **1.2 Unravelling the Pre-Darwinian Tapestry: Forgotten Theories on Evolution**

The idea of evolution was not stumbled upon; it has been the subject of investigation and inquiry for mankind since the dawn of time. Homo Sapiens have long questioned the universe, species, and the origin of life. Thinkers and scientists from around the world developed ideas about various subject matters aimed at the progress and development of all humans' living conditions.

According to Peter Bowler, the idea of biological evolution is a fundamental component of a comprehensive paradigm shift in the field of historical study of earth, which has undergone progressive development over the course of many centuries. Prior to Darwin's exploration of the origins of new species, geologists and cosmologists had already initiated a challenge to the mediaeval Christian worldview. They proposed that both the Earth and the cosmos as a whole had undergone substantial changes over an extensive period of time. Within this new perspective on a dynamic physical cosmos, the notion of living entities being susceptible to natural transformations first emerged (4).

Richard Bambach explains that the word "evolution" carries multiple interpretations, each in some way connected to the original Latin term *evolutionem*. He then affirms that biological literature first used the word "evolution" as a synonymous reference to the process of individual and anatomical development (17).

Philip Sloan mentions that the notion of species transition has long been a topic of consideration in several aspects. The philosophical speculations of Empedocles and the perspectives put forward by the Greek atomists, who were part of the group of natural philosophers known as the Pre-Socratic, established a foundation of classical thought that served as a basis for subsequent philosophical investigations. The Pre-Socratic thinkers combined naturalistic myths of beginnings with contemplations on the mechanisms of chance-like events, thus producing a naturalistic explanation for the emergence of extant living forms.

In the 18th century, influential biologists such as Buffon, Haller, Erasmus Darwin, and Bonnet contributed greatly to shifting societal views from a classical outlook to a more romantic

perspective. This movement, which was both inspired by and influenced by these biologists, initiated the progression towards a more dynamic and romantic approach to scientific inquiry (Stafleu 397).

### **1.2.1 Malthusian Theory: An Essay on the Principle of Population.**

As stated above, a number of biologists and scientists were instrumental in facilitating the progress of research and knowledge in all spheres of society. They facilitated the advancement of scientific inquiry and contributed to the development of a more active culture.

Undoubtedly, Malthus had a significant role in the historical development of political, economic, and welfare theory. Additionally, he was widely recognised as having a major impact on the discourse surrounding evolution (Young 110).

Rogers asserts that Malthus developed a population theory within a unique historical and geographical context. Later, Malthus and other scholars expanded upon the hypothesis, leading to its widespread adoption. The notion first served as a critique of Godwin's concept of human perfectibility.

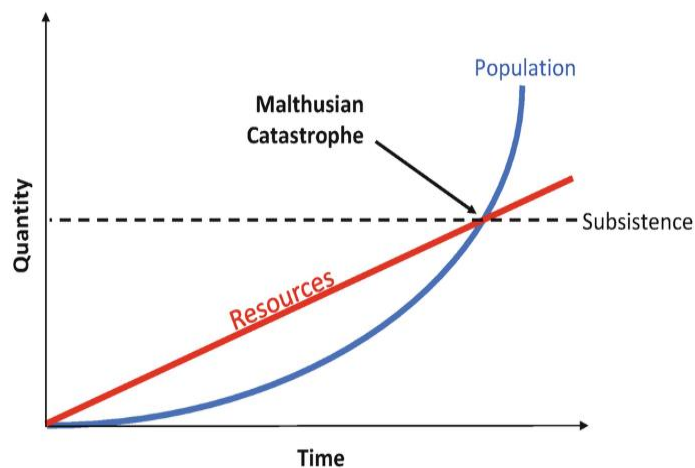
Lueger provides a summary of the essay, outlining the public presentation of the population theory as follows: The second chapter presents a basic definition of the population principle and the strain resulting from population growth. Chapters three through five then separately explore the three distinct solutions capable of reducing population pressure and thereby enabling an increase in production per capita. Eventually, they merge to establish a theoretical foundation crucial for any further investigation into the theory of growth (3).

It is believed that Malthus wrote at a time when numerous families in different Western countries may have come to recognise that extended families were more of a strain than they had previously thought and sought to adopt contraception in an attempt to minimise the size of their family (Caldwell, 676). On this matter, Montano and Garcia Lopez add that humans may resolve to restrain their birth rates if faced with a future in which they would not be able to effectively nurture their children, as noted by Malthus in the opening chapter of his first book on the challenges of population growth (2). In other words, when humans' basic needs are insufficient, having a relatively modest family is necessary.

Malthus articulates his theory by proposing two fundamental principles: first, that food is a necessity for human survival, and second, that the natural attraction between the sexes is essential and will likely remain unchanged. He emphasizes that these principles have

consistently governed human existence throughout history and, given their enduring nature, there is no reason to assume they will ever change (4).

In fact, in the first edition of his *Essay on Population* in 1798, Thomas Malthus stated that "the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man." When left unchecked, the population grows in a geometric ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetic ratio. "A little familiarity with numbers will shed light on the immensity of the first power in comparison to the second" (4). To put it simply, he held the belief that the amount of food produced would continue to rise in an arithmetic progression, for example, 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on. Meanwhile, the number of people on earth is expanding at a geometric rate like 1, 2, 4, 8, etc.



**Figure 1** Malthus on population

Fig. 1. Population-growth projection from "Malthus on Population." Source: Burger, Joseph R. "Malthus on Population." *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Psychological Science*, edited by Todd K. Shackelford and Viviana A. Weekes-Shackelford, Springer, Cham, 2020, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-16999-6\\_1267-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-16999-6_1267-1)

Figure 1 illustrates Malthus's theory. If population growth is not curbed, it will expand at an exponential rate over time. Nonetheless, resource output increases linearly over time. The "Malthusian Catastrophe" predicts that at some point in the not-too-distant future, the increase in population will outpace and exhaust the Earth's resources, forcing its inhabitants to live in abject poverty while also resulting in a decline to levels below those required for sustenance (Burger, 3).

Caldwell highlights the crucial role of a self-regulating system in explaining Malthus's

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insight into population variations. Since fertility levels among humans were significant, they easily outpaced increases in agricultural output (676).

According to James, the Malthusian doctrine proclaims the harmonious relationship between population growth and increases in subsistence and aims to forge a proper connection by depicting a scheme of positive and preventive checks that is both proactive and effective in striking an equilibrium between the needs of the populace and the resources of survival (261).

Hence, Malthus used the population growth in the United States in the eighteenth century to back up his claim that the population may double every 25 years, citing the era's high birth rate and ample food supply as grounds for this rapid rise (qtd. in Monatno et al., 2).

Malthus challenged the conventional wisdom of his day, which held that a country's wealth was directly proportional to its population size and that fertility boosted national prosperity. His worry that the poor laws would lead to a loosening of moral restraint and an increase in family size stemmed from his genuine concern for the plight of the world's overpopulated cities. He envisaged adults postponing marriage and refraining from sexual activity until they were financially stable and secure enough to provide for a family through moral restraint (Dunn, 77).

Malthus suggested that the increase in human population will surpass the limit, implying that populations will persist in growing until they can no longer feed themselves. In an attempt to understand these actions taken to prevent a crisis, James summarises Malthus's measures, or, as he referred to them, checks. There are two types of checks that have been identified: positive checks and preventative checks. Positive checks include deaths from malnourishment or genuine famine, deaths related to the unhygienic environment of poverty, and deaths from misery, plague, and war. The standard safeguards all fall under the category of "moral restriction" (261). That is starvation, and an increase in mortality rates would reduce the population to a sustainable level. Therefore, the way he framed the population concept inspired two immediate approaches, either by changing subsistence production or human behavioral patterns, which would result in population growth.

Furthermore, according to Lloyd, it is critical to closely monitor these two growth rates because the difference between them serves as a benchmark for the number of lives suppressed, and the methods used to carry out this repression ultimately determine the standard of living of a population (474).

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In conclusion, the Malthusian theory, albeit of considerable historical importance, does not provide a deterministic prediction of the destiny of mankind. Time has both challenged and modified it. Currently, discussions about population expansion and resource management often include a multifaceted interplay of elements, encompassing technological advancement, economic progress, and sustainable methodologies.

### 1.2.2 Jean-Baptiste Lamarck: A Swift Sketch of His Theory

While it is true that the works of earlier scholars like Buffon and Erasmus Darwin contain some elements of evolutionary thought, Lamarck initially proposed a comprehensive theory of transformation (Stafleu 398).

Over the last century, several studies have examined the French scientist Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck's contribution to the formation of evolutionary theory (Oxeham 155).

It is noteworthy that Lamarck first developed a theory of taxonomy rooted in the *scala naturae*, which was mostly static in nature. However, he was the first to clearly propose that this theory, with certain modifications, may serve as a reflection of the process of evolutionary progress (Stafleu, 398).

Prior to his studies on the mollusks of the Paris Basin, Lamarck was an essentialist who believed species were unchanging and fixed. Nevertheless, he eventually became convinced that species underwent transmutation, or a change in their structure through time. As a result, he embarked on the task of developing a description, which he addressed in his book *Philosophie Zoologique*, published in 1809, in order to provide an explanation for evolution. He referred to them as the "law of use and disuse" and the "law of inheritance of acquired characteristics" (Rai et al., 2). Koonin and Wolf have identified them as the two fundamental elements of Lamarck's evolutionary synthesis (3).

In addition to being a book on evolution, *Zoological Philosophy* was a comprehensive framework of biology that handled three main topics, which consist of zoological classification and evolution, as well as the nature and causes of life, and the nature and causes of intelligence and emotions (Oxeham, 156).

Avery adds, in Lamarck's work titled *Zoological Philosophy*, that he elaborates on his conviction that the resemblance seen among species belonging to a certain genus might be attributed to their shared ancestry. Moreover, Lamarck emerged as a notable biologist and held the belief that species are not fixed entities but rather subject to transformation throughout the

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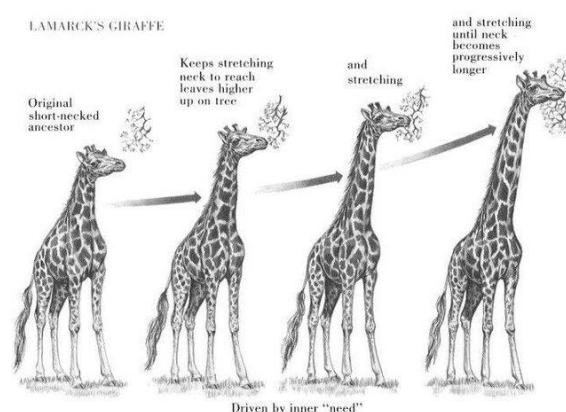
extensive course of Earth's history (11).

As pointed out by Hodgson and Knudsen, “the first meaning of Lamarckism is the notion that acquired characters can or will be inherited.” (1). That is, adaptations made by an organism throughout its lifetime are often transmitted to future generations. Or, as explained by Gadjev, “Lamarckism holds that heredity is not so rigid but rather flexible and pliable” (242).

The first law, summarized by Burkhardt, states that regular and long-term use of any organ will gradually strengthen, expand, and increase it, giving it a power proportional to its length in any animal that has not reached completion. Chronic neglect of an organ ultimately results in its gradual loss, deterioration, and decline of function (796).

For the second law, he says that everything that nature has given or taken away from an organism because of the long-term effects of environmental factors on a race, such as the effect of how often an organ or part is used or not used, is transmitted to the next generation. As long as the changes are shared by both sexes or the population that produced the child (796).

By the same token, he noted that animals seemed very well suited to their environments and suspected that, throughout their lifetimes, animals improved themselves. For instance, scientists believed that a giraffe's long neck resulted from its constant stretching to reach food that rose steadily higher from the ground. This example is the illustration of Lamarck's theory. Lamarck also believed that the animals' struggle for survival influenced the next generation, thereby sustaining the evolutionary process. This implies that a newborn giraffe, as depicted in the figure below, would possess a longer neck due to its parents' efforts to reach food.



**Figure 2** Lamarck's theory of evolution, from Indu, Chaturvedi. “Computational Drug Discovery for Vibrio Cholera: a case study.” Lap Lambert, January 2013, p.14

However, Lamarck's theory of evolution was limited; for instance, he did not take into account the possibility of species extinction and instead maintained the belief that species

undergo progressive change through phyletic modification (Koonin, Wolf, 2).

In summary, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck has significant prominence within the realm of biology due to his pioneering efforts in elucidating the mechanisms behind the phenomenon of evolution. Despite widespread criticism of his hypothesis of acquired characteristics, his research significantly advanced contemporary evolutionary thinking and inspired subsequent generations of scientists to explore the mechanisms behind evolutionary change.

### **1.2.3 Alfred Russel Wallace: Unearthing his Lost Evolutionary Insights**

The name Alfred Russel Wallace may not ring a bell to some, but it does on one widely recognized notion, which is evolution. He was a remarkable figure for his contribution in the field of natural history and evolution; he led a life filled with adventure, exploration, and ground-breaking discoveries.

One cannot overstate Wallace's contributions to the theory of natural selection. His observations of the diverse range of life forms and their adaptations in different environments provided convincing data that reinforced the theory. Furthermore, Berry mentions that the travels undertaken by Wallace are mostly renowned for the significant scientific concepts that sprang from them, rather than the abundance of newly discovered species (1066).

By combining Thomas Malthus' renowned views on population growth constraints with aspects of biological diversity, he proposed a hypothetical process that may stimulate the emergence of new kinds and species in natural populations (Kutschera, 344). Bulmer further elaborates on this idea in two articles he authored during Wallace's tenure as a collector in the Malay Archipelago, which is now Malaysia and Indonesia (125).

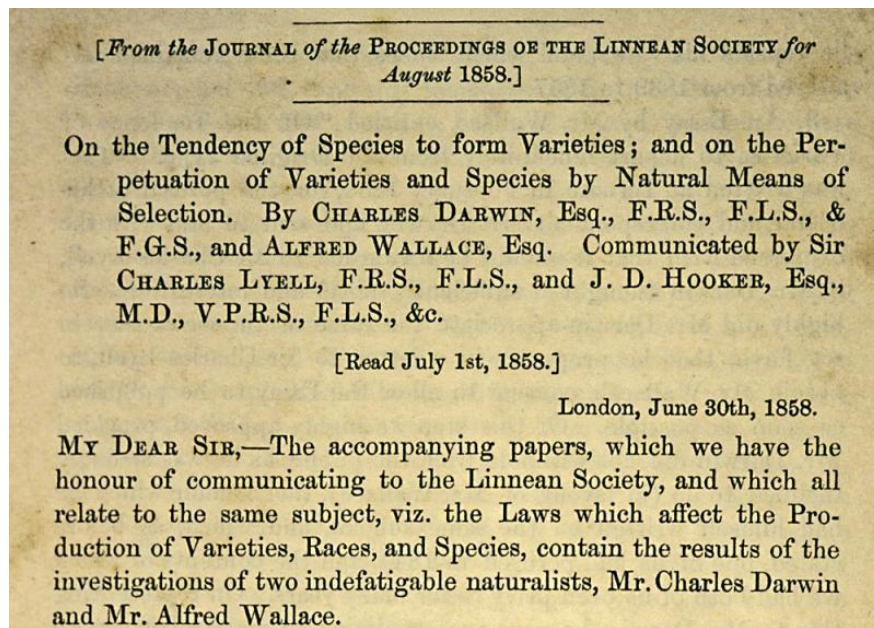
Raby mentions that, in February 1858, amid a bout of malaria in the Moluccas, Wallace merged the pre-existing ideas of Thomas Malthus (1766–1834), which pertained to population growth limits, and the notion of biological diversity. He combined these ideas into a hypothetical mechanism that could potentially give rise to new forms and species within natural populations. Essentially, this marked the birth of the concept currently recognized as "survival of the fittest" (qtd. in Kutschera, 344).

Following his recovery from illness, Wallace promptly documented his views and sent them to Charles Darwin (1809–1882), with whom he had initiated a correspondence several years prior. The naturalist had been exploring related thoughts over the previous two decades, and now a potential challenge to his primacy regarding this fundamental notion was imminent.

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He reached out to his friends, who decided to present Wallace's document and some unpublished excerpts from Darwin's notebook at the upcoming Linnean Society assembly (Kutschera, 344).

In June of 1858, Charles Lyell and Joseph Hooker delivered two papers to the Linnean Society of London concerning the subject of *The Principles Governing The Emergence Of Variations, Races, And Species* (see Figure 3). It is widely believed that Darwin and Wallace proposed nearly identical theories during this time (Barlow, Gould, qtd. in Kutschera, 344).



**Figure 3** From the journal of the proceedings of the Linnean society (The 1858 Darwin-Wallace Paper | The Alfred Russel Wallace Website)

The contributions made by Alfred Russell Wallace were pivotal in shaping the trajectory of evolutionary biology. His observations and deductions challenged the era's conventional belief that species formed separately and remained unchanging in their shapes. Wallace astutely observed a conspicuous pattern when conducting an examination of the spatial arrangement of various animal and plant species within distinct geographical areas, prompting him to formulate his law (Bulmer, 125).

Berry mentions that Wallace's first scientific article on evolution was the renowned "Sarawak Law" (1855), named for the North Borneo area where it was written. In this publication, Wallace presented the concept that Darwin later referred to as the "descent with modification" aspect of evolution. The concept of biological variety is indicative of a genealogical process (1067).

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Bulmer notes that Wallace wrote the paper *On the law that has regulated the introduction of new species* in Sarawak, Borneo, in 1855. Based on his examination of the geographical and geological distribution of flora and fauna, he formulated the principle that each species emerges in proximity, temporally and geographically, to a closely related pre-existing one (125).

*The Sarawak Law* article noted that different species experienced varying rates of change, following a specific sequence. As previously said, Wallace derived his concept from Malthus, therefore positing that individuals possessing beneficial features would exhibit a higher probability of survival and reproductive success, thereby transmitting their advantageous traits to future generations. In contrast, those possessing less advantageous characteristics would have difficulties in their ability to survive and procreate, resulting in a decline in their prevalence across the following generations. Wallace's finding underscores the fundamental principle of natural selection, which assumes a pivotal function in the survival and evolution of species (Gutiérrez, 5).

Hortal et al. add that it is undoubtedly worth highlighting that Wallace made substantial advancements in his ideas during his time spent in Ternate, which is part of the Maluku Archipelago. The author conducted a more in-depth exploration in order to clarify natural selection as the principal force propelling the evolutionary process in what subsequently gained recognition as the *Ternate Paper*.

In his 1858 publication titled *On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original Type*, Wallace highlights that a significant number of individuals perish each year. He argues that the individuals most susceptible to death are the weakest members of the population, including the very young, the elderly, and those afflicted with disease. Conversely, those individuals who manage to survive are likely to possess optimal health and vitality (cited. In Bulmer, 126).

After extensive thought, Wallace reached the conclusion that the repetitive recurrence of this process would ultimately lead to the enhancement of the human race and substantial alterations to the species. The aforementioned alteration, driven by a distinct environmental requirement, has the potential to influence a particular characteristic, ultimately resulting in the gradual separation of the species over an extended period (Gutiérrez, 5).

For Smith, Wallace's argument created a challenge to deeply established views and sparked a fundamental change in the scientific community's viewpoint. Wallace proposed that

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the evolution of human physical attributes preceded the development of their cognitive traits. Furthermore, the concept that the emergence of cognitive abilities altered the trajectory of evolution has opened up a vast array of potential avenues for exploration. Proposals suggest that intellect and consciousness significantly influenced the development of not only humans but also other forms of life. Natural selection suggests that once humans acquired mental attributes, the forces of evolution no longer affected their physical features. In contrast, individuals gradually started to depend on their cognitive capacities to influence and shape their surroundings while also cultivating favorable social exchanges (179).

Smith further argues that Wallace's description of the discontinuity between humans and animals relied on the notion that people had a distinct capacity to exert intellectual dominion over the process of selection. Wallace identified the capacity of humans to intentionally alter their environment and actively influence the course of evolution as a distinctive trait in comparison to other species. Nevertheless, Wallace's analysis overlooked the continuity and gradation of the selecting mechanisms acting upon the physical characteristics of organisms, as well as those influenced by the human intellect (180).

Wallace's objection to the demarcation between ethical and scientific concepts originated from his conviction that the examination of the natural world and the comprehension of human morality were inherently intertwined. He acknowledged the presence of ethical concepts, such as compassion and cooperation, across diverse animal species, implying a sense of continuity between humans and other organisms. However, his comprehensive perspective aimed to reconcile the disparity between science and ethics by integrating ethical principles into his evolutionary scientific framework. He believed that the phenomenon of natural selection exerted an impact not only on physical characteristics but also on the development of moral inclinations within the human species (Smith, 177).

Nevertheless, despite the absence of a hypothesised mechanism, Wallace's concepts laid the groundwork for subsequent investigation and advancement of evolutionary theory. His findings and principles exhibited a notable congruence with the concepts put forward by Darwin in the *Voyage of the Beagle*, suggesting a convergence of intellectual perspectives shared by these two esteemed naturalists (Puentes-Escamilla and Gutiérrez, 4).

Wallace concluded that each species appears in the same location and era as a closely related species that preceded it. He acknowledged that species that are closely associated, which are now referred to as closely related species, have a tendency to geographically cluster

together. This observation also applies to fossils, where they tend to cluster stratigraphically (Berry, 1067).

#### **1.2.4 Unravelling Evolution: Wallace vs Darwin and the Theory of Natural Selection.**

Hull states that several biographies have been written about Charles Darwin. There are only a limited number of publications that have documented Wallace's intriguing life, and the majority of these works have portrayed Wallace as a subordinate figure to Darwin, emphasizing his significance only in relation to Darwin's accomplishments (798).

Giles reckons that the significant scientific achievements of Darwin and Wallace in the realm of natural selection are widely acknowledged, as they both played crucial roles in advancing this ground-breaking idea. Although frequently discussed in conjunction as the trailblazers of this evolutionary mechanism, it is crucial to acknowledge that they independently arrived at their own results within separate circumstances. Consequently, their viewpoints regarding the mechanisms of selection differ in key facets (1).

Ginnobili and Blanco noted that numerous scholars argue that Darwin's theory of natural selection is entirely absent from Wallace's writings, crediting Darwin as its sole originator.

According to Gutiérrez, Darwin and Wallace developed their evolutionary theory with the goal of comprehending the origins of humanity. Nevertheless, their pursuit of knowledge transcended the mere unravelling of the enigma surrounding human existence. Their inquisitiveness motivated them to explore more aspects of terrestrial existence, embracing the diverse range of organisms, their adaptive traits, and the evolutionary mechanisms that shaped them over time (7).

As Giles explains, a fundamental similarity between Darwin and Wallace is their shared understanding that resources are limited, leading to a continuous struggle for survival (1). In essence, the notion of the "struggle for existence," originating from the scholarly contributions of Darwin, Wallace, and Malthus, highlights the persistent competition for finite resources among populations, serving as a pivotal factor in the intricate mechanism of evolution. The ongoing battle referred to in this statement plays a significant role in shaping and altering the diversity and intricacy of life on our planet. This serves as a notable illustration of the intricate interactions between organisms and their surrounding environments.

The differentiation in terms employed by Wallace and Darwin holds considerable importance in comprehending their respective contributions to the theory of evolution.

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Although both Wallace and Darwin separately formulated the notion of natural selection, it was Darwin who initially introduced and popularised the term. However, Darwin's use of the phrase "natural selection" emphasized the idea that a population would favor or select specific features or characteristics based on their advantageous qualities in a specific environment. Consequently, this process would result in the progressive development of species over a prolonged period. In contrast, Wallace's contributions were of comparable significance, albeit with a distinct focus on various facets. He established the concepts of "adaptation" and "population" in a contemporary context, enhancing the comprehensiveness and lucidity of our comprehension regarding evolutionary mechanisms (Kutschera, 351).

The main difference between Darwin and Wallace's theories is their divergence about human species origins. Their disagreement centres on the interpretation of "natural selection" and its application to the inquiry into the source of human existence. Although Wallace and Darwin worked together to support the concept of natural selection in the evolutionary processes of plants and animals, Wallace's staunch adaptationist<sup>1</sup> perspectives faced criticism when it came to the realm of human evolution.

Wallace encountered a challenge in reconciling his strong inclination towards adaptationism and his fervent belief in the localization of brain function, particularly when confronted with the observation that the brains of the often referred to "savages" exhibited similar size and structure to those of Englishmen. This puzzle led him to conclude that natural selection alone cannot account for this phenomenon. The difficulty faced by Wallace can be elucidated by contemporary cognitive scientists, who may attribute it to the phenomenon of a brain selected in one habitat exhibiting entirely new capabilities in an unfamiliar one. Moreover, in his seminal work on *Adaptation and Natural Selection*, G. C. Williams made an observation regarding the perplexing phenomenon of what he referred to as human "cerebral hypertrophy." While acknowledging the credibility of this argument, Williams commented on the perplexing nature of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, he refrained from invoking "higher intelligence" as

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<sup>1</sup> "Adaptationism" refers to a family of views about the importance of natural selection in the evolution of organisms, in the construction of evolutionary explanations, and in defining the goal of research on evolution (Orzack and Forber).

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an explanation for the magnitude of the human brain (qtd. in Glickman, 39).

In summary, Giles succinctly states that Darwin's interpretation of natural selection pertains to its impact as an intraspecific factor, influencing the survival and reproductive capabilities of individuals within a given species. In contrast, Wallace places a major focus on the ecological pressures exerted on different types and species, which compel them to either adapt to their specific local environment or face extinction. This perspective aligns with the concept of ecological balance (6).

In conclusion, Alfred Wallace is significant in the realm of scientific history due to his notable accomplishments. These include his co-discovery of the theory of evolution through natural selection, his advancements in the field of biogeography, his notable contributions to anthropology, and his active support for a variety of social and political causes. The individual's enduring impact on the scientific community persists, with his contributions continuing to have a significant influence across several domains of academic inquiry.

### 1.3 Evolutionary Insights Unearthed: Tracing Darwin's Theory to its Origins

Scholars specialising in science history consistently view the "Darwinian revolution" as a significant event comparable to the "Copernican revolution<sup>2</sup>," according to Bowler. Both of these events represent instances in which a new scientific theory marks a comprehensive shift in societal and cultural beliefs (1).

During the first half of the 19th century, the concept of evolution was not entirely unfamiliar. During that era, geologists were starting to acknowledge the historical nature of the earth's crust. Meanwhile, explorers were uncovering a diverse array of plant and animal species inhabiting the planet. Consequently, the frequent unearthing of fossilised remains belonging to extinct species intrigued a considerable number of individuals (Moog, 414).

According to Gould, the evolution journey within the history of ideas mirrors, in a microcosmic sense, the broader narrative of species evolution that it endeavors to elucidate. This parallel can be described as peculiar, convoluted, unpredictable, intricate, burdened by past legacies, and lacking a linear progression towards a definitive objective (55).

In the words of Charles Eliot's opening note in the Harvard Classics, the concept of organic evolution, contrary to popular belief, predates Darwin's contributions and has a long-standing historical presence. The ancient Greek philosophers, particularly Empedocles and Aristotle, are the originators of the concept in question. As modern philosophy progressed, starting with Bacon, there was a greater conceptual clarity surrounding this concept. Furthermore, in the period preceding Darwin's contributions, Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, and Lamarck had already provided a relatively coherent articulation of this concept (7).

By the early 19th century, the concept of evolution, which posits the transformation of species into other species by natural mechanisms, was a subject of considerable discourse.

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<sup>2</sup> Copernican Revolution: it is shift in the field of astronomy from a geocentric understanding of the universe, centred around Earth, to a heliocentric understanding, centred around the Sun, as articulated by the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus in the 16th century (Britannica).

However, prevailing theological beliefs and scientific opinions strongly supported the notion of species immutability. Darwin's goal was to find a suitable mechanism, and his writings as early as 1838 show signs of natural selection. (Glickman, 34)

### **1.3.1 Evolution under the Lens: Delving into the Core Tenets**

According to Thayer, the primary goal of evolutionary theory is to gain insight into the underlying factors that drive behavior. In evolutionary theory, the idea of ultimate causal analysis helps to explain why proximate processes occur and organisms respond the way they do. It does not pertain to the description of behavior, but rather sets the limits of a proximate causal explanation (127).

Significant experiences occurred when the HMS Beagle departed from South America and traversed the Pacific Ocean to reach the Galapagos archipelago, a cluster of volcanic islands situated near the equator. Upon his arrival on the islands, Darwin possessed profound expertise in the realm of South American flora and wildlife (Ruse 13).

Elliott Sober, the philosopher of biology, states that this process consists of three elements. Initially, there must be genetic variation within the given species. If all individuals possess identical characteristics, then the absence of differentiation provides no grounds for initiating alteration. Gene frequencies are constantly altered by a variety of factors, including genetic drift, migration, mutation, and natural selection.

Therefore, in sexually reproducing organisms, it is only the case that identical twins (or other monozygotic<sup>3</sup> multiple births) exhibit true identical characteristics, whereas all other individuals possess variations. Furthermore, it is crucial for genetic diversity to improve the way biologists define "fitness." An individual belonging to a certain species is considered to be fit when they achieve a higher productive success. This concept is sometimes referred to as "survival of the fittest." The following generation will better represent these individuals than those who are less fit. Eventually, it is imperative that there be heritable diversity in fitness.

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<sup>3</sup> Monozygotic: Either of two children or animals born from the same mother at the same time who have developed from a single egg. Identical twins are of the same sex and look very similar (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary).

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Parents must transmit advantageous trait to their offspring (qtd. in Thayer 131).

Darwin's work showed that many well-known facts about the similarities between animals and how they are distributed geographically and temporally could be explained by suggesting that they are all connected through ancestral lineage, even if the connections are not very close. Additionally, he demonstrated how the natural variations among offsprings of the same parents around a central value that is typically the same as the parents can account for the observed differences between people. Moreover, he observed that certain traits within these variations tend to confer a higher likelihood of survival in the competition for resources and survival (Ellegrd 363).

Based on the theoretical framework, individuals possessing adaptive qualities are prone to enhance their survival prospects and offspring viability, thereby facilitating the transmission of these traits to their offspring. Individuals possessing qualities that are less adaptable are likely to have a lower probability of survival, resulting in a reduced likelihood of transmitting these traits to future generations. BioMed Central demonstrates that over time, the characteristics that provide survival and reproductive advantages to a species tend to become more prevalent within the population, leading to evolutionary changes. Darwin postulated that the process of natural selection might give rise to genetically distinct species originating from a shared ancestral lineage (Than et al.).

As pointed out in the aforementioned paragraph by Ellegård, Ker Than, and his colleagues, the concept of ancestral lineage holds significant importance within the discipline of evolutionary biology. "Lineage" refers to a series of species or individuals that directly link to a particular organism or species through a series of parent-offspring relationships. Lineages are used to track the evolutionary history of a certain collection of organisms, ultimately leading to the identification of their common ancestors. This analytical approach helps understand the process shaping biodiversity.

Charles Darwin concluded his expedition and arrived back in England in 1836. In 1839, Charles Darwin released his scholarly publication, *Journal of Researches*, which consolidated and documented the expedition's results. The evidence substantiating the concept of species evolution was undeniable. The debut of his initial notebooks on the subject of transmutation occurred within a year subsequent to his homecoming, specifically in the year 1837. Darwin acknowledged the concept of "descent with modification" and reached the conclusion that

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nature undergoes transformation. Having embraced Lyell's theory of uniformitarianism<sup>4</sup>, Darwin concluded that the plant and animal life inhabiting those areas should reflect changes in land formations, as failure to adapt would result in their eventual extinction. The diverse array of organisms in his vicinity served as evidence of their capacity to adapt to their surroundings (Tandon and Maitra 38).

Tandon and Maitra append that the first edition of *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* occurred on November 24, 1859. In its opening chapters, *The Origin* introduces the concept of variation in the context of both domestication and the natural environment. The material presents evidence to support the idea that ongoing competition, both within and between species, gives rise to a battle for survival, ultimately resulting in the process of natural selection or the survival of individuals best adapted to their environment (38).

Darwin further demonstrated the phenomenon of similar variation across species belonging to the same genus. There is a substantial amount of empirical evidence supporting the idea of hybridism, as well as the study of the geological record, geographical distribution, and their impact on variation. Tandon and Maitra highlight the remarkable nature of the concluding segment. “There is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally created by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that whilst this planet has gone on cycling according to the fixed laws of gravity, from so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved” (cited. in Tandon and Maitra 38). This means that, the contemplation of life in its various manifestations, originating from a limited number of forms or a single form by a divine Creator, evokes a sense of magnificence. As this planet has continued to orbit in accordance with the immutable laws of gravity, an infinite array of exquisitely beautiful and awe-inspiring forms have emerged and

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<sup>4</sup> Uniformitarianism: in geology, the doctrine suggesting that Earth's geologic processes acted in the same manner and with essentially the same intensity in the past as they do in the present and that such uniformity is sufficient to account for all geologic change. This principle is fundamental to geologic thinking and underlies the whole development of the science of geology (Britannica).

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continue to evolve.

Darwin opted for the term "natural selection" as a deliberate juxtaposition to "artificial selection," a process wherein animal breeders intentionally choose specific qualities that they consider advantageous. According to Than et al., the natural environment, rather than human intervention, is what drives the selection mechanism in the process of natural selection.

Undoubtedly, Darwin's contemporaries met the notion of natural selection in his seminal work, *The Origin of Species*, in 1859 with considerable scepticism, leading to only a limited number of individuals embracing the new concept. It required around three generations before achieving widespread acceptance, even within the community of biologists (Mayr 321).

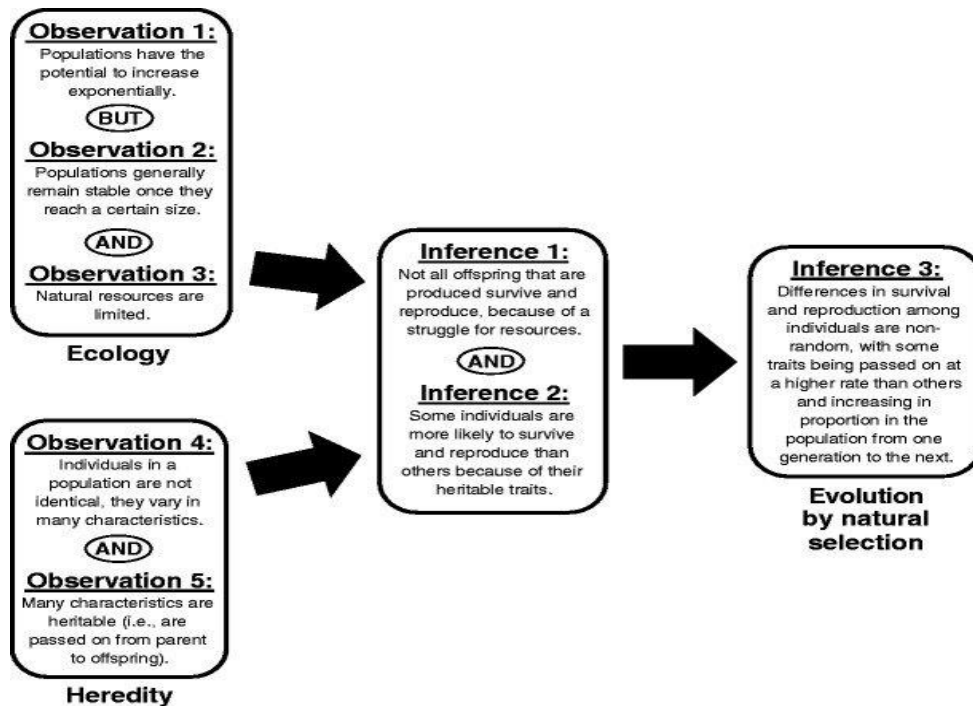
Furthermore, Thayer asserts that the fundamental concept of evolution through natural selection entails that the majority of behavioral traits observed in a species undergo evolutionary changes due to their advantageous role in promoting the species' survival and reproductive success (130).

Ruse declares that natural selection, Darwin's proposed method of evolutionary change, is based on the idea that some organisms have advantageous traits that enable them to excel in the processes of survival and reproduction. Consequently, there exists a discrepancy in the reproductive success of organisms, leading to a higher transmission rate of traits deemed "useful" compared to other traits. It is widely acknowledged that Darwin did not just introduce the concept of natural selection without providing supporting arguments. Initially, he introduced a concept known as the "struggle for existence." After completing the aforementioned task, the individual proceeded to use their derived conclusion regarding the conflict to advocate for the concept of natural selection (220).

Charles Darwin posits in his seminal work, *On the Origin of Species*, that natural selection is the process that inherits genetic features better adapted to the environment. However, the comparative advantage that some individuals have over other members of the same species is what drives the process, rather than the absolute superiority of one organism over another. Four fundamental principles, namely variation, inheritance, population increase, and differential survival and reproduction, underlie the concept of natural selection (Raevska 6).

Mayr condenses Charles Darwin's extensive exploration of natural selection into five key "facts," essentially direct observations, and three related inferences (qtd. in Gregory 157).

Fig. 1 illustrates these observations.



**Figure 4** The basis of natural selection as presented by Darwin (1859), based on the summary by Mayr (1982) (Gregory 158).

Ernst Mayr, a prominent figure in evolutionary biology and renowned historian of modern synthesis, presented the following characterization of its fundamental assertions during a meeting that brought together all the key contributors (qtd. in Mayr and Provine 1).

Gregory explains that one fundamental discovery that forms the basis of natural selection is that populations possess the inherent ability to undergo exponential growth, often referred to as geometric growth, in principle. This can be regarded as a fundamental mathematical function. If an organism generates two children, and each of these offspring generates two offspring, and so forth, the total number of organisms increases exponentially ( $1 \rightarrow 2 \rightarrow 4 \rightarrow 8 \rightarrow 16 \rightarrow 32 \rightarrow 64 \dots$  to  $2^n$  after  $n$  rounds of reproduction) (157).

Darwin's work repeatedly references the idea, which originated from the theories of Malthus: "All plants and animals are tending to increase at a geometrical ratio" (qtd. in Boero 6).

Gould explains that the fundamental tenet of Darwinism necessitates that natural selection not only function but also serve as the creative force for evolutionary modifications (56).

The presence of variation among individuals is an essential condition for driving

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evolutionary change. Considering the significance of variation in relation to Darwin's theory of natural selection and its contradiction to prevailing beliefs at the time, it is not unexpected that Darwin (1859) dedicated substantial effort to establishing the widespread presence of variation. Additionally, he underscored the observation that certain species, specifically those that share a familial relationship, particularly parents and their offspring, exhibit greater similarity to one another compared to unrelated individuals within the population. He also came to realize that this factor is critical for the process of natural selection to occur. Darwin (1859) stated, "Any variation not inherited is unimportant for us" (quoted in Gregory 158).

In his work, *The Origin of Species*, Darwin succinctly encapsulated the theory of evolution through the mechanism of natural selection as follows:

As many more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either with one individual with another of the same species, with individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life. Can it, then, be thought improbable, seeing that variations useful to man have undoubtedly occurred, that other variations, useful in some way to each being in the great and complex battle of life, should sometimes occur in the course of thousands of generations? If such do occur, can we doubt (remembering that many more individuals are born than can possibly survive) that individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving and of procreating their kind? On the other hand, we may feel sure that any variation in the least degree injurious would be rigidly destroyed. This preservation of favourable variations and the rejection of injurious variations I call natural Selection (cited. in Ayala and Fitch 7691).

Darwin initiates his argument by observing that within each species, there exists an excess of individuals being born or created, surpassing the capacity for survival and effective reproduction. This observation applies to communities within the natural environment, often facing resource constraints. As a result of excessive production of individuals, an ongoing state of competition and struggle for survival ensues. The struggle can manifest in diverse manners, including intraspecific competition, interspecific rivalry, and competition against challenging environmental conditions. He argues that the observation of beneficial changes in humans

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through artificial selection implies the possibility of similar favorable variations occurring naturally in other animals, facilitating their ongoing struggle for survival.

According to Darwin, in the event that advantageous variations emerge through natural means, individuals who possess even a minor advantage as a result of these variations are more inclined to endure and procreate effectively. The fundamental concept of natural selection revolves around the notion that organisms possessing beneficial qualities are more likely to pass down those traits to subsequent generations. On the contrary, any variation that is detrimental or unfavourable would probably lead to a decreased likelihood of survival and reproductive success for people possessing such qualities. Essentially, natural selection gradually eliminates harmful mutations over time. Darwin concludes his work by providing a definition for a concept he terms "natural selection." Natural selection is a mechanism that retains and propagates advantageous variations within a population, gradually removes undesirable variations across successive generations, and ultimately leads to evolutionary transformations within species over extended periods.

Darwin derived his idea of natural selection from two main points, according to Ayala and Fitch: first, the idea that organisms have beneficial genetic differences, and second, the observation that they have more children than the environment can support. One of the primary challenges faced by Darwin's theory of evolution was the lack of a comprehensive theory of inheritance capable of explaining the perpetuation of changes across successive generations, which was critical for the mechanism of natural selection to operate upon (Ayala and Fitch 7691).

Zirkle says that natural selection includes a number of subordinate claims when explaining the idea of evolution. These include the existence of heritable differences, the effect of population pressure, the struggle for existence, and the survival of individuals with advantageous traits or higher adaptability.

He further argues that population dynamics have commonly portrayed the concept of the struggle for existence as a gladiatorial contest, leading the general public to overlook the fact that natural selection can occur even in the absence of direct competition among organisms. An inhospitable environment has the potential to eradicate certain variations while favouring the survival of others (74).

Additionally, Darwin introduced the notion of fitness, without explicitly using this term: "I use the term struggle for existence in a large and metaphorical sense, including dependence

of one being on another and including not only the life of the individual but success in leaving progeny” (cited. in Boero, 6).

Charles Darwin clarifies the metaphorical sense in which he uses the phrase "struggle for existence" in his argument. He extends the scope of the notion to incorporate a wider array of interactions and interdependencies within the natural realm, surpassing the mere physical conflicts among individual species. Darwin emphasizes that the struggle for existence includes not only survival but also reproduction and gene transmission. The goal extends beyond mere survival, encompassing the successful propagation of offspring that inherit favourable features.

Darwin firmly believed that interactions between members of the same species were the main factors driving competition for survival. He demonstrated an understanding of the importance of climate in determining resource distribution and animal population size. However, he regarded climate as an intermediary factor that influences the interactions between organisms and their resource-acquisition strategies, as shown in the following citation: "Climate chiefly acts in reducing food; it brings on ... struggle between the individuals, whether of the same or of distinct species, which subsist on the same kind of food." (qtd. in Boero 7).

Boero concludes that the concepts put forth by Darwin exerted a significant influence on contemporary society, resulting in a permanent alteration of our understanding of the natural world and our self-conception. The primary innovation in Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was the concept of natural selection. It is noteworthy that the term "evolution" is conspicuously absent in the initial edition of *The Origin*, although the book concludes with the term "evolved" (1).

In conclusion, it is widely acknowledged that Charles Darwin's theory of evolution via natural selection as one of the most consequential and important ideas in the history of scientific inquiry. The phenomenon of evolution as explained by Charles Darwin is the process by which species undergo adaptation to their specific environments, leading to the development of new traits and, eventually, the emergence of unique species. The notion indicated previously serves to clarify the interconnectedness of all living species while also highlighting the remarkable tale of life's development and adaptation over an extensive period of time. Moreover, this phenomenon has shown its resilience over an extended period, gaining widespread acceptance among scientists, and significantly reshaping our understanding of the natural world.

### **1.3.2 Neo-Darwinism: an Alternative Perspective of Evolution.**

In a nutshell, the Modern Synthetic Theory of Evolution, commonly referred to as The

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Modern Synthesis, is a theory of evolution that builds a coherent evolutionary framework by combining the fundamental ideas underlying both Darwinian evolution and Mendelian genetics.

According to the journal *Emergence*, the decades of the 1930s and the 1940s saw the emergence of "Modern Synthesis," a significant development that integrated Darwinian Theory of natural selection with Mendelian genetics and population genetics. This synthesis gave rise to a Neo-Darwinist perspective on the origins of humanity, which included the concepts of heredity and adaptability.

Likewise, Haig claims that the term "Neo-Darwinism" has a variety of interpretations depending on the context, but its original meaning referred to August Weismann and his supporters' adamant rejection of the transmission of acquired characteristics. Romanes (1888) coined the term "Neo-Darwinian" as an adjective to describe a philosophy that he opposed (416).

Evolutionary biology has viewed the rise of Neo-Darwinism as a significant breakthrough. The combination of genetic concepts and natural selection mechanisms provides a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms driving evolutionary transitions. The synthesis mentioned above has become the prevailing theoretical framework in the realm of biological sciences for understanding the processes behind the phenomenon of evolution.

Mayr posits that the field of evolutionary biology widely recognises August Weismann as a prominent and influential figure. When considering the individuals who had the most significant influence on evolutionary theory throughout the nineteenth century after Darwin, it becomes evident that Weismann emerges as the indisputable figure. He was the one who bore the responsibility for what was later referred to by Romanes as Neo-Darwinism. Interestingly, contemporary scholarly investigations pertaining to Weismann's contributions mostly focus on his influence within the field of genetics, while a comprehensive examination of his evolutionary theories in a contemporary context remains lacking.

Noble elucidates the interconnection between Neo-Darwinism, the modern synthesis, and the concept of the selfish gene. The concept of Neo-Darwinism, first coined by Georges Romanes in 1883, and its subsequent growth into Modern Synthesis as a gene-centric perspective on evolution may be discussed apart from the notion of the selfish gene. Neo-Darwinism, a widely used term in contemporary discourse, refers to the amalgamation of Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection and the proposition that variations on

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which selection operates are predominantly or exclusively generated by genetic mutations. However, the term "Modern Synthesis" is more accurate, as Romanes coined the term "Neo-Darwinism" before the rediscovery of Mendel's genetics (1008).

Overall, Modern Synthesis encompasses a complete theoretical framework that integrates the principles of genetics and natural selection to elucidate the mechanisms behind species evolution and adaptation to varying environmental conditions. The theory in question continues to have a pivotal position within the field of evolutionary biology, contributing significantly to our comprehension of the underlying principles that drive the remarkable array of life forms on Earth.

During the first decade of the 20th century, there emerged a concerted effort to harmonise the findings of Darwin's investigations on evolution via natural selection with Mendel's studies on the mechanisms of heredity. This endeavour culminated in the formulation of the Modern Synthesis (MS), which effectively integrated many disciplines like genetics, systematics, embryology, and palaeontology (Hancock et al.).

Theodosius Dobzhansky (1900–1975) played a pivotal role in the development of the Synthetic Theory of Evolution, also referred to as the Modern Synthesis of Evolutionary Theory. This comprehensive framework encompasses a diverse range of biological information, with a primary focus on Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, interpreted through the lens of genetics (Ayala and Fitch 7691).

Dobzhansky's seminal work, *Genetics and the Origin of Species*, presented a thorough and encompassing explanation of the evolutionary process via the lens of genetics. Empirical data substantiated the theoretical assertions put forward, fortifying this scholarly endeavour (Ayala and Fitch 7692).

Ayala and Fitch denote that Mendelian genetics served as the crucial component that filled the gap in Darwin's reasoning. During the period coinciding with the publication of *The Origin of Species*, Gregor Mendel, an Augustinian monk, conducted a comprehensive series of experiments using peas within the confines of his monastery's garden located in Brunn, Austria-Hungary (present-day Brno, Czech Republic). In 1866, Mendel's publication established the foundational principles of theory of heredity that explains biological inheritance through discrete elements, now referred to as "genes." Each parent inherits these genes, which do not blend or mix. Instead, they segregate during the formation of gametes, which are the reproductive cells (7691).

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They also reveal that the term "synthetic" generally refers to the skillful integration of Darwin's theory of natural selection with Mendelian genetics, as well as the inclusion of pertinent knowledge from several scientific fields (7691).

Besides, Gafton and Chirila unveil the Neo-Darwinism paradigm, which places significant emphasis on the mechanism component, as demonstrated by Darwin, while exclusively prioritising the function of natural selection and disregarding any potential contribution from other factors. This shift from the original Darwinian notion is a fundamental characteristic of Neo-Darwinism (10).

Ayala and Fitch note that modern synthetic theory is based on the original synthesis. The understanding of biological evolution encompasses more than a singular hypothesis or theory supported by evidence. Rather, it is a comprehensive collection of knowledge derived from multiple disciplines. This amalgamation comprises well-founded theories and working hypotheses, supported by empirical studies and trials that confirm accepted hypotheses and disproven ones. Collectively, these components aim to elucidate the mechanisms and consequences of the evolutionary process. The formulation of hypotheses, the collection of observations, and the conduct of tests often stem from several academic fields, including genetics, embryology, zoology, botany, palaeontology, and molecular biology (7691).

It is worth noting that despite the release of "Evolution: The Modern Synthesis" by Huxley, which aimed to integrate the contributions of prominent figures in the field, the Modern Synthesis (MS) framework continued to develop. Scholars who followed in the footsteps of Fisher, Wright, Haldane, Dobzhansky, Simpson, Stebbins, and others continued to refine and update the principles of the MS (Hancock et al.).

The notions derived from Darwinian Theory have been widely accepted and established within the field of evolutionary biology to the extent that students without a historical context frequently mistakenly presume their longstanding presence since 1859. Natural selection was recognized as a fundamental component of evolutionary theory during the intellectual movement of the 1930s and 1940s, sometimes referred to as the "modern synthesis," as described by Julian Huxley in 1942. The review included real-world evidence that natural selection is a strong cause. This move from being one of many possible causes to a prominent role as a main mechanism driving evolutionary change (Gould 55) was an important one.

At the present time, several scholarly articles advocating for the enduring significance of the MS exhibit inconsistencies in their conceptualizations of its nature, often opting to

highlight the variables or scholars deemed most significant within a particular academic domain. The absence of coherence in the context of the MS may also result in the perception that newly acquired information is outside its purview (Hancock et al.).

Julian Huxley coined the term "evolutionary synthesis" to encapsulate the broad consensus surrounding two fundamental principles: the explanation of gradual evolution via progressive genetic changes, commonly referred to as "mutations" and recombination, and the arrangement of this genetic diversity through the mechanism of natural selection. Furthermore, the empirical occurrences of evolution, particularly the processes of macroevolution and speciation, may be thoroughly elucidated in a manner that aligns with our contemporary comprehension of genetic mechanisms (qtd. in Gould 56).

Gafton and Chirila conclude that, according to Darwin, natural selection plays a significant role in the retention and development of traits resulting from both direct adaptation and chance occurrences. However, other factors often influence the strength of natural selection, which is not consistently strong. The struggle for survival, which leads to the survival of the most adapted individuals, varies in its overall impact as other factors also exert their influence. According to proponents of Neo-Darwinism, natural selection operates only on randomly occurring traits. They assert that natural selection is the sole process driving evolution, with the struggle for existence and the survival of well-suited individuals assuming paramount importance. In the context of sexual selection, Darwin also identifies a component that contributes to the process, but it is not the only determinant (10).

### **1.3.3 The Evolutionary Puzzle: Uncovering the Criticisms of Charles Darwin's Theory**

It is undeniable that individuals exhibit reluctance and opposition when confronted with the need to adapt and embrace new ideas. This resistance can manifest in both personal and organisational contexts, and it represents acknowledged and extensively studied phenomena within the realm of human psychology and behaviour. Throughout the 19th century, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution via natural selection faced substantial criticism and controversy upon its first introduction.

Darwin's accurate prediction of the scientific community's response, according to Loewenberg, demonstrates his notable insight. He acknowledged on a previous occasion that it would be quite challenging to persuade those of older generations. ... "Whose minds are stocked with a multitude of facts, all viewed . . . from a point of view directly opposite to mine..." (Darwin 687).

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In the journal *Emergence*, in an article written by Chris La Placa discussing Charles Darwin's theory, he mentions that the notion of a non-Creationist origin of modern humans caused significant astonishment among both scientific and religious communities, leading to heated protests based on biological, geological, and theological considerations.

Gould reports that critics of Darwinism, including Arthur Koestler, have often shown a misunderstanding of this fundamental principle of Darwinism. Critics argue that Darwinism's validity is questionable because they contend that the intricate organization seen in our environment cannot plausibly be attributed to random mechanisms (57).

Whitwell Elwin, the editor of the magazine *Quarterly Review*, was the first unofficial reviewer of Charles Darwin's seminal work, *The Origin of Species*. Darwin's publishing firm selected Elwin to assess and evaluate the manuscript prior to its potential publication. Elwin provided a notable recommendation against publishing the work, arguing that it was "a wild and foolish piece of imagination." He said that the author would have been wiser to exclude his theoretical wanderings and focus solely on the subject of pigeons (Thomas).

There have always been those who say evolution is not a "scientific theory." Falk notes. Not only creationists who argued that Darwin's theory of evolution was, at most, a matter of belief similar to the biblical account of creation, made these assertions.

Bowler claims that Haughton has the distinction of being the first individual to provide comments on Darwin's theory, after the presentation of the collaborative works by Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace before the Linnaean Society of London in 1858 (412).

Haughton, who had access to the printed copies of the papers, critiqued the idea concisely during his address to the Geological Society of Dublin on February 9, 1859. The journal of the organisation documented the aforementioned findings, and Darwin came into possession of a fragment of this material. He said: "This speculation of Mess. Darwin and Wallace would not be worthy of note were it not for the weight of authority of the names under whose auspices it" (qtd. in Bowler 412).

Samuel Haughton clearly undermines Darwin's work and goes on to state that Darwin and Wallace's significance lay not just in the substance of their ideas, but also in the considerable authority attributed to the names associated with these pioneering notions. People with less recognition might have overlooked or dismissed these notions.

Prevalent religious perspectives about the essence and chronology of life have opposed

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the idea of evolution since the work of Charles Darwin. Given that evolutionary biology emerged in scientifically sophisticated nations where Christianity was the prevailing religion, it is noteworthy that Christian perspectives on evolution have yielded a substantial body of literature. The majority of Christian perspectives on evolution may be classified into broad classifications of theological conservatism that reject the concept of evolution (Edis, 1).

It is worth noting that, within the framework of Muslim scholars, reactions exhibit significant resistance. They have reservations about the idea of evolution, seeing it as incompatible with their religious convictions.

Muslim scholars, Ibrahim and Baharuddin note, have highlighted that a primary criticism of Darwinism is its perceived adverse effects on the Islamic faith (creed). Allah, the Almighty Creator, has omnipotence, enabling Him to accomplish anything, including those deemed unattainable by conventional means (52).

They further argue that the Quran's teachings typically do not view the possibility of one species evolving into another as contradictory. Allah's explanation in verses 38:71–76 of the Quran, asserting that Prophet Adam (52) is the origin of mankind, renders the notion of human evolution implausible within this theoretical framework.

In his article "Islamic Theological Views on Darwinian Evolution," Guessoum in *Islam and Science* highlights two primary theological concerns arising from Muslim scholars' debates on evolution: 1) Is God eliminated by the evolutionary paradigm, or does 'the Creator' gain a new definition? 2) Does Adam continue to exist in the human evolution scenario? Moreover, Dr. Shoaib Malik indicates that "Evolution is without a doubt a challenging issue for Muslims".

Eventually, when Charles Darwin first introduced his theory of evolution by means of natural selection in the 19th century, it faced significant opposition and skepticism. However, after removing it from its biological context, people applied it to the social and cultural aspects of human society, resulting in the emergence of social Darwinism, a global phenomenon that gave rise to eugenics, Nazism, and other factors.

### **1.4 The Historical Context of Social Darwinism: Tracing its Influence and implications**

Understanding social Darwinism, its origin, and its development only allows the reader to have an overview and comprehension of the influence and relevance that this latter has had over the last decade.

The simplistic application of Mendelian theory to non-hereditary traits persisted with

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E.O. Wilson's *Socio-biology* (1975), which aimed to bridge social and physical sciences. Wilson and others viewed the use of biological principles in social explanations as a natural extension of Neo-Darwinism. He argued that sociology should be restructured similarly to taxonomy and ecology, which had been transformed through integration into the Modern Synthesis (qtd. in the journal *Emergence*).

Social Darwinism is a conceptual framework and collection of hypotheses that originated during the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. It sought to extend the concepts elucidated by Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection to the realm of human societies. Social Darwinists contended that human societies and their social hierarchies could follow the principles governing the evolution of species, such as competition, adaptation, and the survival of the fittest.

Rutledge says that many European intellectuals had previously discussed the link between race and intellectual predisposition before social Darwinism emerged and established the idea of European supremacy a central part of natural selection and evolution (244).

Throughout history, science has frequently served as a tool to rationalise, advocate for, and implement societal policies that perpetuate racism, according to Rutledge. Philosophical and political foundations first established the scientific validation and credibility of concepts pertaining to racial superiority and inferiority, subsequently reinforced by the pioneering publication of Charles Darwin's (1859) significant work, *The Origin of Species* (243).

According to *Britannica*, social Darwinism is the theory that asserts that human groupings and races are vulnerable to the same principles of natural selection observed by Charles Darwin in the realm of plants and animals in the natural world.

Dickens argues that scholars often use the term "Social Darwinism" to refer to numerous attempts to apply principles from Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection to the fields of social theory, political systems, economics, and other aspects of human social existence (as cited in Mogilski, 1). Others, such as Thomas and Lerato, assert that scholars frequently use the term "Social Darwinism" to misapply Charles Darwin's biological evolutionary concepts to fields like politics, economics, and society (1).

Additionally, it is explained by Halliday that the term "Social Darwinism" is used to refer to a nineteenth-century movement or body of ideas in which social change is asserted to be driven by the selection of advantageous genetic variations.

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Richard Hofstadter, in his prominent work titled *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944), provided a comprehensive definition of social Darwinism. According to Hofstadter, social Darwinism is an ideology that adopts a competitive perspective on nature and uses Darwin's concept of a struggle for existence as a foundation for social theory. As noted by Hofstadter, in its initial stage, social Darwinism largely functioned as a rationale for laissez-faire<sup>5</sup> ideas since it emphasised the significance of individualistic competition. Subsequently, throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, proponents of imperialism, racism, and eugenics increasingly turned to Darwinian principles as a basis for their assertions. The ultimate stage of social Darwinism emphasised collective struggle and emerged along with the progressive movement (qtd. in Weikart 469).

Furthermore, Simpson claims that the concept of "Social Darwinism" emerged as a result of applying Darwin's idea of natural selection to human society, particularly focusing on the notions of rivalry and struggle. This ideology, which was aligned with the prevailing intellectual atmosphere of the late nineteenth century, received support from proponents of unregulated competition in the business sector, promoters of colonial expansion, and those who opposed voluntary reforms in society (34).

In his work titled *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, Hofstadter argued that American entrepreneurs saw Darwin's theories as a suitable justification for their advocacy of free markets. "Successful business entrepreneurs," he said, "seemed to have accepted almost by instinct the Darwinian terminology that had emerged from the conditions of their existence" (qtd. in Leonard 40).

Ernst Haeckel provides scientific validation for this perspective, in "Freedom in Science and Teaching" he explains that:

The theory of selection teaches that in human life, as in animal and plant life, everywhere and at all times, only a small and chosen minority can exist and flourish, while

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<sup>5</sup> Laissez-faire, (French: "allow to do") policy of minimum governmental interference in the economic affairs of individuals and society (Britannica).

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the enormous majority starve and perish miserably and more or less prematurely. . . . The cruel and merciless struggle for existence which rages through living nature, and in the course of nature must rage, this unceasing and inexorable competition of all living creatures is an incontestable fact; only the picked minority of the qualified fittest is in a position to resist it successfully, while the great majority of the competitors must necessarily perish miserably. We may profoundly lament this tragical state of things, but we can neither controvert nor alter it. "Many are called, but few are chosen." This principle of selection is as far as possible from democratic; on the contrary it is aristocratic in the strictest sense of the word (qtd. in Simpson, 34).

The concept of selection suggests that, as in natural processes, human life is marked by the success of a select few, while the majority encounter difficulties and frequently face premature death. The relentless and intense struggle for existence represents a harsh reality, whereby only a limited number of individuals with exceptional abilities may achieve success, while the rest unfortunately face demise. The present circumstances may be regarded as lamentable, but our ability to alter them remains limited. The aforementioned principle of selection is notably undemocratic reflecting explicitly aristocratic orientation.

In the most recent academic study on the topic, Mike Hawkins's research titled "Social Darwinism and European and American Thought 1860–1945" identifies four primary assumptions that constitute the worldview of social Darwinism. There are several fundamental principles that govern organic nature, including humans. An example of this is the influence of biological laws. Furthermore, population growth puts pressure on available resources, causing organisms to compete for survival. Another significant factor is the advantage conferred by physical and mental traits, which can increase an individual's prospects in this struggle for existence or in sexual competition. These advantageous traits have the potential to spread throughout the population via inheritance. Lastly, the combined effects of selection and inheritance over an extended period contribute to the emergence of new species and the extinction of others (Claeys 228).

Kropotkin argued that Darwin's adherents, such as Herbert Spencer and T. H. Huxley, had significantly constrained the concept of struggle to its most limited scope. Huxley's scholarly article, titled *The Struggle for Existence and Its Bearing upon Man*, argued that among

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primitive societies, akin to the animal kingdom, those who were deemed feeble and unintelligent were marginalized. In contrast, those who demonstrated resilience and astuteness, possessing superior adaptability to their surroundings while lacking in other respects, were more likely to survive (qtd. in Simpson 34).

While Darwin acknowledged that militarism and war can lead to reverse selection by causing the premature death or reproductive limitations of physically fit young men, while simultaneously providing greater opportunities for individuals with weaker constitutions to marry and pass on their genes. It is noteworthy that some social Darwinists even praised war as a mechanism for advancing societal development (Simpson 35).

The "balance of power" ententes and alliances, as well as the wars between competing imperial powers, were justified by Darwinian theory. Social Darwinism legitimised the ideas of rulers like Bismarck in Germany, Chamberlain in England, and Theodore Roosevelt in the United States (Simpson, 36).

Both England and the United States accepted social Darwinism because it aligned with policies and practices deemed consistent with their respective national interests. While the United States had internal racial issues, England, by contrast, did not have such challenges. However, England's expansive empire compelled it to formulate external colonial and imperialist policies rooted in social Darwinist frameworks. Social Darwinism in the United States included an internal focus on both racial and economic aspects (Rutledge 245-246).

When he became aware of Spencer's expression, Darwin perceived it to more accurately depict the outcome of the Malthusian battle for survival compared to the controversial concept of natural selection. Charles Darwin had a singular reservation about the phrase "survival of the fittest," which was solely grammatical. "It cannot be used as a substantive governing a verb, and that this is a real objection I infer from H. Spencer continually using the words, Natural Selection" (qtd. in Rogers 278).

Malthus used organic metaphor to conceptualise society, positing that similar principles regulated the realms of both animals and humans. He distinguished between people who, according to their productivity, contributed to societal progress and those who did not. Furthermore, he proposed that one's productivity exclusively determined one's rights. Malthus followers also argued that competition, like natural selection, determined the survival of the most capable individuals, while those who were less successful faced the risk of starvation unless external factors intervened (Claeys 233).

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The conflation of biological and social development is a fundamental aspect of the correlation between Darwin's theories and subsequent manifestations of "Social Darwinism." The Malthusian idea of human population has had a lasting impact (Rogers 275).

Some proponents of social Darwinism suggest that individuals who possess greater strength may experience an increase in their financial status and influence, and those perceived as weaker may witness a decrease in their wealth and power (Thomas and Lerato 2).

The fifth edition (1869) of *The Origin of Species* titled the chapter on natural selection "Natural Selection, or The Survival of the Fittest." Darwin revised the last sentence of the definition of natural selection. He suggested the following change: "This keeping of beneficial variations and the rejection of harmful variations, I call Natural Selection or the Survival of the Fittest" (quoted in Rogers, 278).

Nevertheless, Thomas Huxley, a prominent advocate of Darwinism, expressed his belief that the use of Spencer's terminology was highly unfortunate. Huxley argued, "The unlucky substitution of 'survival of the fittest' for 'natural selection' had done much harm in consequence of the ambiguity of 'fittest'—which many take to mean 'best' or 'highest'—whereas natural selection may work towards degradation...." (qtd. in Rogers 278).

Even R. J. Wilson also criticized, asserting that Darwin's theory of natural selection does not mandate its direct application to social theory (Rogers 267). Evidently, Darwin cannot be held accountable for the diverse social ideologies' subsequent interpretations of his theory of natural selection. The biological process he outlined in his concept of natural selection has nothing to do with social philosophy (Rogers 268).

However, one intriguing aspect of Darwinism's reception was the finding that while some academics in the fields of economics and sociology found it repulsive, theologians embraced it. The concept gained popularity during a period when classical economics' influence was diminishing and social legislation was significantly expanding. Conservatives who were concerned expressed their approval of Darwinism as a new justification of a longstanding belief. For many individuals, the Darwinian concept of the battle for life seemed to provide a fresh justification for economic rivalry. Furthermore, the concept of survival of the fittest justified opposition to welfare to those considered weak (Hofstadter 457).

According to Ashley Montagu, the Darwinian fallacy refers to the belief that "life is a struggle for existence in which only the fit survive, the fittest being those who have whatever it

takes to survive" (qtd. in Simpson 43).

While the current perspective on natural selection emphasizes the importance of cooperation in contemporary societies, it also acknowledges the significance of competition. The compatibility between unchecked competition and democracy is questionable, since democratic nations strive to manage competition for the sake of society (Simpson 45).

#### **1.4.1. Survival of the Fittest: A Closer Look at Figures Shaping Social Darwinism**

Simpson notes that, similar to religious texts, Darwinism may be subject to multiple interpretations. Various groups of individuals, including aristocrats, democrats, Marxists, racists, militarists, pacifists, social scientists, and biologists, have extensively studied and analysed the works of Darwin, repeatedly examining and interpreting his ideas (33).

As a matter of fact, by 1900, social Darwinist conceptions of “struggle”, “fitness”, and "survival," of the everlasting Hobbesian war of all against all, individual, national, and species-centred, had become essentially pervasive and definitive of one of the most significant modern tendencies in European and American philosophy (Claeys 226).

Thomas and Lerato define survival of the fittest as the theory that certain individuals rise to prominence in society because they are innately superior, which is central to the beliefs of social Darwinists. Social Darwinism has supported controversial causes such as imperialism, racism, eugenics, and socioeconomic inequality over the last century and a half (2).

Rogers claims that it was Charles Darwin who ultimately achieved success with his theory of natural selection within the realm of evolutionary ideas that were prevalent at the time. However, it was Herbert Spencer who propagated the concept of survival of the fittest and subsequently elucidated the implications of Darwin's theory of natural selection for human civilization. Spencer had held a belief in the theory of evolution prior to the release of Charles Darwin's seminal work, *The Origin of Species*. Using biological theory to analyse social issues, he concluded that population pressure could be considered "beneficial" as it ensures the inexorable advancement of the human species. Since only the smartest and most adaptable survived each generation (279–280),

##### **1.4.1.1. Beyond Charles Darwin: Herbert Spencer's Notion of Survival of the Fittest.**

Herbert Spencer is considered by Munch to be the man who “shaped the emergence of sociology as a distinctive scientific discipline” (35). Moreover, Abraham and Morgan mention

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that Spencer's views significantly contributed to the process of evolutionary change in social structures and institutions (59).

Ward observes that Spencer explored the motivations that drove his work in his 'Autobiography,' demonstrating the inextricable link between egoism and altruism in the composition of these motivations.

He further argues that we should not view Herbert Spencer's 'Autobiography' as a mere leisure activity or an accidental occurrence in his professional trajectory, but rather as an essential component of his life's work. The author's other writings include a philosophical perspective on nature, while his 'Autobiography' encapsulates a philosophical outlook on life (874).

Turner explains that the overarching concept of evolution consistently influenced Spencer's conceptualization of social systems (cited. in Hossain and Mustari 57). In other words, Spencer engaged in contemplation and comprehension of the structure and function of societies and social systems. The overarching concept of evolution consistently influenced his ideas of social systems. Spencer believed that the tenets of biological evolution, as postulated by Charles Darwin, could be used to elucidate the processes by which civilizations evolve and undergo transformation throughout history.

Spencer posits that the structure of society follows the same framework as that of an individual. Although the development of societies differs significantly from other evolutionary processes, he posits that it exemplifies a consistent and universally applicable natural law (qtd. in Hossain and Mustari 57).

Spencer states, "There can be no complete acceptance of sociology as a science, so long as the belief in a social order not conforming to natural law survives" (qtd. in Hossain and Mustari 57). Furthermore, other scholars, like Herbert Spencer, who coined the phrase "survival of the fittest," argued that Darwin's principles could also apply to human societies to extend biological evolution to the social realm (Rutledge 244).

In contrast to Darwin's perspective, Spencer held the belief that individuals had the capacity to transmit acquired traits, such as frugality and morality, to their offspring via hereditary transmission. He expressed his opposition to legislation aimed at supporting workers, those living in poverty, and those whom he saw as genetically disadvantaged. According to his argument, the implementation of such rules would impede the progress of human civilization

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by prolonging the survival of those deemed biologically disadvantaged (Thomas and Lerato 3–4).

Spencer held that human societies, like biological species, follow the principles of natural selection, are subject to competition and fitness, and go through a transformation from a homogenous and primitive stage to one characterized by diversity and advancement (Rutledge 244). He explained that we should not provide an artificial advantage to those who lack the necessary strength or resources to compete, or who are unwilling and incapable of doing so, to sustain their presence on the battlefield of natural selection.

Herbert Spencer saw much more common ground between Darwin's scientific foundations and his own economic beliefs. Spencer adapted the concept of "survival of the fittest" to "laissez-faire" capitalism during the Industrial Revolution, allowing enterprises to operate with minimal government intervention (Thomas and Lerato 3).

According to Rogers, Herbert Spencer used the phrase "survival of the fittest" as early as 1852 in writing on biological evolution. It later became a major slogan of the Social Darwinists (265).

An essay addressing population theory introduced the term in 1852. In this article, Spencer proposed that intraspecific struggle, primarily driven by the pressures of population expansion, led to "progress." He argued that the existence of plant and animal species was contingent upon their fertility (Claeys 227).

Herbert Spencer coined the phrase "survival of the fittest," and it first appeared in his book "Principles of Biology" in 1864. In this statement, he sought to articulate the mechanistic character of natural processes involved in the development of species, a phenomenon that Darwin referred to as "natural selection or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life" (Howerth 488).

Spencer's staunch adherence to laissez-faire governance principles and individualistic ideology closely intertwined with his ideas on the development and functioning of human societies (Rutledge 244).

Thomas and Lerato add that Spencer advocated for the principles of laissez-faire capitalism, drawing upon his Lamarckian perspective that the competition for existence serves as an outlet for personal advancement, which may then be passed down through generations (2).

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Moreover, the adherents of social Darwinism, in alignment with Spencer's ideology, saw the function of society and government as mostly adverse, aiming to preserve the circumstances conducive to laissez-faire principles. All social values derived from the concept of survival emerged as the paramount criterion for assessing worth (Rogers 280).

Furthermore, Simon notes that Herbert Spencer, an established figure, was an outspoken supporter of liberalism, individualism, and laissez-faire. He also maintained that all organisms are subject to the same laws that govern society using the "biological analogy". Consequently, he asserted that we can analyse society through the application of scientific methods (294).

Spencer, in addition to his role as the originator of the concept of "survival of the fittest" five years subsequent to the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, offered this concept in a manner that was unrelated to the notion of competitiveness within the realm of human economics. The term first appears within the context of the "Principles of Biology", serving as a mere equivalent for the concept of natural selection (Paul 413).

"This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called 'natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life'" (qtd. in Paul 413).

In essence, he is linking the idea of "survival of the fittest" with Charles Darwin's concept of "natural selection." Darwin uses the scientific term "natural selection" to describe this process, suggesting that the survival of favoured races in the struggle for life is the same concept.

Howerth puts it simply: the conditions of life necessitate a struggle for existence among all living organisms. Animals and plants intensify this struggle by reproducing more individuals than can feasibly survive. Within all organisms, there is a tendency to exhibit variation. During this struggle, organisms that have favorable variations, making them better suited to their environment, gain an advantage that allows them to survive and reproduce. Conversely, the absence of such favourable variations leads to their elimination. The tendency to inherit similar traits causes the surviving individuals' favourable variations to reappear in their offspring. Consequently, each successive generation becomes increasingly adapted to the specific circumstances of their environment. Over time, this gradual process leads to a species' transformation as it becomes increasingly adapted to its surroundings (489).

Robert Knox's *The Races of Men* (1850) prophesied the global dominance of a race of

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blue-eyed Saxons, arguing that "race is everything" in human history. Similarly to the way racial Anglo-Saxon ideals of "Manifest Destiny" legitimised American imperialism, Likewise, H. G. Wells foresaw the end of non-white populations if they did not "develop sane, vigorous, and distinctive personalities for the great world of the future; it is their portion to die out and disappear" (Claeys 239).

Richard Hofstadter is often credited as the primary source of the widely held belief that the term in question originated in the early 1850s. In his seminal work titled "Social Darwinism in American Thought," he wrote:

Spencer's theory of social selection . . . arose out of his concern with population problems. In two famous articles that appeared in 1852, six years before Darwin and Wallace jointly published sketches of their theory, Spencer had set forth the view that the pressure of subsistence upon population must have a beneficent effect upon the human race. This pressure had been the immediate cause of progress from the earliest human times. By placing a premium upon skill, intelligence, self-control, and the power to adapt through technological innovation, it had stimulated human advancement and selected the best of each generation for survival. Because he did not extend his generalization to the whole animal world, as Darwin did, Spencer failed to reap the whole harvest of his insight, although he coined the expression "survival of the fittest." (qtd. in Paul 412).

Hofstadter explains that even before Darwin and Wallace introduced the concept of natural selection, Herbert Spencer proposed a social selection theory relating to population issues. According to Spencer, subsistence pressure on the human population was the driving force behind development. He believed that this pressure promoted skills, intellect, self-control, and flexibility through technical innovation, and rewarded those who could handle resource scarcity. Spencer argued that this process benefited mankind and promoted the survival of each generation's most adaptable individual. Moreover, Spencer and Darwin's approaches vary significantly. Darwin applied natural selection to all animals, proving its universality. Spencer limited his hypothesis to humans. This limited the scope of his theory and prevented him from seeing its full implications. Despite this constraint, Spencer is credited with coining "survival of the fittest," a major evolution idea.

Many pivotal essays published throughout the 1850s identify the primary concepts of Spencer's theories of biological evolutionism and social Darwinism. Spencer proposed that a singular rule of evolutionary advancement governs all entities, including inorganic matter,

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organic life forms, and human beings. This law included a transition from a state of uniformity, which Spencer referred to as "homogeneous," to a state of diversity, which he termed "heterogeneous" (Ruse 26).

After establishing a clear understanding of Spencer's stance, one may now proceed to examine the alignment between his sociological analysis as offered in *The Principles of Sociology* and his depiction of moral existence in *The Principles of Ethics*. In both cases, Spencer bases his analysis on the disciplines of biology and psychology. In the field of psychology, Spencer posits that sociality may be seen as commencing at the point when "there is less tendency than usual for the individuals to disperse widely". Children of the same parents may sustain the propensity to remain in close proximity to one another for an extended period. If this small change benefits the family, it will further postpone the distribution of wealth among future generations. "Sociality having thus commenced, and survival of the fittest, tending ever to maintain and increase it, it will be further strengthened by the inherited effects of habit" (qtd. in Offer 167).

Primarily, it is evident that his conceptualization of a 'social organism' relied on the interconnectedness of all phenomena, emphasising the ubiquitous nature of the evolutionary process. Furthermore, it specifically underscored the resemblance between the relationships governing an individual and their biological constituents, as well as the relationships governing a society and its constituent elements, namely human beings. Spencer characterizes the connection in both situations as "organic." He argues that society "is a growth and not a manufacture and has its laws of evolution" (qtd. in Simon, 295). The aforementioned rules exhibit an unyielding nature and enforce an unavoidable sense of determinism.

Elliot highlights the intriguing nature of "The Development Hypothesis" article, which endorses an evolutionary theory seven years before the publication of *The Origin of Species*. At the time, Spencer's perspective on the inheritance of acquired characteristics was beyond that of Lamarck, since he attributed it as the only and sufficient source of development (21-22).

Simon further mentions that despite the release of *The Origin of Species*, Spencer maintained his loyalty to his initial Lamarckian perspective on evolution. Thus, he saw society, along with all other species, as possessing a "self-adjusting principle" and the ability to undergo adaptive metamorphosis (295).

Ruse characterizes Spencer's perspective as clearly Lamarckian, indicating his adherence to the idea of the inheritance of acquired qualities. Various pressures might arise,

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causing the organism, family, or community to develop specific requirements. In response, new traits emerge, leading to diversification, heightened complexity, and greater variety. Subsequent generations have the potential to inherit and transmit these qualities. The process remains consistent, whether it pertains to the development of a new biological trait, such as the eye, or to the rise of a new phenomenon, such as reading, writing, and printing. Spencer did not see any similarity in this context; rather, he saw social Lamarckism as an authentic phenomenon (27).

From 1840 until his death in 1903, Herbert Spencer maintained a steadfast adherence to Lamarckian principles. Throughout this period, he primarily grounded his own interpretation of evolution, specifically in relation to the human species, on the tenets of Lamarckian principles (Freeman et al. 215).

In broad terms, it is widely acknowledged that Spencer posited that the phenomenon of evolution naturally resulted in societal improvement and should not be disrupted in order to attain optimal outcomes. The rules of evolution are universally applicable and inevitable. Society, in its most complex manifestation, actively engages in the evolutionary process. The principle of equal freedom, applicable to both individuals and societies, is not only a metaphorical concept but rather a fundamental rule governing the functioning of the social structure. Simon (297) views it as a natural law.

In the context of the current discussion, it is important to consider Thomas Malthus' contributions and relevance. In a very fundamental way, Spencer flipped Malthus's conclusion on its head by claiming that the population pressure Malthus mentioned is the exact source of all this development and evolutionary change. Organisms have a penchant for rapid reproduction, but the availability of food and space remains limited. Consequently, competition for resources ensues, thereby establishing the underlying pressures and requirements that drive Lamarckian evolution, in the context of human beings (Ruse 27).

Darwin and Spencer drew inspiration from the sixth and ultimate edition of Malthus's seminal publication, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, which was released in 1826. Malthus's theory is widely known for its pessimistic outlook. He aimed to offer a counterargument to the upbeat viewpoints of thinkers like Condorcet and Godwin, who advocated the idea that society is steadily moving towards a future that is characterized by equality and prosperity (Ruse 24).

Furthermore, Malthus saw society through the lens of an organic metaphor, in which the

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same rules applied to both animals and humans. He made a sharp distinction between those who contributed to society (in terms of productivity) and those who did not, and he based rights on productivity alone. In his view, competition as natural selection dictated the survival of the "fittest," and the starvation of the less successful, unless other factors intervened (Claeys 232).

Malthusian political economy and thought pictured a world where the first three things were most important: people were subject to the same natural laws as animals; getting scarce resources required more mental and physical work (or, for thrifters, giving up present pleasures); and society should focus on keeping the "fittest," "desirable," or "valuable" members (Claeys 235).

In short, the inherent mechanism that ensured the advantageous nature of spontaneous evolution was the concept of the struggle for life, which applied to social species as well as all others. According to Spencer, this process resulted in the phenomenon known as "survival of the fittest." Any endeavour to alleviate the severity of the challenge was shortsighted and ultimately detrimental to the grand scheme of things. Furthermore, one could argue that societies that allow only the fittest to thrive also tend to be the most resilient and successful (Simon, 297).

### **1.4.1.2. The Evolutionary Ideals of William Graham Sumner: Exploring Social Darwinism**

Similar to Darwin, Sumner turned to Malthus as the foundational source for his philosophy. In several aspects, his sociological framework essentially followed the sequential progression of biological and social thinking, originating with Malthus and Darwin, extending through Herbert Spencer, and culminating in contemporary social Darwinist perspectives (Hofstadter 462).

Furthermore, William Graham Sumner based much of his Darwinism on species origins. But it was not Darwinism but rather Malthus's thesis that he immediately applied to the development of human society (Rogers 267).

According to Sumner, the fundamental basis of human civilization is the ratio between the population of people and available land resources. In essence, the land is the primary source of food for human beings, and the ratio of people to accessible land resources determines the quality of their livelihoods, the methods they use to obtain it, and their interactions with each other. Regions characterized by a scarcity of male population and an abundance of agricultural land tend to reduce the intensity of the battle for survival, thereby increasing the likelihood of

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establishing and maintaining democratic institutions. When the population puts pressure on land availability, a phenomenon known as earth hunger emerges. This led to the migration of different human populations across various regions, fostering the growth of militarism and imperialism. Consequently, conflicts intensify, and aristocracy becomes a dominant role in governance structures (Hofstadter 462-463).

In the early 1890s, Sumner decided to discontinue his pursuit of undergraduate studies in economics. However, he maintained his involvement in teaching advanced courses on this subject and actively engaged in writing and delivering lectures on economically relevant topics that appealed to the general public. Subsequently, he progressively focused his efforts primarily on the discipline of sociology (Starr 622).

During the early 1890s, Sumner made the decision to conclude his career in economics education. Instead, he focused on creating a comprehensive curriculum centered on the study of society, which his students affectionately referred to as "Sumnerology." This shift in his academic pursuits prompted him to undertake lengthy research endeavours, ultimately culminating in the publication of his renowned work, *Folkways*, in 1907. We can regard the piece in question as nothing more than an expanded section of a planned sociological dissertation, which the author unfortunately did not have the opportunity to finish (Webster 324–325).

Crusading was not the sole focus of Sumner's life. Two interconnected stages characterize his cognitive engagement, primarily distinguished by a shift in the focus of his efforts, rather than a fundamental alteration in his thinking. Throughout 1980s, Sumner actively engaged in a fervent ideological battle against the increasing rise of reformism, protectionism, socialism, and government interventionism. Contributions to widely read journals and public speaking engagements expressed this opposition. During this time, he authored three notable works: *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (1883), *The Forgotten Man* (1883), and *The Absurd Attempt to Make the World Over* (1894). However, during the early 1990s, Sumner's inclination for academic sociology began to grow. This particular era saw the creation of the ambitious project known as the Science of Society, which inspired the text of *Earth Hunger* (Hofstadter 461).

Spencer's beliefs often countered efforts in the United States to enact legislation aimed at improving the circumstances of the impoverished population. The rationale behind this opposition was that such laws would limit the discerning impact of competition (Hofstadter

465).

Sumner viewed human nature as fixed and constant. One potential psychological capability that might be suggested is the capacity to differentiate between sensations of pleasure and discomfort or pain. According to Sumner, "Pleasurable acts are those that bring adaptation to life conditions; painful acts do not." According to his statement, enjoyable activities are defined as those that contribute to an individual's increased likelihood of surviving. Therefore, the fundamental principles of Darwinian theory logically lead to his hedonistic tendencies (qtd. Notestein 391).

He then argues that the conditions of life serve as the fundamental basis upon which the endeavour to fulfil personal interests gives rise to the formation of societies. Individuals resolve their existential dilemmas by adapting to societal customs and moral standards rather than attributing them to acts of creation. The external conditions of existence shape mores and institutions. Among these external factors, the economic aspect has the greatest significance (Notestein 391).

Bannister claims that, similar to Spencer, Sumner was a fervent proponent of individualism and the promotion of economic competition. However, similar to Spencer, Sumner refrained from using the phrase "social Darwinism" in any of his written works, and his body of work rarely contains references to Darwin. One can see Sumner's defense of millionaires as a result of natural selection. However, Darwinian attitudes only partially support Sumner's advocacy for laissez-faire principles (qtd. in Leonard 41).

Sumner's deterministic perspective elucidates his use of the phrase "the economic," which encompasses three concepts:

First, Monopoly. Sumner saw private property as an inherent aspect of the natural order. However, the ability to amass property was dependent on the land-to-people ratio.

All species inherit the instinctive tendency to control the resources required for self-sustenance, which emerged in the context of the survival struggle. Criticising property as a monopoly is similar to criticising gravity as a fundamental force. Sumner believed that individual ownership of property was a part of the natural order. Yet, the ability to accumulate wealth was dependent on the land-to-population ratio.

Next, land-man ratio: All humans have to rely on the land for sustenance; therefore, the ratio of people to farmable land determines not only how well people live but also how they

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interact with one another. The struggle for survival was easier when people were less numerous and agricultural land was more plentiful than it is now. Sumner argued that investing in capital, which he saw as the most important factor in social progress, could improve the man-land ratio.

Then, capital: "Capital is energy stored up against the struggle for self-maintenance." Tools and machines embody this energy, subduing natural forces to serve man. How is capital to be accumulated? Capital accumulation "is the result of human foresight, rendered possible by consistent renunciation of the present in favour of the future." An indeterminate element has now entered into these deterministic forces. The importance of this factor in understanding Sumner's values cannot be overestimated, as will subsequently be shown (qtd. in Notestein 393).

Sumner places a significant emphasis on the economic foundation of social existence, attributing its importance not to its status as a testable hypothesis, but rather to its inherent ontological reality. It has a higher degree of authenticity compared to disciplines such as art, music, law, theology, and others. In hindsight, an individual's first endeavor is to accumulate money before engaging in the indulgence of "dithyrambic rhetoric." From a prospective standpoint, the primary objective is to foster the accumulation of money and improve industrial efficiency rather than prioritise the development of artistic and intellectual potentialities (Notestein 393).

In other words, individuals accumulate capital as a form of stored energy to prepare for the challenges they may face in maintaining their own well-being. Tools and machines manifest this energy by exerting control over natural forces, transforming them into instruments that serve humanity. Capital accumulation is a phenomenon that arises from individuals' deliberate planning and forward-thinking actions, made possible by the persistent sacrifice of immediate gratification in favor of long-term benefits. These deterministic forces include an element of uncertainty.

When discussing Sumner's social Darwinism, Notestein states that as individuals grapple with the challenges posed by the natural environment in their efforts to adapt to the land, they inevitably engage in competitive interactions with their fellow men. In order to achieve success in this endeavour, the presence of capital is seen as essential, leading Sumner to view private property as a fundamental characteristic of a society that is structured in accordance with the inherent circumstances of the struggle for survival (394).

The disparities in wealth arise from differing levels of skill in navigating the challenges

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associated with survival and success. During that period, those who were economically disadvantaged, lacking in productivity, indulgent in excessive behavior, and lacking in knowledge were characterized as "weak." The individuals classified as "strong" included those who demonstrated industriousness, frugality, talent, and prosperity. According to Sumner, the endeavour to satisfy one's self-interest was synonymous with the endeavour to achieve the optimal outcome for society. This assumption was made based on the survival of the "fittest" (Ibid.).

Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner played significant roles in promoting the ideology of social Darwinism. Despite disparities in their philosophical perspectives, both individuals saw the poor as "unfit." Evolutionary processes have rendered these individuals incapable of receiving assistance, making attempts to aid them through legislative measures, public philanthropy, and societal reformation morally objectionable. According to Spencer, "the whole effort of nature is to get rid of them and make room for better. If they are sufficiently complete to live, they do live, and it is well they should live. If they are not sufficiently complete to live, they die, and it is best that they die" (qtd. in Simpson 35).

The application of science in the context of laissez-faire economic systems has compelled to acknowledge the potential conflict between these various utilities, thereby presenting with a challenging issue of value judgment (Huxley 355).

Huxley examines the intricate interplay between science and laissez-faire economic systems, as well as the complexities that emerge when divergent ideals or purposes conflict. He elucidates the use of scientific knowledge and ideas within a laissez-faire economic framework. He argues that the convergence of these factors has resulted in a societal condition whereby individuals are more required to retain crucial information. This observation emphasizes the potential for conflicting utilities or advantages to arise from these systems. Within the realm of economics, the term "utilities" encompasses a range of purposes, aims, or advantages pursued by people or society. These may encompass economic expansion, societal well-being, or ecological durability, among others. He concludes by asserting that the current situation presents a complex dilemma in which one must navigate the process of evaluating and determining values or priorities.

In conclusion, it can be understood that William Graham Sumner significantly contributed to the advancement and dissemination of the ideological framework recognised as social Darwinism. During the latter half of the 19th century, his written works and educational

instructions provided intellectual backing for the notion that societal functioning should align with the tenets of natural selection.

#### **1.4.2. From Darwin to Society: Exploring the Far-Reaching Consequences of Social Darwinism.**

The theories proposed by Charles Darwin had a profound influence on the development of scientific thinking. However, his views also impacted the domains of politics and economics. It is noteworthy that the rise in popularity of social Darwinism has resulted in an increase in inequality.

The effects of social Darwinism were multifaceted and had negative consequences. The phenomenon had a significant impact on several facets of society, including politics, economics, racial perceptions, and social policy.

Several sociologists and political philosophers resorted to social Darwinism as an approach to counter government initiatives aimed at assisting poor people, contending that destitution stemmed from inherent inferiority, which had to be gradually eliminated from the human population (Thomas and Lerato 4).

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a growing number of biologists and scientists, in conjunction with social workers, philanthropists, and politicians, expressed apprehension regarding the demographic shift occurring in the United States. This shift was attributed to the influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, which was perceived as a potential threat to the prevailing notion of "Anglo-Saxon superiority" (qtd. in Garver and Garver 1110).

Herbert Spencer provided an illustrative case study with a young female individual called Margaret, from upstate New York, whom he described as a "gutter child." Due to the assistance provided by the government, Margaret had, as Spencer noted, "proved to be the prolific mother of two hundred descendants who were idiots, imbeciles, drunkards, lunatics, paupers, and prostitutes." Spencer's inquiry culminated with the following question: "Was it kindness or cruelty that, generation after generation, enabled these to multiply and become an increasing curse to the society around them?" (Thomas and Lerato 4).

Thus, the concepts discussed above served as a catalyst for the eugenics movement that emerged throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By using sterilisation measures on people categorised as "feeble-minded" or otherwise considered "unfit", this movement aimed

to enhance the overall well-being and cognitive abilities of humanity (Thomas and Lerato 4).

#### **1.4.2.1.The Dark Side of Science: the Birth of Eugenics**

Eugenicists often used garden analogies to depict their endeavours, comparing society to a garden requiring the removal of undesirable elements or a tree that requires careful trimming. The identification of "weeds" varied across different locations in the context of eugenics and sterilisation programmes (Dyck).

The eugenics movement, which saw significant growth in Britain throughout the early 20th century, serves as a noteworthy illustration of the relationship between scientific concepts and the motivations and objectives of various social groups (MacKenzie 499).

Eugenics sought to use comprehension of biological principles in order to influence the regulations governing individuals' lives and surroundings within a given society. This included immigration and emigration policies, marriage and prostitution regulations, and considerations about the overall quality and quantity of the human population (Mazumdar).

Medical professionals, mental health professionals, and scientists—particularly biologists working in the burgeoning field of genetics—all espoused eugenic principles. These principles gained significant traction via the spread of literature, public lectures, and scholarly publications intended for the educated people of that era (Kevles 435).

Levine and Bashford state that since the late eighteenth century, scientists from several nations have shown considerable interest in and extensively investigated the processes and patterns of heredity in humans, plants, and animals. French doctors first used the word "hérédité" during the 1830s. Furthermore, the investigation of hereditary diseases was already a topic of scholarly examination in both Britain and the United States, predating the development of Darwinian Theory by many decades. Although evolutionary thinking gained popularity during the early 19th century, it was Charles Darwin's contributions in the 1850s that brought population-level concepts to the forefront. Darwin established humans in the natural world through his theories of natural and sexual selection, subjecting them to nature's laws. This had a significant impact on challenging the notion of special creation (2).

The Social Darwinists further emphasized the ideas of natural selection, racial purity, and racial conflict in the latter part of the 19th century, according to Dennis. Francis Galton often regarded as the father of the eugenics movement, further accentuated these ideas. During the historical period, there was a division among liberals and conservatives over the

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predominant influence on individual qualities, namely inheritance or environment. Galton, however, strongly advocated for the former (246).

Burke and Castaneda define eugenics as a scientific discipline focused on enhancing human breeding to enhance the overall quality of the human population, and was once embraced on a global scale as both a theoretical concept and a practical approach. Its primary objectives were to achieve human perfection and address societal issues such as poverty and crime (6).

Eugenics originated in Britain and spread to other nations, exhibiting common characteristics across most, if not all, of the countries in which it thrived. However, it acquired distinct regional nuances in each country, setting it apart from similar movements seen elsewhere (Mazumdar 2). In addition, the eugenists held a social theory and a collection of social policies that claimed to have a scientific basis (MacKenzie 499).

Galton firmly believed that the emerging field of heredity had the potential to contribute to the improvement of mankind by means of selective breeding (Langkjær-Bain 18). Furthermore, Galton's research merged prevailing 19th-century developments in biostatistics and biological medicine, therefore contributing to the emergence of a new discipline focused on the study of heredity (Dyck 8).

Galton read Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, which inspired him to publish a number of essays. These publications explored the hereditary patterns of scientific, literary, and legal aptitude within families. He contemplated the apparent rationale of social status and social opportunity, but presented compelling data to support his argument. For instance, he observed that among a group of privileged students enrolled at Cambridge, those who achieved the highest scores in English or mathematics tests had a far higher frequency of familial relationships than what one would anticipate by random chance. The outcome of his investigation provided many volumes dedicated to the examination of the origins of eminence. The first book, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences* (1869–1892), builds upon his empirical data, bolstering the idea that ability typically inherits within families. Furthermore, he posits that this influence diminishes as the familial link becomes more distant (Revelle 2).

Galton's profound intrigue and deep appreciation for Darwin's scientific contributions, along with his constant preoccupation with the quantification of human traits, generated a keen curiosity in the realm of human heredity. He was a pioneer in advocating the heritability of intellect and other cognitive attributes. He reinforced his assertions by publishing a series of

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works, including *Hereditary Genius* in 1869 and *Natural Inheritance* in 1889, which presented empirical data to support his claims (Clouser 441).

Farrall shows a letter from Galton dated October 10th, 1904, addressed to Sir Arthur Rucker, who served as principal at the University of London. In this letter, Galton expressed his intention to provide a monetary contribution of £1500 for an initial period of three years, followed by an annual sum of £500 afterward. The purpose of this generous donation was to create a research fellowship dedicated to the field of eugenics. In his correspondence, Galton described the scope and objectives of the study he desired the Fellow to undertake (107).

His wish was as follows; the goal is to advance the precise study of what can be termed National Eugenics, focusing on socially controllable factors that determine a nation's status. These factors fall into two categories: (1) those that influence the genetic composition of the population and (2) those that impact public health. While much research already exists on health-related influences, the genetic factors remain largely unexplored, with only rough estimates of their effects. A more rigorous statistical approach is needed to analyze both aspects accurately. Additionally, part of this effort involves compiling records of English families distinguished by a notable lineage of accomplished individuals (Farrall 107).

The origins of British eugenics may be traced back to the 1860s when the first scholarly essays on the topic were published by Galton and Greg. In the 1880s, the concept of eugenics emerged as a prominent subject of public discourse, as shown by its presence in many literary works and scholarly publications. During the period from 1900 to 1914, the field of eugenics had significant institutional development. This was particularly evident via the founding of a specialised Eugenics Laboratory at the University of London. Furthermore, the establishment of the Eugenics Education Society (EES) in 1907 solidified the institutionalization of eugenics during this period (MacKenzie 503).

Chris La Placa describes eugenics in the journal *Emergence* as a genetic idea rooted in Robert Bakewell's selective sheep breeding practices in 18th-century Leicestershire. The remarkable outcomes of these experiments influenced works like Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* (1868), which provided evidence for the hereditary transmission of mental traits in humans. In Victorian England, this research was perceived as a tool for social control, promoting the belief that artificial selection could maintain societal hierarchy by selectively breeding people based on their physical and intellectual traits, much like livestock.

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In the words of its founder, Galton defines eugenics as “the study of agencies under social control which may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations” (qtd. in Molinari 1). Agar states that Francis Galton derived the term for his new scientific discipline aimed at enhancing human hereditary traits from the Greek word “eugenes”, which means to "well-born" or "of good birth" (137). Galton's evaluative definition of eugenics aligns with the word's origin as “the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race, as well as those that “develop them to the utmost advantage” (qtd. in Burke and Castaneda, 6). Dyck adds that articles and the history of the term eugenics reveal that the term has altered and taken on new connotations throughout time. The simplest meaning of the term is "nobility by birth" (8).

Eugenicists on both sides of the Atlantic advocated for two separate strategies aimed at increasing the frequency of "socially suitable" genes within the population while simultaneously reducing the presence of "undesirable" genes. One aspect involved in eugenics was the implementation of positive measures, which included the deliberate manipulation of human heredity or selective breeding, or both, with the aim of producing individuals of higher quality. In contrast, negative eugenics focused on enhancing the overall quality of the human population by means of removing or rejecting individuals deemed biologically inferior from (Kelves 436).

By the year 1875, Galton had been struggling with the dilemma, for more than ten years of the assessment of the respective influences of nature and nurture. This undertaking was not altogether new. Since ancient times, intellectuals have been asserting the significance of either a family line or one's educational background (Waller 914).

Boas further notes that the eugenicists' rallying cry, "Nature over nurture," has become an established belief, with less emphasis on the environmental factors that shape an individual's physical and mental development (472). Comfort adds Galton's primary objective was to distinguish between the influences of nature and nurture, with a consistent focus on achieving both quantitative understanding and societal advancement (349).

Levine and Bashford argue that the primary objective of the majority of eugenics groups was to influence reproductive behaviour by implementing ideas of heredity. Occasionally, eugenics groups employed sterilisation, contraception, segregation, and, in some cases, abortion as methods to prevent certain individuals to exist. Additionally, these practices sought to promote the development of healthier lives through environmental reforms, which focused on

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the education and upbringing of children as well as public health initiatives (2).

Furthermore, they state that eugenic efforts aimed to increase the number of individuals through pronatalist<sup>6</sup> interventions, infertility treatments, and the promotion of "euteleogenesis<sup>7</sup>." At its most extreme, it resulted in the termination of life, often referred to as euthanasia, of those with disabilities and the denial of medical care for babies. The fundamental essence of eugenics has always been characterised by an evaluative logic. Certain proponents of these practices aimed to apply them in a manner that distinguished the worth of certain human lives above others, taking into consideration factors like the state, the country, the race, and future generations (ibid.).

Farrall claims that during the first decade of the twentieth century, the expansion of this particular movement was characterised by the establishment of two separate institutions, both using the term "eugenics" in their names. The institutions mentioned include the Eugenics Record Office, which eventually transformed into the Galton Eugenics Laboratory at University College, London, and the Eugenics Education Society. Although there are limited representations of the "eugenics movement" in Britain, both groups could be considered official (103).

Farrall's examination of the English eugenics movement characterises it as a manifestation of "middle class radicalism" and draws parallels between this movement and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) throughout the 1950s and 1960s (MacKenzie 520).

The practice of eugenics exhibited geographical variations, as Swedish, Soviet, German, and American eugenicists implemented race biology into their own programmes, each with differing levels of scientific and ideological credibility (Dyck).

Rutledge mentions that in order to establish the existence of intrinsic disparities across the socioeconomic strata in England, Galton devised a set of examinations principally centred on the evaluation of sensory and motor abilities (246).

Simpson claims that the eugenics movement was an offshoot of social Darwinism that

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<sup>6</sup> Advocating or supporting a high birth rate (Collins English Dictionary).

<sup>7</sup> Artificial insemination (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

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emerged around the turn of the century. The eugenicists, like early social Darwinists, saw the "fit" as belonging to the upper classes and the "unfit" as belonging to the lower classes. They believed that the high birth rates of the lower classes contributed to the spread of sickness, poverty, and criminality, primarily due to inheritance (36).

MacKenzie adds that the biological form of political economics, known as social Darwinism, was characterised by a notably strong affinity. The concept of eugenic identification, which associates social failure with biological unfitness, the belief that progress may be achieved by eliminating those deemed unfit, and the perspective of society as a biological entity, all stem from the principles of social Darwinism (503).

Mazumdar further explains that in Britain, throughout the eighteenth century, the segment of the population that posed a potential threat to society due to their poor cognitive abilities and high reproductive rates consisted mostly of casual workers or those belonging to the pauper class. Moreover, this social group viewed the feeble-minded as its core members (2). Thus, eugenics attracted significant support from social conservatives who were motivated by the desire to limit the expansion of lower-income groups and reduce the financial burden associated with their care (Kevles 435-436).

This premise led to the proposal of a social intervention project, which aims to improve the overall quality of the population. A key aspect of this phenomenon is the modification of the comparative birth rate (or rate survival) between those deemed "fit" and those deemed "unfit". Individuals with favorable genetic traits must exercise caution when selecting a spouse and procreate in large numbers, a concept commonly referred to as positive eugenics. In contrast, individuals affected by hereditary disabilities should be dissuaded from engaging in parenting, a practice known as negative eugenics (MacKenzie 499).

Central to Galton's hereditarian ethos was his belief that society should reject the mistaken notion of innate equality among individuals. He implemented a eugenics programme that aimed to promote procreation among the privileged Anglo-Saxon upper classes, whom he perceived as genetically superior, while discouraging reproduction among those from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds and racial minorities, whom he believed to be genetically inferior (Rutledge 246).

The emerging discipline of eugenics gathered the interest of a diverse group of scientists, policymakers, philosophers, and social reformers from many political backgrounds, many of whom had pre-existing interests in population management. The reform-minded individuals

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seeking scientific resolutions to many challenges linked to urbanization, diseases, poverty, moral decline, immigration, and racial decline were deeply fascinated by the potential outcomes offered by a scientific study of heredity (Dyck 8).

According to Farrall, the British quarterlies engaged in discussions on eugenic concepts, while the journals and congresses dedicated to the study of crime, poverty, and disease presented eugenic proposals as potential remedies to these issues (103).

The British eugenics organisations primarily focused on class conflicts and poverty as the primary socioeconomic factors contributing to societal degradation. They targeted urban slums, particularly those in East London, as potential areas for implementing eugenic reforms, even if they included deportation of immigrants. Race is often portrayed as the responsible agent requiring purification in European and American programs (Dyck).

Mazumdar asserts that the dedication and organisational efforts of Sybil Gotto, who was twenty-one years old at the time and had recently experienced the loss of her spouse, led to the establishment of the Eugenics Education Society in 1907. Gotto had a pre-existing inclination towards societal issues; however, it was the literary works authored by Francis Galton that served as a catalyst for her subsequent engagement and proactive involvement.

The first interaction occurred through the Sociological Society. The Secretary, James W. Slaughter, exhibited enthusiasm for her proposal and proceeded to facilitate an introduction between her and Montague Crackanthorpe, a lawyer who happened to be Galton's acquaintance. Following that, Crackanthorpe developed an interest in the subject and proceeded to facilitate her acquaintance with Galton himself. Collaboratively, they embarked on the endeavour of establishing a societal framework based on Galton's conceptualization of eugenics, which he defined as “the study of all agencies under social control which can improve or impair the racial quality of future generations” (Mazumdar).

The two most prominent movements occurred in Britain and the United States. While the two initiatives had certain commonalities, they also exhibited substantial differences, mostly due to the ideologies of their respective founders. Karl Pearson, a British statistician and Charles B. Davenport, an American scientist (Allen 2).

Thomas and Lerato state that Galton's views did not achieve much traction in his own nation; they found popularity in America, where the principles of eugenics rapidly gathered momentum. Moreover, the phenomenon of eugenics gained significant traction as a prominent

social movement inside the United States, reaching its peak during the 1920s and 1930s. The promotion of eugenics took the form of books and films, and various local fairs and exhibits organized nationwide competitions such as "fitter family" and "better baby" contests (4).

#### **1.4.2.1.1. The Rise of Eugenics in the United States: a Brief Overview**

The eugenists did not formulate their beliefs in isolation from intellectual influences; rather, they were capable of using pre-established notions of heredity and society. The researchers formulated their theory in alignment with their objectives by selectively adopting some ideas, modifying others, and introducing new components (MacKenzie 501).

Many nations established eugenic gardens, exposing distinct sets of objectives and societal conflicts as diverse strains fought for prominence within the metaphorical garden. The primary motivation behind the eugenics programmes was the desire to exercise control and monitoring over families and individuals who did not align with the national or regional agenda. Although eugenics rhetoric evolved as a global concept, its manifestation emphasised a distinct regional nature (Dyck 8).

In the 1920s, eugenicists sought to exert control over the physical bodies of the American people by capitalising on their concerns about social decline. They strategically assigned worth to those they considered superior, while simultaneously depriving those they regarded as inferior of the opportunity to procreate. Public programmes promoting eugenic measures and the implementation of sterilisation legislation established a broad eugenic framework within American culture. The societal influence of eugenics in the United States is clearly apparent (Lee 1).

Garver and Garver suggest that the traditional view of the gene as an immutable entity led to the ability to predict the genetic value of offspring based on the genetic value of their parents. Biologists believed that direct transmission was the cause of certain human problems such as feeble-mindedness, congenital abnormalities, epilepsy, and other illnesses. As a result, they proposed that the implementation of negative eugenics could manage these conditions (1110).

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Mazumdar explains, “In each country, the eugenists’ Wunschbild<sup>8</sup>, their ideal type, and their negative image were determined by national background and historical context” (2). For instance, the United States perceived the immigrants from Southern Europe as a group with high birth rates and associated them with negative traits like feeble-mindedness and criminal behavior. People were blamed for overcrowding institutions such as asylums and prisons.

American historians have started investigating eugenics initiatives during the post-World War II era. Their research reveals that the development of these programs got deeper due to the influence of second-wave feminism, Planned Parenthood, and lobbying efforts aimed at obtaining access to contraceptives, which were prohibited at the time (Dyck 10).

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., a Justice of the United States Supreme Court, made the following statement during the delivery of the court's prevailing decision regarding the sterilisation of a seventeen-year-old female in 1927: “Three generations of imbeciles are enough” (qtd. in Lee 2).

Two key factors fuelled the eugenics movement in the United States: the re-emergence of Mendel's laws of heredity and the conviction that one could genetically determine and transmit most, if not all, human traits from one generation to the next (Garver and Garver, 1110). Thomas and Lerato assert that the practice of eugenic sterilisation, which exhibited a notable bias against women, minority groups, and immigrants, persisted inside the United States until the 1970s (4).

During the first part of the 20th century, an estimated 20,000 people had sterilisation procedures inside California's state homes and hospitals. Eugenic regulations, which aimed to regulate the reproductive capabilities of individuals categorised as mentally unfit, guided these actions (Stern et al., 50). Besides, Lee asserts that over the course of seven decades, California conducted almost 20,000 sterilisations between the years 1909 and 1979, establishing itself as the state with the largest number of operations completed (1).

The American Eugenics Movement, which occurred in the early 20th century, gave rise to the concept of forced sterilisation. In 1909, California implemented eugenic legislation,

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<sup>8</sup> Ideal (Cambridge dictionary).

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establishing itself as one of the pioneering states to endorse the practice of forced sterilization targeting those classified as "feeble-minded." Forced castration affected victims such as mentally ill patients in psychiatric state facilities, individuals with epilepsy and autism, and inmates with criminal records (Lee 1).

Thomas and Lerato add that the eugenics movement in the United States was primarily concerned with the eradication of undesirable qualities among the population. Advocates of the eugenics movement used a rationale that promoted the prevention of procreation among persons deemed "unfit" as the most effective means to achieve their objectives. In the first half of the twentieth century, a total of 32 states in the United States passed laws that led to the forced sterilization of over 64,000 individuals, including immigrants, people of diverse racial backgrounds, unmarried mothers, and those afflicted with mental illness (4).

Several American scholars, such as Alexandra Minna Stern, Paul Lombardo, Johanna Schoen, Wendy Kline, Molly Ladd-Taylor, and Rebecca Kluchin, have examined sterilisation from a broader perspective, going beyond its direct connection to eugenics initiatives. Rather, many see it as an integral component of the public health history of the United States, including notions of healthcare accessibility, entitlement, socioeconomic disadvantage, political influence, gender equality, and governmental jurisdiction. They specifically conducted their research on how eugenics effectively served the state's underlying objectives by selectively targeting certain demographic groups (Dyck 10).

The Kallikak family received significant attention after the publication of highly acclaimed research in 1912 (Smith, 1985). The study explored the coexistence of a distinguished line and a deteriorating lineage within the family, tracing their simultaneous development throughout several generations. This literary work significantly contributed to mobilising support for initiatives pertaining to negative eugenics (Garver and Garver 1110).

Lee reckons that with the increasing prevalence of discussions around eugenics and the worldwide spread of related literature, a significant number of individuals in the United States found themselves inclined to support and adopt eugenic principles. Consequently, these changes gave rise to the formation of many institutions, including the American Breeders Association, the Race Betterment Foundation, the Galton Society, and the American Eugenics Society (6).

Dugdale assumes that initially, proponents of change had a positive outlook on their ability to assist those in question. Nevertheless, towards the end of the century, an increasing

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number of reformers began to hold the belief that these circumstances were a consequence of inadequate genetic inheritance, hence rendering them resistant to improvement or eradication by environmental interventions. A significant precursor to the emergence of sterilization programs was the publication in 1875 of a study of the Jukes, a family residing in New York known for their inclination for alms houses, taverns, brothels, and incarceration (qtd. in Garver and Garver 1110).

Beckwith claims that this concern rapidly broadened to include individuals suffering from alcoholism, individuals living in poverty, children without parental care, people engaged in criminal behaviour, those involved in prostitution, and individuals without the means to sustain themselves (cited. in Garver and Garver 1110).

Dyck elucidates that the notion of defects encompassed a wide range of behaviors and symptoms, which underwent a gradual medicalization process to evaluate their inherited characteristics. This advancement does not only adhere to reductionist principles. Researchers face a significant challenge in critically evaluating the definitions of defects and the mechanisms of heredity due to the widely acknowledged complex relationship between biology and the environment. For instance, researchers have proposed that metabolic abnormalities, leading to defective or dysfunctional alcohol metabolism in humans, may be the cause of alcoholism. Regardless of the underlying causes of the behavior, it was widely acknowledged that parents with alcohol addiction were deemed inadequate in their ability to effectively raise children. Insufficient monitoring and care contributed to the emergence of individuals with impaired thinking, judgment, and moral values (8–9).

In 1907, Indiana became the first state to enact a statute on forced sterilisation, based on eugenics principles. This legislation mandated the sterilisation of individuals confined in state facilities, diagnosed as mentally ill, intellectually disabled, mentally deficient, feeble-minded, guilty of rape, or persistent offenders. The aforementioned approach necessitated endorsement by a panel of specialists, as determined by individual states. By 1931, a total of 30 states had enacted legislation pertaining to the implementation of forced sterilization methods. Certain statutes included a broad spectrum of individuals classified as "defectives," which included those classified as "sexual perverts, drug addicts, alcoholics, epileptics, and individuals afflicted with degenerative diseases" (Buck v. Bell Superintendent, 1927) (Garver and Garver 1110).

The primary objective of "positive" eugenics was to promote the reproduction of individuals who exhibited advantageous traits, such as superior intelligence and physical

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attributes. At the same time, "negative" eugenics aimed to eliminate undesirable characteristics, such as mental illness and physical deformities, through measures like compulsory sterilisation. While eugenicists largely prioritised the promotion of those deemed genetically superior and the eradication of those considered genetically inferior, a significant number also expressed concerns about miscegenation, which refers to the intermingling of different races (Lee 1).

The United States had laws prohibiting miscegenation, which were a fundamental aspect of discriminatory practices, spanning from the early Colonial Period to the historic Supreme Court ruling in *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967. The *Loving v. Virginia* case prohibited the union of individuals of different racial backgrounds, namely white people and those of other races. Therefore, the *Loving* case invalidated highly significant legislation that had served as a foundation for the American system of racial segregation for more than three centuries (Lombardo 422).

Lee affirms that eugenicists saw miscegenation as a perceived danger to the supremacy of the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon white population, sometimes referred to as the "master race." Consequently, they implemented stringent anti-miscegenation legislation, exemplified by Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924, which effectively banned interracial marriage (Lee 1).

Kelves adds that the sterilisation legislation disregarded individual human rights, ranking them below an alleged superior public interest. This reasoning was specifically considered in the US Supreme Court's 1927 ruling, in which a majority of eight justices supported Virginia's eugenic sterilization legislation in *Buck v. Bell* (436).

Modern discussions widely acknowledge the practice of state-sanctioned sterilisation as a particularly extreme expression of eugenics. Furthermore, many view it as an ethical transgression, leading to the denial of reproductive autonomy and the absence of fully informed consent for numerous individuals. Governors of several states have issued apologies for sterilisation programmes since the early 2000s (Stern 196).

According to Grandsoult, the Nazi regime in Germany and the Holocaust were profoundly destructive manifestations of the American desire to establish a superior Nordic race beyond the expectations of eugenicists. While the American population engaged in protests and advocated for national isolation from the Reich, eugenicists saw a sense of obligation to disassociate themselves from Hitler's campaign to racially purify Germany. However, in truth, they were deeply enthused by the remarkable and extensive execution of their own ideologies (25).

In conclusion, the American eugenics movement primarily aimed to improve the genetic quality of the human population by eliminating undesirable features. The concept of both positive and negative eugenics spread among American scientists, physicians, politicians, and the general public. However, it became evident that both approaches had adverse effects on the socio-political structure of America (Lee 1).

#### **1.4.2.1.2. The Surge of Eugenics in Germany: a Concise Review.**

The examination of the history of eugenics provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex dynamics of culture, social interests, and social institutions in shaping the progress of scientific endeavours. At the same time, the concept of eugenics exemplifies the prevailing belief in the early 20th century that science had the potential to resolve societal issues. This era saw the infiltration of biological principles into several domains of social policy, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s (Weindling 321).

American eugenicists have consistently endeavoured to include European experts in the eugenics movement and expand their initiatives internationally. The European members of the global eugenic organisation displayed strong enthusiasm and dedication towards the American-supported ideology of Nordic superiority, an attitude that had been gaining momentum in Germany (Grandsoult 25).

Williams claims that the origins of German eugenics can be traced back to a reform movement that sought to address societal issues resulting from the country's rapid industrialization and urbanization. These issues included poverty, crime, and alcoholism, as well as illnesses and afflictions like pulmonary disease. The movement aimed to use scientific methods in order to find solutions to these problems. In Germany, the proponents of eugenics emerged as a group of highly educated individuals from the middle class with medical expertise (16).

In his study, Stahnisch examines the interconnected networks of prominent German and American eugenicists, illustrating the process by which eugenic principles became deeply embedded throughout the intellectual landscape of disciplines such as medicine, psychology, and social science. In addition to tracing the beginnings of eugenics to Francis Galton, Stahnisch elucidates the underlying foundations of population control and degeneration, which emerged from an amalgam of many academic currents in biology, sociology, medicine, genetics, and politics (Dyck 12).

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The appeal of eugenics quickly spread to other countries, resulting in the spread of the American eugenics movement. During the mid-1930s in Nazi Germany, there was a widespread propagation of ideas pertaining to Aryan supremacy, anti-Semitism, and a commitment to eliminating inherited disorders. Consequently, a strong alliance emerged between eugenicists from the United States and Germany, characterised by a robust flow of communication including commendatory letters, guidance, and the sharing of research findings and data (Lee, 2).

The movement gained popularity throughout the latter half of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. According to several experts, this movement reached its peak with the German-led Holocaust during the Second World War. The Nazis' eugenics programmes brought significant attention to the magnitude and seriousness of these initiatives, highlighting the grave implications of eugenic ideology and its capacity for manipulation, particularly with regards to racial and ethnic distinctions (Dyck 9).

Several American eugenicists took pride in the fact that Germany's sterilisation regulations drew significant inspiration from their predecessors in America. The eugenics movement in Nazi Germany ultimately evolved into a systematic extermination campaign, and in the wake of the atrocities committed during the Holocaust, American eugenicists endeavoured to disassociate themselves from any prior affiliations with Nazi eugenic initiatives (Lee 2).

Grandsoult contends that prominent German eugenicists, working closely with Cold Spring Harbor, authored *Foundation of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene*. This publication provided scientific justification for Hitler's extremist racial ideology even before he came to power (25).

The racial hygiene movement in Germany exhibited significant activity throughout the latter part of the 19th century, when Dr. Wilhelm Schallmayer and Alfred Ploetz started articulating their perspectives on racial hygiene (Garver and Garver 1110).

The German eugenics movement is often attributed to the pioneering contributions of Drs. Schallmayer and Ploetz. Two factors, the social difficulties resulting from rapid and progressive industrialization and apprehension regarding social Darwinist tenets, which were the initial sources of fascination with racial hygiene in Germany. The latter posited that the more privileged and thus superior segments of society were reproducing at a lower rate

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compared to the working-class components. It was also recognised that the several conflicts involving Germany constituted a counter-selective mechanism, as the most capable individuals of the country were mobilised for warfare and subsequently perished, while those individuals who were deemed unfit for military service remained in their homeland and engaged in procreative activities (Garver and Garver 1110).

In Germany, eugenic research primarily focused on those diagnosed with psychosis and psychopathy. Nevertheless, with the implementation of sterilisation laws during the National Socialist era, individuals classified as feeble-minded were also included in the targeted population. In Germany, there was no indication that the notion of jeopardising the race was linked to social status (Mazumdar 2-3).

Dyck adds that the Holocaust had a profound impact on the trajectory of the eugenics movement, influencing both its terminology and subsequent historical interpretation. The majority of scholarly investigations pertaining to eugenics have focused primarily on the historical era before or culminating in the onset of the Second World War (9).

The strong link between eugenics and the Nazis has led to surprise among many individuals upon learning that Sweden had conducted sterilization procedures on around 60,000 people, mostly women, throughout the period spanning from the 1930s to the 1970s (Kevles 435).

Chris La Placa, in the journal *Emergence*, explains that the decline in the credibility of eugenics was driven by several factors. These included ethical concerns surrounding human subject research, the growing understanding of heredity's complexity, and the rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany, which tainted the movement's scientific legitimacy.

Studies on German social Darwinism and eugenics were conducted by certain medical historians, such as Gunter Mann, starting in the mid-1970s. Additionally, social historians began exploring this topic in the early 1980s, driven by their interests in feminism, ecology, and their critical examination of scientific medicine and biotechnology (Weindling 323).

Kevles concludes that during the period between World War I and World War II, the principles of eugenics faced increasing scientific scrutiny and were subject to criticism due to their inherent class and racial biases. Research has demonstrated that numerous mental disabilities are not influenced by genetic factors. Although some mental disabilities are genetic, they are not exclusively determined by genetics. Additionally, environmental factors

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significantly influence the development of most human behaviors, including deviant ones, potentially even more so than biological heredity if genetic factors are involved at all (437).

He also adds setting aside scientific considerations, eugenics acquired a negative reputation mostly because of its association with Hitler's rule. This association became more pronounced in the aftermath of World War II, when the involvement of eugenics in the Nazi extermination camps was exposed (ibid.).

Hence, Boas affirms that it is imperative that eugenics be prohibited from misleading us into endorsing the notion of cultivating a superior race, as well as from advocating the complete eradication of all forms of misery and distress. Eugenics is the legal pursuit of eradicating groups of people who are perceived as undesirable and whose flaws can be proven through scientific methods to be inherited, as well as the prevention of marriages that would inevitably lead to the birth of children with illnesses. The extent and feasibility of endeavors in this particular domain are dependent on the results derived from meticulous investigations into the principles governing genetic inheritance. Eugenics should not be seen as a universal remedy for addressing human ills; instead, it should be recognised as a potentially perilous instrument that might inadvertently harm people who depend on its perceived efficacy (478).

The implementation of eugenics programs in a targeted manner and on a large scale sparked widespread criticism. The international community's apprehensions over Nazi eugenics in the wake of the Second World War brought about a significant transformation in the landscape of eugenic research. This transformation led to a profound relationship between eugenics and genocide in the collective consciousness, establishing a lasting historical link between Nazism and eugenics for an extended period of time (Dyck 9).

When discussing the current state of eugenics, Agar claims that the concept of genetic engineering has inherent peculiarities that pose challenges in conducting a rational moral evaluation (138).

Burke and Castaneda discuss the future state of eugenics and mention that in contemporary American society, there is a growing tendency among individuals to place more reliance on the potential of DNA as a cure for addressing the challenges associated with ageing, illness, and physical abnormalities. Furthermore, DNA is increasingly seen as a crucial factor in determining one's ancestral heritage and personal sense of identity (17).

They also argue that there is agreement on the potential of advancements in human

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genetics and genomics to significantly contribute to the discovery, treatment, and possible eradication of genetic illnesses. However, there is a viewpoint suggesting that some genetic services, such as pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), may be classified as eugenic technology. It is still being searched for genetic markers linked to diseases like Alzheimer's and cancer, as well as behavioural traits like violence, ADD, and depression. People are also still looking for identity markers like racial ancestry and genes that make someone more likely to be homosexual. The most important thing is that these efforts need to be regulated. In light of advancing technological capabilities, the central inquiry revolves around the formulation of appropriate policies to govern such research and its implications (ibid.).

### **1.4.2.2.Nazism versus Fascism : Close Relatives**

Both Nazism and Fascism shared a common rejection of democratic principles, liberalism, and communism, instead promoting the establishment of a single-party state that sought to eradicate political opposition and exert control over multiple facets of society. These ideas gained traction within a period of economic instability and social turmoil, providing extreme remedies to the perceived predicaments of the time. Some nations' aggressive expansionist strategies and dehumanising beliefs played a pivotal role in triggering World War II and the subsequent atrocities throughout the war.

The academic discourse around Nazism and Fascism is extensive, characterised by debates on the precise definitions, origins, sources of support, ideology, and overall signification of these two movements (Hawkins 272). Journalists and public intellectuals have extensively linked the concepts of "eugenics" and "racism," sometimes using them interchangeably as derogatory labels for those who provide biological justifications for human behavior (Anomaly 153).

Darwinian inegalitarianism cannot be the sole cause of the devaluation of people with disabilities. Financial considerations also played a significant role. Numerous proponents of eugenics expressed concerns over the financial strain imposed on society by those with mental and physical disabilities (Weikart 99).

Hawkins claims that researchers agree that social Darwinism shaped Nazi and Fascist ideologies. Researchers often reference the influence of social Darwinist concepts as the foundation for Nazi ideologies related to warfare, eugenics, and racial superiority. Furthermore, these theories have justified the prominence of struggle and conflict in Italian and French fascism (272).

There is a belief that several individuals inside influential political and affluent circles provided assistance to the Nazis because they perceived the party as a flexible political entity capable of gaining public support for maintaining the prevailing socioeconomic structure (Conway 401).

#### **1.4.2.2.1. Rise of Swastika: Unveiling the Origins of Nazism.**

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, a German physician, is widely recognised as the pioneering contemporary scientist who initiated the categorization of individuals based on racial distinctions. Blumenbach classified the human population into five primary categories, namely Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, Ethiopian, and American. These groupings are representative of the European, East Asian, South Asian, African, and Native American populations. In contrast to some individuals of his day, Blumenbach did not have a particular inclination to categorise races based on their comparative levels of accomplishment. Instead, his intention was to categorise them based on their continent of origin and physical resemblances (Anomaly 154).

There were several conflicting interpretations about the significant surge of the Nazi Party in Weimar, Germany. The dominant interpretation refers to the influence exerted by the Great Depression. The individuals most severely affected by the economic crisis attributed their circumstances to the existing political parties, thereby expressing their dissatisfaction by casting their votes in favour of the Nazi Party (Galofré-Vilà et al. 85).

During the transition to the twentieth century, the eugenics movement gained prominence and placed more emphasis on the evolutionary implications of disabilities and other atypical human characteristics. Upon perusing several works authored by German eugenicists, it becomes evident that they assigned varying degrees of worth to individuals (Weikart 96).

William Shirer's 1960 work, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, is arguably one of the most widely read narratives in the English-speaking world. Although noteworthy in its comprehensive nature, it is evident that this tale has unintentionally perpetuated several preconceived assumptions (Conway 399).

According to Turda, the German establishment of an organization of scientists aimed at using advancements in biology to improve the genetic makeup of the population led to the introduction of the word "rassenhygiene" (translated as "racial hygiene"), which effectively conveyed a similar concept as the English term "eugenics" (qtd. in Anomaly 156).

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Weindling examines the early racial hygienists, Alfred Ploetz and Schallmayer, who were influenced by discoveries about chromosome function in reproduction and heredity. They argued that selecting individuals with superior genetic traits could enhance the human race. In the 1890s, this utopian vision led to efforts to shape social structures based on biological principles, aligning with imperialist ideologies before and during World War I, influencing the Weimar social experiment, and ultimately contributing to the racial hygiene movement under the Nazis (324).

Luhrssen states that the intellectual development of Adolf Hitler, the emergence of the Nazi movement, and the origins of its ideology are subjects of ongoing dispute, more than fifty years after the destruction of Nazi Germany (xiii). Moreover, Conway contends that Nazi sympathisers often argue that Nazism is the only viable alternative to Communism (401).

However, Weindling claims that in their scholarly examination of Germany's progression towards the Holocaust, Wehler and his colleagues did not overlook the significance of social Darwinism. However, they viewed it as a secondary element, best comprehended within the wider context of the enduring regressive Junker interests (323).

Furthermore, Weikart mentions that in his writings and public addresses, Hitler often made reference to Darwinian principles, including the notions of evolution (Entwicklung), higher evolution (Höherentwicklung), the struggle for existence (Existenzkampf or Daseinskampf), the struggle for life (Lebenskampf), and selection (Auslese) (541).

Moreover, according to Anne Harrington, the Nazis exhibited an affinity for some aspects of Darwinism, particularly the concept of the struggle for existence. However, they did not embrace the notion of human evolution (qtd. in Weikart).

Weikart discusses *The Völkischer Beobachter*, which is the official newspaper of the Nazi Party and includes pieces that express admiration for Darwin and Haeckel due to their significant contributions to the field of evolutionary theory. In an essay published in 1932 titled "Darwin," it was argued that Darwin's theory served as the conceptual basis for both eugenics and racial theory. The article highlighted that the topic of evolution has reached a consensus throughout the academic community, with Darwin's theory of natural selection prevailing over Lamarckism (547).

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler expressed his admiration for America's efforts to maintain racial purity. He substituted the American term "Nordic" with "Aryan" and condemned racial mixing,

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describing its harmful consequences using terms like "mongrelisation," he says:

Any crossing of two beings not at exactly the same level produces a medium between the level of the two parents. This means: the offspring will probably stand higher than the racially lower parent, but not as high as the higher one. Consequently, it will later succumb in the struggle against the higher level. Such mating is contrary to the will of Nature for a higher breeding of all life. The precondition for this does not lie in associating superior and inferior, but in the total victory of the former. The stronger must dominate and not blend with the weaker, thus sacrificing his own greatness...Historical experience offers countless proofs of this. It shows with terrifying clarity that in every mingling of Aryan blood with that of lower peoples the result was the end of the cultured people...The Germanic inhabitant of the American continent, who has remained racially pure and unmixed, rose to be master of the continent; he will remain the master as long as he does not fall a victim to defilement of the blood (qtd. in Grandsoult 26).

Upon reading this passage, one may note a direct link to eugenics, racial purity, and notions of one race being superior to another. He contends that the blending of people from diverse racial or ethnic origins leads to the production of a child that is seen as inferior to the "superior" parent. He further suggests that races deemed "superior" should exert dominance and refrain from interacting with races considered "inferior" in order to preserve their cultural and genetic integrity.

The acquisition of a large membership base played a pivotal role in facilitating the ascent of the Nazi Party to political power. Prior to its emergence as a significant political entity, the Nazi Party cultivated an extensive network of supporters, many of whom exhibited unwavering dedication to the cause (Satyanath et al. 479).

A German historian recently observed that many widely accept Adolf Hitler as a significant outcome and prominent legacy of World War I for Germany. He started his political path in 1919, during the aftermath of a defeated war and the costly Treaty of Versailles (Schwabe, 864). Another interpretation is that he harbored towards the substantial financial obligations imposed upon Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. Initially, the total amount of

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these debts amounted to 260 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 1913 (Galofré-Vilà et al. 85).

According to *Anomaly*, it is well acknowledged that Adolf Hitler had a profound admiration for the scholarly contributions of Madison Grant, an American naturalist. Grant, following in the footsteps of Gobineau, supported the notion of the Nordic (or "Aryan") race as being superior in terms of physical attractiveness and psychic aptitude among all European populations (156).

Grandsoult reveals that Nazi legal scholars extensively examined the American legal system and implemented comparable legislation, particularly state-level anti-miscegenation statutes aimed at impeding racial intermingling, as well as the Immigration Act of 1924. Adolf Hitler himself saw these legal frameworks as exemplars for the pursuit of racial cleansing (27–28). Apart from Proctor, some have suggested that American writers, rather than German scientists, had a greater influence on Hitler's concept of the Aryan ideal (qtd. in *Anomaly* 156).

Kevles asserts that during the period of Nazi rule in Germany, the implementation of eugenics policies resulted in the sterility of a significant number of individuals. These policies eventually contributed to the initiation of euthanasia programmes targeting the Jewish population, ultimately resulting in the establishment of death camps (435).

Within a little over seven weeks, Germany underwent a transformation from a republican form of government to a dictatorial one. By the end of March, all traces of parliamentary democracy, constitutional federalism, and individual liberties had vanished. In the absence of these protective measures against complete authoritarian rule, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party undertook the task of shaping Germany, and subsequently a significant portion of Europe, into a dystopian society characterized by brutality and savagery, unparalleled in historical records (Klein 260).

Gilberts notes that in a brief span of time, Hitler managed to propagate his reign of terror throughout Germany, adopting the Swastika as his symbol, although in a distorted manner that deviated from its original Sanskrit connotation of harmony (34).

Upon assuming power, the Nazi regime swiftly adopted comprehensive legislation with the aim of segregating individuals who were not of German descent, particularly Jews, and imposing restrictions on their ability to enter into marital unions with Germans. The goal was not only to preserve the purity of the German race by protecting it from external influences, but

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also to enhance it (Anomaly 157).

In January 1934, the German government, known as the Reich, made a public declaration stating that German citizens would promptly undergo certain treatments. This method aimed to sterilise a minimum of 56,000 individuals, which accounted for about one out of every 1,200 Germans during the first year. Inspired by the American system of racial categorization and segregation, the subsequent legislation sought to commend the successful legislative efforts in the United States and to continue discouraging the reproduction of individuals deemed "worthless" or detrimental to the race population (Grandsoult 27).

Following his appointment as Chancellor of the Reich in 1933, Hitler promptly enacted significant legislation mandating widespread sterilization, which drew inspiration from eugenic sterilization laws already in place in the United States. The legislation established nine distinct classifications of individuals seen as defective, justifying their sterilization. The law read:

If medical science determines a high probability of severe physical or mental disorders in an individual's offspring, sterilization may be performed on those diagnosed with hereditary diseases. Under this law, individuals classified as hereditarily ill include those with congenital intellectual disabilities (feeble-mindedness), schizophrenia, manic-depressive disorder, hereditary epilepsy, Huntington's chorea, hereditary blindness, hereditary deafness, and severe hereditary physical deformities. Additionally, chronic alcoholism is also considered a condition that may warrant sterilization (qtd. in Grandsoult, 26–27).

This passage outlines a eugenics policy, specifically focusing on the sterilisation of individuals deemed to possess genetic illnesses or diseases potentially inherited by their progeny. The passage delves into specific situations where advocates promoted sterilisation as a method to prevent the spread of inherited illnesses.

The shift from religious-based to racial-based manifestations of antisemitism occurred many decades prior to the rise of the National Socialists. Eugen Fischer, a prominent German scientist and proponent of eugenics, held the belief that Jews had specific ethnic characteristics apart from those of Germans, primarily due to their historical origins in the Middle East (Anomaly 155).

During the first stages of the Reich, there was a significant emphasis on spatial segregation as a means to safeguard the perceived racial purity of the German population from what was considered Jewish degeneracy. Coercive measures, aimed at compelling Jews to leave

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Germany, achieved this. In order to handle the "Jewish problem," the Nuremberg Laws were enacted, consisting of two anti-Jewish laws. The first legislation, known as the Reich Citizenship Law, established a clear distinction between those classified as "citizens of the Reich" and those classified as "nationals." Next, the second law, referred to as the Law on the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, delineated the specific restrictions on citizenship for the latter group (Grandsoult 27–28).

Hitler's "basic principle of blood," a fundamental ideology, nearly eliminated the Jewish population in significant parts of continental Europe and claimed many lives among the Slavs and Gypsies (Luhrrssen xiv). The Nuremberg Laws, passed in 1935, explicitly prohibited the union of individuals belonging to the Jewish and German communities through marriage. Legal regulations forced the deportation of Jewish descent to concentration camps. Academic institutions fired a significant number of individuals of Jewish descent from prestigious positions. In 1938, the government prohibited individuals of Jewish descent from engaging in any form of employment. The start of the mass extermination of Jews occurred in the latter part of 1941, a considerable time after the implementation of eugenics initiatives that resulted in the sterilisation and death of tens of thousands of German individuals (Anomaly 157).

Anomaly argues that "The Final Solution," a policy that sanctioned the systematic extermination of Jews, emerged as a reaction to the long-standing issue known as "the Jewish Question," which had its roots in Europe many centuries before (157). Franz Stuckart, the Undersecretary in the Ministry of Interior of the Reich, introduced the phrase "Final Solution" in 1938 (Grossmann 56).

According to Grossmann, the murder operations identified Franz Stuckart as one of the 211 significant individuals. In his 1938 writings, he expressed the idea that the significance of the judgments made under the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 would diminish as the Final Solution to the Jewish Problem drew nearer. An official government document (56) has identified the word in question for the first time.

Adolf Hitler viewed Jews as a competing group, contending with Germans for scarce resources and cultural dominance. Beyond the psychological aspects of his obsession with Jews, he framed his ideology around the notion of a struggle between racial collectives, portraying Jews as a threat to the prosperity and purity of the German people. The Final Solution resulted in the widespread extermination of a significant portion of the European Jewish population. Furthermore, Hitler's military campaign led to the loss of many European lives, reaching a

staggering magnitude of tens of millions (Anomaly 165).

In conclusion, a variety of factors, including profound economic challenges, widespread dissatisfaction in the wake of World War I, and persistent nationalist sentiment, influenced the rise of Nazism in Germany. The Treaty of Versailles resulted in Germany experiencing profound humiliation and economic constraints, as it imposed substantial reparations and territory concessions that generated sentiments of hatred. The worldwide financial crisis of the 1930s had a profound impact on the German economy, intensifying its already dreadful status and providing an ideal setting for the emergence and spread of extreme ideas.

#### **1.4.2.2.2. From Chaos to Tyranny: Tracing the Birth of Fascism.**

Nazism and fascism were ideological movements that arose in Europe during the years between the wars and were characterised by their extreme nature. These ideologies exhibited common elements such as authoritarianism, nationalism, and the repression of opposition. However, it is important to note that each of these movements had unique characteristics and historical backgrounds.

Italy entered World War I a year later than the other European nations, thus aligning itself against its previous allies, Germany and Austria. Despite encountering significant resistance from both the general public and the parliamentary body, those advocating for intervention effectively orchestrated the nation's involvement in the war. Mussolini's nationalist propaganda and the newspaper under his control significantly contributed to this progression (Acemoglu et al. 5).

It is noteworthy to mention that the preceding seven years of Italian history serve as a representation of the global challenges experienced in the aftermath of the war. Pacifism, warweariness, and the intolerance of disillusioned individuals, further exacerbated by the Socialists' efforts, significantly contributed to Italy's precarious situation. Thus, the nation's collective instincts played a crucial role in preserving and revitalising it (Murray 173).

In recent years, there has been a growing trend in Italian fascist studies to focus on the cultural aspects and internal dynamics of the phenomenon. There is a growing recognition that a combination of economic and social factors, along with a particular state of mind, influenced the development of fascism, both in its general form and especially in the Italian context. This ideology also included a comprehensive understanding of culture (Nelis 141).

By strategically targeting young people who the established political parties had not yet

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enticed, fascism, a relatively recent phenomenon in politics, was able to garner a substantial base of supporters. To reduce the potential consequences of social isolation, the leaders of fascist regimes found it necessary to align themselves with the goals of the 'New Romantics', a group of individuals who, after the war, eagerly anticipated the emergence of a subsequent era characterised by heroic figures (Wanrooij 406).

Gilbert contends that fascism was characterized not only by the presence of charismatic leader Mussolini, but also by the implementation of a repressive infrastructure, exemplified by the increasing severity of a police state. The period spanning from November 1922 to January 1933 saw the emergence of a significant political development: the formation of totalitarian authority by Mussolini and his fascists. This event served as an outline for the subsequent rise of dictatorships in other European nations (32).

Mussolini exhibited a keen awareness of the political potency inherent in the youth movement and gave significant consideration to its complaints and aspirations. His endeavours had positive outcomes. Less than three months before the fascist movement's establishment, he witnessed a notable influx of young individuals drawn to its dynamic nature, progressive mindset, and vigorous pursuit of a profound societal transformation (Wanrooij 406).

The fall of 1920 marked the emergence and escalation of fascism. Within a span of two years, Benito Mussolini successfully ascended to the position of dictator in Italy, strengthening the realisation of the "national revolution" (Crawford 547).

The key characteristics of a fascist state involve aligning the individual with the state, embedding personal identity within the state's core structure, and ultimately unifying both the individual and the state into a singular entity (Krisztics 133).

Whittam mentions that there has been an ongoing flow of books and articles that aim to chronicle, examine, and explain the fascist Ventennio, including its roots and enduring impact. He further states that the ideology of fascism, the influence of Mussolini, the interplay between the party and the state, the dynamics between secular and religious institutions, and the connections between domestic and foreign policy have always emerged as prominent subjects of study and analysis (163).

Berman claims that prior to the outbreak of the war, Mussolini had already initiated significant departures from the prevailing socialist movement. The First World War served to accelerate this trajectory and further radicalize Mussolini. The failure of the Socialist

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International to effectively prevent the beginning of hostilities, along with the widespread endorsement of the war effort by its member parties, served to reinforce Mussolini's belief in the potency of nationalism and the inadequacy of internationalism (126).

Many people agree that the early 20th century, during the Great War, marked the beginnings of fascism. At that time, Italy maintained a neutral stance and saw the emergence of interventionist groups known as "Fasci." These groups aimed to persuade the government to align with the Allies and actively engage in war propaganda among the general population (Crawford 545).

Benito Mussolini, from the beginning, assumed the role of leader and director of the fascist groups. In contrast to the Socialists, the Fascists found in Mussolini an unparalleled leader who had unwavering determination, robust energy, and astute ingenuity. His remarkable influence over his followers was evident (Crawford 546). Berman adds that Benito Mussolini stands as a prominent and significant illustration of the transition from the revisionist left to the fascist right (126).

Throughout the course of the war, Mussolini gradually distanced himself from the prevailing socialist movement. By the end of the war, he had openly renounced the concept of class struggle, dismissing it as an ineffective and inconsequential ideology. Instead, he embraced nationalist discourse and prioritised the promotion of social solidarity (Berman 126–127).

In the assessment provided by his disciple, Dr. Gorgolini, after an extensive exposition filled with fervent praise, a concise summary of his character is presented as follows: “a man gifted with extraordinary energy and genius who has followed his rugged path without asking for sympathy, counsel, or help; a man who is greatly hated and feared, greatly loved, and also calumniated” (qtd. in Crawford 546).

The inaugural address delivered on Ascension Day, specifically on May 26, 1927, signified the establishment of a fascist autocracy in Italy. During his parliamentary speech, Mussolini explained the aims of his government. He made a commitment to eradicate any manifestations of moral and physical decline within the race. He declared himself the country's "healer" with the therapeutic objective of revitalising the population (Quine 7).

Nevertheless, in March of 1919, Benito Mussolini collaborated with a group of individuals who had similar ideologies to establish a new political organisation known as the

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Fasci di Combattimento. This movement aimed to combine nationalist and socialist principles. The initial programme of the organisation exhibited a clear opposition to capitalism, the clergy, and the monarchy. It advocated for various reforms, such as the implementation of an eight-hour workday, the establishment of minimum wages, the inclusion of workers' representatives in industrial governance, the imposition of a substantial progressive tax on capital, the expropriation of assets owned by religious groups, and the redistribution of all unused land (Berman 127).

Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator, first used the term "totalitarian" to convey the concept of the state embodying the core essence of the country. However, throughout time, the term has evolved to signify the state's complete dominance over political, economic, and societal aspects (Nester 73).

The totalitarian governments that existed in Europe effectively eradicated democratic systems and suppressed any kind of resistance. Following this, in all cases, they directed their attention to territorial expansion. Mussolini was the first to undertake such action. Even though his country emerged victorious in the First World War, it harbored dissatisfaction due to its perceived lack of additional gains, such as the acquisition of a portion of the Ottoman Empire. In defiance of the League of Nations, Benito Mussolini initiated military campaigns in Ethiopia, followed by Albania, and later Greece. The use of poison gas in Ethiopia prompted Thomas Hardy to criticize Catholicism, given that Italy, the country in question, adhered to the Roman Catholic faith, stating, "After two thousand years of Mass, we've come as far as poison gas" (Gilbert 34–35).

Alfredo Rocco, the minister of justice during Mussolini's regime, made a statement that might be applicable to either communism or fascism, emphasising the imperative nature of the situation, as stated below:

Adherents of totalitarian creeds believed they possessed a transcendent truth whose pursuit and fulfilment justified any action. Communism and fascism are secular religions whose disciples must blindly follow and sacrifice everything to its dictates. Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito became messiahs who would liberate the masses from the evils of contrary beliefs and practices and lift them above all other nations (qtd. in Nester 74).

Italian fascism displays a significant range of ideological perspectives, particularly in

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relation to the concept of social Darwinism. Alfredo Rocco (1875–1935), who served as Mussolini's Minister of Justice from 1925 to 1932, used this particular worldview as a framework for his fascist ideologies in his speeches and writings. In a written discourse immediately after the conclusion of the Great War, he says:

Conflict serves as the fundamental principle of life for both social and biological organisms. It is through conflict that societies take shape, grow stronger, and progress. The most resilient and capable groups assert their dominance over the weaker and less adapted, driving the natural evolution of nations and races (qtd. in Hawkins 285).

Rocco outlines his perspective on the role of conflict in the development and evolution of social and biological organisms. This passage also reflects a view that aligns with social Darwinism. He further suggests that conflict is not only a random event but rather a natural principle that controls existence, including both social groups and biological organisms.

The act of censoring school textbooks played a crucial role in upholding the principles of fascism, since it included altering classroom ethics and removing any content from the curriculum that was considered liberal, humanitarian, or critical. Meanwhile, party leaders appropriated state firms and seized companies for their own gain (Gilbert 33).

The victims affected by both fascism and communism included a wide range of individuals from many societal sectors, including civil servants, professionals, educators, trade union members, religious leaders from diverse faiths, scientists, medical practitioners, journalists, and judges. Individuals who adhered to liberal ideologies and expressed criticism towards oppressive regimes were susceptible to persecution and, in some cases, capital punishment (Gilbert 34).

Mussolini's objective was to break the unity of established social groupings and classes in order to achieve a transfer of political power based on generational divisions. The divergence between the fascist movement's "revolutionary" agenda in 1919 and their aggressive assaults on all revolutionary movements may be seen as a deliberate strategy aimed at undermining connections between the working class and other organizations (Wanrooij 407).

According to Mussolini, the driving force behind national advancement is not mass movements, ideas, or latent forces, but rather the exceptional elite inside a country. Mussolini does not hold a positive view of the people, as ample historical evidence indicates that the actions of a select few individuals, who form a marginalised minority, have triggered the most

significant transformations in human history. He has made the following statement: "We are not hysterical women who always worry about the future; we do not aim for historic effects and do not anticipate disasters." We do not believe that history is repeating itself or that we must follow the beaten track. Fascism is facts and actions" (qtd. in Krisztics 131).

#### **1.4.2.2.3. Tracing the Roots: The Genesis of Capitalism.**

According to the Oxford Dictionary, capitalism is "an economic system in which private owners, rather than the government, control and run a country's businesses and industry for profit."

Compared to the historical reality it represents, the idea of "capitalism" is relatively new. Even though "capital" and "capitalist" existed earlier, the term "capitalism" did not appear until the second half of the nineteenth century (Kocka).

Scott describes capitalism as an economic governing system that has arisen in many contexts and is subject to ongoing evolution (2). Ayn Rand, on the other hand, posits that capitalism functions as a socio-economic system that recognizes individual rights, particularly in relation to property ownership, ensuring private ownership of all forms of property.

Moreover, Adam Smith, who presented a critique of mercantilism, introduced the concept of capitalism. Smith introduced the concept of an invisible hand in his work *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, suggesting that free markets have the ability to self-regulate through mechanisms like competition, supply and demand dynamics, and individual self-interest (Svejnar 27).

The first assumption that must be challenged is that the emergence of capitalism in Europe may be attributed to its better economic organisation and productivity. Adam Smith and Karl Marx concur that science, technology, the division of labor, and the free market played a significant role in the triumph of capitalism in Europe before its global expansion (Rehbein 698).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, a significant majority of nations around the globe, even those with few economic resources, had embraced the fundamental structure of contemporary capitalism. However, it is fascinating to note that only a few cultures managed to adopt this framework without encountering profound and ongoing debates and disagreements (Sachs 91).

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According to Rehbein (698), colonialism was the primary impetus behind the development of European capitalism prior to the rise of industrialization and technological advancements.

Private individuals or corporations own capital goods and property in a capitalistic economy. The relevant decision-makers decide when and how to create items. Government regulations do not dictate the creation of goods and services; rather, the laws of supply and demand in the wider market do (Svejnar 26).

The concept of private ownership encompasses people's entitlement to own various things, including tools, natural resources, land, and, in some cases, knowledge, either for personal satisfaction or as a way of facilitating production. It also means that a person who controls an asset profits financially from using it to produce goods or services that others want and are willing to pay for (Walberg and Bast 88).

One prominent perspective, advocated by scholars such as Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, posits that capitalism is characterised by a rational approach to assessing expected periodic gains, such as dividends or interest payments. This approach involves equating these gains to the present value of money (Taeusch 222).

As explained by Walberg and Bast, when individuals engaged in the purchase and sale of products and services gather in a market, the interactions between them in the form of offers and bids result in the establishment of prices. Various means, including posting, advertising, and other forms of communication, can then disseminate these prices. Therefore, this characteristic differentiates capitalism's economies from other economic systems (87). Furthermore, economist Henry Hazlitt clarifies the aforementioned passage as follows:

Only the much-vilified price system can solve the enormously complex problem of precisely determining the relative production of tens of thousands of different commodities and services. The system of prices, profits, and costs quasi-automatically solves these otherwise bewildering equations. This system solves them incomparably better than any group of bureaucrats could (qtd. in Walberg and Bast 87).

His statement elucidates a key principle in the field of economics that pertains to the role of pricing within a market economy. The statement underscores the efficacy of the pricing mechanism in resource allocation and production determination across a wide range of

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commodities and services. Market economies use prices as indicators for the equilibrium of supply and demand across various goods and services, a mechanism commonly referred to as the "price system". He argues that market pricing, profits, and costs guide the decentralised method of resource allocation, which is superior and more practical than government officials' centralised planning.

Capitalism and socialism possess multiple advantages and downsides. One prominent perceived benefit of socialism is that the government distributes wealth fairly, eliminating socioeconomic disparities. The main advantage of capitalism lies in its capacity to generate substantial economic development and enhance efficiency. This phenomenon engenders an elevated level of living standards, increased export volumes, and the capacity to manufacture goods and services that align with market demands (Svejnar 27).

Global capitalism has manifested itself on two occasions throughout history. Initially, it took shape as a European imperial system towards the end of the nineteenth century. It then re-emerged as a worldwide system, including sovereign states, by the end of the twentieth century. Both phases involved the progressive assimilation of many regions around the world into a unified framework (Sachs 99).

This event marked the emergence of contemporary capitalism. The accumulation of capital did not primarily occur via the process of production but rather through activities like piracy, the plundering of raw resources, metals, and products, as well as the exploitation of slaves and acts of betrayal (Rehbein 699).

Based on this particular philosophy, Rehbein argues that the emergence and subsequent expansion of capitalism in Europe may be attributed to its increasing efficiency, ultimately leading to its global proliferation. This statement lacks credibility. Colonialism played a significant role in facilitating the global spread of European capitalism, closely intertwining its development. Ideologically speaking, capitalism is a market-based economic system that operates under the governance of inherent laws. The statement provided lacks credibility. He continues by arguing that the concentration of capital under the control of a select few individuals, a phenomenon not inherently aligned with natural laws, distinguishes capitalism from a market system. The use of wage labor is the fundamental principle of capitalism, according to ideological perspectives.

He further states that the phenomenon of wage labour assumed a significant role only during the period of industrialization, but capitalism, in its broader scope, seeks to exploit other

resources and entities. From an ideological perspective, the primary catalyst for capitalism's functioning as the division of labor in terms of productivity, while the prevalence of financial dominance as an anomaly or deviation from the norm. Finance has played a pivotal role in driving the capitalist system (696).

In short, capitalism, as an economic system, has emerged as the prevailing mode of economic organisation throughout an important part of the globe after the decline of feudalism. Privately owned means of production, market-based resource allocation, and the pursuit of profit within a competitive framework distinguish the system. Advocates contend that capitalism engenders effective resource allocation, fosters innovation, and facilitates wealth generation. However, critics argue that capitalism has the potential to lead to economic inequality and exploitation.

#### **1.4.2.2.4 Clash of Classes: a Marxist Review.**

Throughout history, societies have been defined by intricate social structures and hierarchical divisions. In ancient Rome, society was stratified into patricians, knights, plebeians, and slaves. The Middle Ages featured a similar system, with feudal lords, vassals, guild masters, journeymen, apprentices, and serfs. Within these broad classes, further subdivisions existed, creating a deeply layered social order (Lorimer 40).

Revillard states that social class is a significant social group that has similar socioeconomic features associated with a certain social position, such as the lower and working classes (qtd. in Pramudya 2).

Examining advancements in the concept of class and stratification within sociology reveals that functionalism<sup>9</sup>, the prevailing paradigm until the late 1970s, has been overtaken by theoretical frameworks derived from the works of Weber and Marx (Drudy 21). Durante and Fiske on the other hand, argue that social class inequality is perpetuated and reinforced by perceptions of wealth against poverty and education vs illiteracy. It exacerbates social class disparity and makes it more inevitable (qtd. in Pramudya 2).

Drudy highlights that from a theoretical standpoint, whether Marxist or Weberian, the

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<sup>9</sup> Functionalism is the doctrine that what makes something a thought, desire, pain (or any other type of mental state) depends not on its internal constitution, but solely on its function, or the role it plays, in the cognitive system of which it is a part. (Levin)

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idea of class refers to relation to property and the capacity to command income, money, and other resources (26). According to *The Economic Times*, Marxism is a socio-economic and political ideology that analyzes how the ruling class exerts control over laborers, leading to an unequal distribution of wealth and social privileges. It encourages workers to challenge these injustices. Developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the theory was introduced in *The Communist Manifesto*, a pamphlet written during the era of Imperialism. Their ideas were shaped by their own experiences as members of the proletariat.

Engels and Marx primarily examined the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the principal classes within societies. Specifically, classical historical materialism suggested many patterns deemed typical of every civilisation with private ownership of the means of production, including machinery and factories (capital goods) and free markets for capital, labour, and consumer products (Ultee 1).

Marxism is a socio-economic framework based on the political and economic theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. While a thorough examination of its social and economic implications would require an in-depth discussion, the *Encarta Reference Library* concisely defines Marxism as "a theory in which class struggle is a central element in the analysis of social change in Western societies" (Cathy).

Marx developed his theory in response to laissez-faire capitalism, an economic system predicated on individual rivalry for markets. It arose from the dismantling of feudalism, characterised by peasant agricultural production adhering to subsistence levels for the benefit of lords, and the disintegration of merchant and craft guilds, which tightly regulated all facets of commerce and industry through monopolistic professional organisations (Sociological Theory in the Classical Era 44).

Marx posited that, per his theory, industrial society will experience predictable changes and go through certain stages of development, ultimately resulting in a worldwide proletariat revolution. According to these stages: firstly, the bourgeoisie or middle class will diminish in number; secondly, the proletariat will increase in number; thirdly, all other intermediary classes will lose substantial political power, resulting in a polarised society between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Helemejko 15).

Marx identified the proximate cause of the class conflict during the June Days as the National Workshops: the closing of these workshops threatened the workers, while their presence threatened the capitalists. The former, since the workers would 'starve' without them;

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the latter, as 'the national ateliers represented the tangible protest of the proletariat against bourgeois industry, bourgeois credit, and the bourgeois republic (Leipold 6).

Wolff adds that the primary reason Marx viewed capitalism as unfair stems from the reality that he said that capitalist profit is ultimately generated from the exploitation of labourers. Capitalism's hidden reality is that it is not a domain of harmony and mutual benefit, but rather a system whereby one class systematically derives profit from another.

From his perception, Karl Marx emphasised that a social revolution is initiated when the creative powers of society clash with the existing relations of production. In this remark, Marx exhibits a pivotal role in the development of modern socialism and communism via his contributions to Marxist theory (Kolley,1).

According to Blackburn, the true originality of Marx and Engels lies in their political thought rather than in economics or philosophy. They were the first to recognize the historical importance of the proletariat, a new class created by capitalism capable of achieving universal emancipation from all forms of oppression and exploitation. Unlike past movements, the modern labour movement, armed with self-determination and the best elements of bourgeois culture and science, did not need utopian visions or religious zeal. The political power of the proletariat stemmed from its position within bourgeois society. Marx and Engels' analysis of capitalism, its origins, development, and consequences served as a crucial foundation for their political theory despite certain early limitations in their arguments.

Finally, Marx's comprehension of the importance of suffering substantiates the previous assertion: the workers are aware of their alienation, whilst the capitalists remain oblivious. In Marx's early philosophy, pain serves as a kind of insight. In subsequent writings, he claims that the workers' suffering inhibits them from harbouring illusions about their circumstances and enhances their understanding of social dynamics in general (Cohen 216).

### **1.5 Conclusion:**

It seems only fair to sketch a map to trace the foundations of evolutionary theory. This chapter sought to dissect the different thinkers and concepts that allowed Charles Darwin to propose his theory of evolution by means of natural selection. Each section unveiled the relationship between scientific ideas and societal interpretations, illustrating how early evolutionary theories paved the way for a new one.

It is noteworthy to mention that social Darwinism contributed to the spread of several

## Chapter one : Laying the Foundation

extreme ideologies throughout the 19th and early 20th century. This chapter aimed to examine the application of Darwin's principles beyond the realm of biology. This latter legitimised social hierarchies through the lens of survival of the fittest, which influenced, in turn, significant fields like social and economic theory.

Figures like Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner contributed to integrating Darwin's theories into social and economic frameworks, merging with notions of capitalism and materialism. The influence led to the emergence of eugenics, which endorsed the ideas of "the fit" and allowed movements such as Nazism and Fascism to emerge.

This impact resulted in the influence of several thinkers, like Andrew Carnegie who admired Spencer's thoughts. In *The Gospel of Wealth*, Carnegie argued that social inequality in modern industrial society is necessary for human progress, stating that competition, though challenging for individuals, benefits the race by ensuring survival of the fittest in all fields. We acknowledge and embrace environmental inequality, concentrated business ownership, and competition as necessary for human progress (qtd. in Beck 4).

Shirazi and Sojasi conclude that social Darwinism has offered a justification for Nazis and neo-Nazis, as well as the market economy doctrine that facilitates the exploitation of weaker nations by more powerful ones. This idea posits that human societies resemble biological organisms in their struggle for existence, with Western groups now deemed superior and attributed to the highest level of social development (244).

The example of social Darwinism illustrates how scientific theories may become ideologies by sociologists, economists, socio-biologists, and other stakeholders. Scientific assertions regarding human society are only partly verifiable, allowing for discourses that combine logical and irrational components, including scientific truths and unscientific prejudices. Social Darwinism has justified imperialism, racism, eugenics, and other radical ideas (Lungu et al. 77).

While examining the application of Darwinian principles to societal and economic realms, it has come to the attention that this application has influenced modern perspectives on power, competition, and social structure. This impact illustrates how some theories can alter one's views and shape ideological frameworks that stretch beyond their empirical foundation.

**Chapter Two :**  
**Theoretical**  
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## **2.1 Introduction:**

The second chapter is a theoretical framework aiming to understand the interplay between media, culture and the ideological spread of social Darwinism from a globalized perspective. It examines the different frameworks of media and culture that shape social norms, identity and cultural behaviours.

This chapter elucidates media theories like the Hypodermic Needle Theory, which entails that media has a direct and consequential effect on passive audiences, and the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which portrays media audiences as active participants who selectively use media to fulfil specific needs. Furthermore, it explores cultural studies theories focusing on Hegemony and Reception Theory to examine power dynamics and audience interpretation in the formation of ideology.

Moreover, a swift shift to the concept of globalization is introduced, examining its dual function as a mechanism for cultural interchange and a vehicle for ideological spread. Economic and cultural dimensions drive the process of globalization, exposing the debate between cultural homogenization and heterogenization that is relevant to how social Darwinism adapts across cultures.

This chapter aims to provide a thorough theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis. It seeks to illustrate the mechanisms by which globalization and media collaborate to influence society, providing a path to understanding the effects of social Darwinism in modern cultural and media landscapes. Furthermore, the goal of this chapter is to establish a foundation by examining fundamental theories from both media studies and cultural studies to illustrate how media functions as a conduit for cultural norms and beliefs.

By analysing how these films engage with global issues and shape public discourse, this chapter seeks to point out the long-term significance of dystopian cinema. While these narratives entertain, they also compel viewers to critically assess their own societies, imagine alternate futures, and question the structures that govern their lives. In doing so, cinema not only reflects reality but also plays an active role in influencing its ideological and the ethical pathways.

## **2.2 Media Theory and Cultural Studies: an overview**

How the media affect society, communication, and individual views is the central question in media theory. The media's power to build reality, propagate ideology, and mould cultural standards shall be discussed shortly. Now, intertwined with media theory, cultural

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studies investigates society's cultural production, distribution, and consumption processes. It explores how various social groups are portrayed in media, the dynamics of power, and the process of identity construction. The interplay of media, culture, and social power in shaping contemporary life may be better understood with the help of the theoretical frameworks provided by these disciplines taken as a whole.

A practical definition of culture and a clear separation between mass communication and the media should be the first priorities. The term "mass communication" describes the dissemination of information to large populations. The mode of transmission, or media, may be print, digital, or electronic, and can include one or more types of mass communication (*Understanding Media and Culture* 5).

However, by definition, mass media are those forms of communication whose primary goal is to provide information to a large population. Common examples of mass media platforms include television, radio, books, magazines, newspapers, and online media including video sharing, podcasts, and blogs. Another way to look at it is that a single mass media message may be spread over many mass media platforms, like an advertising campaign that incorporates television, radio, and the Internet (*Understanding Media and Culture* 5).

Guanah and Dalung refer to mass media as the means by which the general public receives and processes news and other forms of mass communication. Radio, television, the Internet, newspapers, magazines, and outdoor billboards are all examples of mass media that disseminate news and other information to a large and diverse audience (228).

They add that the mass media serve as conduits for engaging a broad audience regardless of their geographical location. They include films, video and audio recordings, books, and journals. Each medium has inherent potential in serving the populace and has undergone many developmental phases owing to the influence and competition from emerging communication technologies. The mass media has the capacity to link diverse societal groupings (228).

Furthermore, modern public opinion is heavily influenced by the media, which shapes societal values and conventions via its coverage of many aspects of society and the introduction of novel lifestyle choices (Spirchagova et al 95). Additionally, Akiki notes that those values and institutions that promote success, mobility, innovation, and consumerism are fostered and disseminated via the mass media and communication (21).

However, rapid advancements in media technology during the last several decades have

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had an obvious effect on people's religious beliefs, social mores, and cultural practices (Spirchagova et al 95).

Besides, what defines a social group, organisation, or institution is its culture, which includes its common values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Cultures are flexible, varied, and often overlapping, making it impossible to establish clear borders around them—just as it is difficult to define culture precisely (5).

Edward B. Tylor, an anthropologist from Britain was the first to introduce the term "culture"; it signifies “the totality of the ways of life of a people over a given period of time”; according to Akinwale, a society's culture encompasses all of its practices and may serve as a defining characteristic for that society. He divides culture into two parts: material culture, which includes tangible objects like buildings and furniture, and immaterial culture, which includes intangible concepts like morality, aesthetics, and religious beliefs (qtd. in Guanah and Dalung 227).

As Hall puts it, ‘By culture, here I mean the actual grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific society. I also mean the contradictory forms of common sense which have taken root in and helped to shape popular life’ (qtd. in Barker and Jane 7).

Media portrayals of culture, according to Hall and other scholars like him, highlight socioeconomic disparity, which in turn makes it difficult for the common individual to have a voice in our increasingly corporate and commodity-based society (Zeeshan).

Rodman says that cultural studies comprises a cohesive framework of leftist academic and political methodologies. The primary objective is twofold: (i) to generate comprehensive, contextual analyses of how power and social relations are constructed, organised, and sustained through culture; and (ii) to disseminate these analyses in public venues appropriate for pedagogy, provocation, and political engagement (2).

He adds that since it is an intellectual endeavour, it is not just focused on communication. Instead, it is very multidisciplinary, with practitioners spanning many humanities and social sciences. Cultural studies are not only driven by academic interests. It includes study, theory, teaching, activism, critique, and art, resembling political endeavours like feminism or Marxism rather than conventional scientific fields like sociology or anthropology (2).

### **2.2.1 The Role of Media in Shaping Cultural Norms.**

Culture is a developed assemblage of loosely structured concepts and behaviours that are collectively shared, if imperfectly, among interdependent people and passed down through generations to facilitate the alignment of individual objectives within communal existence (Chiu et al 482).

Gelfand and Jackson claim that cultural norms, or collective behavioural standards within a group, significantly influence social life (175). This means that, social life is profoundly affected by the generally acknowledged norms or standards that govern the conduct of individuals within a community. Whether it is about behaviour, attire, speech, or social positions, members of any given community adhere to these commonly held standards.

Moreover, the importance of cultural and personal values and norms in communication is widely recognized. These two concepts are deeply interrelated. Values represent what an individual or society deems important, whether as an ideal outcome or a desirable personal trait. Norms, on the other hand, serve as moral guidelines that dictate acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (Teilanyo 66).

Chiu asserts that humans may be distinctive in their deliberate creation of cultural norms, but their normative behaviour is significantly influenced by social and epistemic variables. Norms are essential for facilitating people' coordination of social actions, enabling them to get positive evaluations from others while evading punishments (qtd. in Gelfand and Jackson 176).

The phrase "cultural practices" refers to the commonly held beliefs and behaviours within a culture, while "cultural values" refers to the ideals held by members of that culture and "intersubjective perceptions" refer to the ways in which individuals typically act within that culture (Frese 1327).

Furthermore, different forms of media serve as sources of information and entertainment, according to Paul and Rai, media are means of communication that allow us to reach and engage with a wide variety of people in many different languages. Media affects every aspect of society. It has several purposes, including but not limited to providing entertainment, disseminating information, advertising, marketing, and voicing opinions and exchanging ideas. Many forms of media have evolved to meet the needs of modern audiences (2).

They further emphasize that media serves as a powerful communication tool that has interconnected the world into a unified entity. The term "media" is derived from the Latin word *medium*, meaning "in the middle." It encompasses traditional mass communication channels, content creators, and various technologies that enable mediated human interaction (1).

Lemmens adds that, in the last 25 years, entertainment has evolved into an essential component of our everyday media intake. In addition, the global entertainment business is vast and has spread to all levels of communication by transcending all types of media and communications. News organisations, commercial enterprises, political parties, educational institutions, charitable groups, and religious entities all use entertainment aspects and tactics to augment the attractiveness of their messages or to improve their efficacy (101).

Virtually every aspect of people's daily lives is impacted by the internet. In this respect, the internet (and social media in particular) facilitates denser and more frequent connections or rather, tetheredness, in line with the caging/exoskeleton concept already articulated—to both people and information. The most noticeable impact of the internet on people's daily lives is the increased access to information and the ease of interacting with others via various forms of media (Schroeder 8).

Furthermore, Hilde and Kellner speak of media culture and how it developed, whereby pictures, sounds, and spectacles constitute the essence of daily existence, influencing leisure activities, defining political perspectives and social conduct, and supplying the resources from which individuals construct their identities. The media, including radio, television, and cinema, define the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, success and failure, as well as power and weakness (1).

### **2.2.1.1 The Role of Media in Socialization: How Media Shapes Cultural Norms**

Scholars have long pondered, studied, and argued about the nature of the connection between media and culture. On this matter, Schroeder says that most of the profound social shifts that have occurred in the last 25 years can be traced back to digital media (1).

Cultural norms are greatly impacted by the media's ability to shape public opinion, attitudes, and actions. The media have a significant impact on shaping cultural norms and expectations via the continuous presentation of certain ideas, pictures, and stories. It also plays a role in socialisation by providing contexts for comprehending social duties, transferring cultural information, and shaping identities.

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Thus, Parke and Buriel define the term "socialisation" as the process by which a person's values, beliefs, practices, and habits are shaped to align with what is expected of them in their current and future social roles (14516).

They add that numerous factors contribute to the socialisation process, including family, peers, educational institutions, and the media. It is presumed that these diverse agents operate together rather than autonomously (14517).

Moreover, socialisation refers to the process of learning the attitudes, beliefs, and conventions deemed acceptable by a certain group within a community. In essence, one acquires the culture of a civilisation via socialisation (Amaechi et al 159).

Cole characterises socialisation as a process that introduces individuals to cultural norms and practices, facilitating their effective functioning within society and, hence, promoting societal stability (qtd. in Amaechi et al 159).

By the same token, DiAngelo states that while the cultural standards that dictate our relationships and behaviours may seem innate, they are not inherent from birth. We are led into them. Socialisation is the process of being trained into our society, acquiring the norms, significances, and practices that facilitate our understanding of the world and guide our behaviour within a specific cultural context. We learn these standards via several methods, from diverse individuals, and via various channels (29).

Uznienė reveals that, as a lifetime process, socialisation helps individuals grasp values, norms, social status, roles, and conduct patterns. It involves the creation of personality, self-formation, and managing relationships with society via awareness and conduct. Socialisation includes several actors, including individuals (parents, instructors, peers) and social structures (school, church, media, workplace, institutions) (231).

In fact, media heavily influences society. The present generation of children is exposed to alarming audio-visual messages from early life. Current figures indicate that young adults and children spend an average of 2 hours and 20 minutes every day on mass media (Mwangi et al 1).

It is noteworthy to mention that mass media is a crucial socialiser. The media informs people primarily. People use this information to create their world based on a picture. This manufactured reality helps individuals model and display necessary conduct, becoming part of their reality image and behaviour expression (Mwangi et al 2).

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Researchers stress that Medias are not only socialisation agents. Treating them as a socio-cultural element may affect the surrounding environment. Their influence on people might be favourable or unfavourable, since they alter cognition and effect (Uznieņ 231).

On the other hand, Guanah and Dalung mention that the fundamental principle of this theory is that the media intentionally accentuates and reinforces certain cultural norms (beliefs, perceptions, behaviours, and values) via messages sent to the public (226). They add that cultural norm theorists assert that television programs depicting an active lifestyle for elderly individuals may influence viewers' perceptions accordingly (226).

The power knowledge theory of Michel Foucault fits well into this context of media and culture as a dialogic connection. As a lens through which to identify rhetorical processes that dominate media texts, his perceptive remarks on the exercise of power via cultural constructions and social institutions have tremendously benefited the area of media studies (Bennis and Ghourdou 83).

Consequently, the fact that media plays a significant role in propagating power relations—essential components of human societies—is an obvious fact. Media cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and political factors that influence it; otherwise, it would be a complete illusion. The media is more than just a network of technical devices that demonstrate how clever humans are at creating virtual worlds to satisfy our primal need for visual entertainment. Media, in its most basic definition, is a culture, a set of norms, a practice, and a conduit for ideas, stories, and language. The media have a profound impact on individuals and society because of the way it permeates our thoughts and emotions (Bennis and Ghourdou 84).

The fast-paced evolution of media culture, in terms of both structure and content, has significantly established reliance on media. Various social, cultural, and psychological demands may be met by people's exceptional reliance on media. Uses and Gratification Theory, an empirical study of media impacts, found that people's susceptibility to the persuasive messages of media increases as their reliance on it grows (Bennis and Ghourdou 84).

According to Steel, since the emergence of media studies as a recognised academic discipline, most theories agree that the power, influence, and control exerted by media remain unchallenged. Media outlets function as institutions of authority and social regulation. They dictate not just our thought processes but also the subjects of our contemplation (cited. in Bennis and Ghourdou 84).

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Therefore, it is quite clear that media producers are driven by clear political goals that dictate how the media is structured and how the public is influenced. The policies imposed by those who fund and control the media are required of working journalists, who are expected to mould and limit newsworthiness to these standards (Bennis and Ghourdou 85).

As an example, one should mention that the majority of media in the United States is generated by corporations. A significant number of television channels in the United States are controlled by the same huge corporation that also controls radio stations and print media. These three sources together provide the reader with daily knowledge that might influence your perspectives on various ideas, events, and theories. They monopolise public opinion. They have instructed us that this narrative is unfavourable and melancholic, whereas that one is exhilarating. It is not the content of the information supplied to individuals, but rather the identity of the entity that has the information that matters (Zeeshan).

A study conducted by Browne and Hamilton-Giachritsis found that children exposed to violence experienced additional phenomena, such as desensitisation. The audience develops a habit of violence, leading to passivity and indifference towards violent actions (Mwangi et al 3).

Pandia condemns the impact of social media on culture by stating that it has usurped the trajectory of humanity. The spread of misinformation, the virality of biased narratives, the prevalence of pornography, and the addiction to social media represent significant threats to the integrity of familial structures and societal values (19).

### **2.2.1.2 Media Representation and Cultural Norms: Influencing Identity and Behaviour**

Media entertainment often provides significant enjoyment and employs visual, auditory, and spectacular elements to entice viewers into aligning with certain perspectives, attitudes, emotions, and stances. Consumer culture presents an impressive variety of products and services that compel consumers to engage in a system of economic satisfaction. Media and consumer culture collaborate to produce thoughts and behaviours that align with established values, institutions, beliefs, and practices (Kellner 3).

Moreover, the prevalence of media, the persistent exposure of humans to it, and its influence on the development of ideas, attitudes, and expectations have made it a focal point of scientific inquiry. Numerous theories have sought to investigate the mechanics and psychological processes by which media influences identity formation, script and schema cultivation, and socialisation processes (Santoniccolo et al 1).

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Scharrer claims that the media serve as crucial socialising agents in contemporary society, directly and indirectly influencing viewers regarding cultural norms, beliefs, and expectations. As both adults and children allocate substantial and increasing amounts of time to different media forms, the media assume a role alongside parents, family members, friends, and others in influencing people's impressions of their surroundings and their place within it (1).

Arias states that a primary focus in the social sciences has been to determine the degree to which mass communication may affect social and political results. Numerous studies have shown that media impacts are prevalent and include a broad range of areas, including political support, electoral behaviour, and the incitement of violence (561).

Throughout the ages, the media, beginning with newspapers, have been instrumental in shaping and depicting the nation-state in Europe and the Americas. In post-colonial nations, the media served as crucial instruments for nation-building initiatives (Fu'rsich 113).

Nevertheless, the media cannot accurately depict the world, despite its claims of truth, realism, and authenticity. It provides us with perspectives or curated viewpoints on reality. They re-present that reality to us by creating images and actions for various groups both inside and outside our society (Ungureanu and Georgescu 858).

Neary and Ringrow reinforce the earlier argument that the mainstream media struggles to present a comprehensive and impartial view, citing a range of factors such as time constraints, perceived newsworthiness, societal norms, audience preferences, and the political stances of media outlets. Instead, it uses language and imagery to present reality. Many media discourse academics focus on how media texts portray individuals and/or groups (7).

In addition, the mechanism of media influence may be categorised into two primary effects: (1) an individual or direct effect, and (2) a societal or indirect effect. In the former instance, media provides information on new norms and influences people to embrace them. In the latter, the information presented functions as a coordination mechanism (Arias 561).

Within this cultural-critical framework of media studies, Fu'rsich states that researchers developed and examined the concept of representation. This approach enabled students to transcend the perception of media messages as mere representations or reflections of reality. Representations are integrated into the continuous 24-hour media stream, shaping norms and perceptions of individuals, groups, and institutions in modern society (115).

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He claims that, representations are fundamental to culture, conveying meaning and information about our surroundings and ourselves. Media representations in cinema, television, photography, and print journalism not only reflect reality but also construct it and normalise certain worldviews or ideologies (115).

He further argues that representations as ideologically charged constructed images fascinate cultural media experts. Since representations have the power to create cultural meaning, faulty or inadequate representations may contribute to the perpetuation of social and political inequality and have a detrimental impact on decision-making within these areas (115).

According to Tawil's article, *What Exactly Is Media Representation Anyway?* Media representation is defined as the manner in which media; including television, cinema, and literature, depict certain individuals or groups. Neary and Ringrow argues that research on media representation has investigated how concepts of masculinity and femininity are perpetuated, mostly in gender-specific media texts (9).

Wood supports the previous argument by stating that media has a significant impact on our perception of men and women. Media permeates our everyday lives, instilling its messages. Media portrayals of sexes sometimes reinforce inaccurate, stereotyped, and restrictive beliefs. Three themes convey how media portrays gender. The under-representation of women in culture perpetuates the idea that males are the norm and women are inconsequential or invisible. Stereotyped portrayals of men and women reinforce socially accepted gender stereotypes. Third, depictions of male-female interactions privilege conventional roles and normalize violence against women (31).

Despite its influence, media often reinforces gender stereotypes, shaping a limited perception of human potential. Men are frequently depicted as bold, strong, assertive, and sexually dominant, with little interest in committed relationships. Women, on the other hand, are commonly portrayed as sex objects, young, slim, attractive, submissive, and dependent, often conforming to traditional societal expectations. Female characters are typically shown focusing on appearance, domestic responsibilities, and caregiving. As media saturates daily life, these misrepresentations can distort self-perception and reinforce restrictive gender norms (Wood 32). Additionally, Arauna and Tarragona voiced their disapproval of the fact that women have been sexualised and shown as sexual objects for an extended period of time (qtd. in Fong 29).

According to BBC Bitesize, the depiction of women in the media has evolved

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throughout time to mirror the cultural and social transformations within society. Nonetheless, gender stereotypes persist in some media texts. The representations of women are often determined by the male perspective, known as the 'male gaze,' or by societal expectations regarding women's appearance and conduct. Numerous depictions of women emphasise sexuality and emotionality. Some prioritise their ties with their offspring or love partners.

As per, Gallagher et al., when it comes to mainstream media, stereotypes abound. Many media portrayals of women limit them to traditional roles as housewives and caretakers, as well as objects of male admiration or dependence. Reports written by women are more likely to question gender norms than those written by men (qtd. in *Gender and Media - GSDRC*).

Over the last two decades, depictions of males have evolved with the advent of the 'new man' or 'metrosexual'<sup>10</sup>, characterised by an awareness of his feminine attributes and an interest in romance, fashion, health, and fitness. Nonetheless, the primary emphasis remains on the conventional concept of masculinity characterised by strength, heroism, and the capacity to navigate life's challenges and endure despite adversity (BBC Bitesize).

Inevitably, media portrayals of men are just as stereotypical. Usually, people perceive men as domineering and forceful individuals. The media suppresses or limits a variety of masculine ideals. The media often portrays men who oppose violence or engage in caring or domestic roles in a negative light. These depictions have the power to shape not just societal expectations of men and women but also individuals' self-perceptions. They promote for a gender-biased view of men's and women's societal roles (*Gender and Media - GSDRC*).

Furthermore, the media's portrayal of women and men has been a contentious issue for decades. Advertising on television, as one of the most pervasive forms of mass communication, has a substantial impact on how people perceive traditional gender roles. According to Kilbourne, when it comes to cosmetics, ads not only help sell the products, but they also

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<sup>10</sup> A usually urban heterosexual male given to enhancing his personal appearance by fastidious grooming, beauty treatments, and fashionable clothes. (Metrosexual Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster)

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promote particular ideals of beauty that are typically linked to certain genders (qtd. in Purba et al 758).

Purba illustrates that commercials for cosmetic products targeting women, such as L'Oréal and Olay, deliberately include language that underscores the significance of physical attractiveness and the maintenance of a youthful appearance. These advertisements use carefully crafted phrases such as "Because you're worth it" and "Ageless" to cultivate a feeling of empowerment and self-assurance in women, tacitly suggesting that achieving and maintaining a certain level of physical beauty correlates with self-worth (762).

Whereas in commercials promoting male-orientated goods, such as Nivea Men and Gillette, Purba says, they use a markedly different vocabulary that highlights characteristics conventionally linked to masculinity. Slogans such as "Stay Cool, Stay Active" and "The Best a Man Can Get" emphasize the themes of strength, physical capability, and an active lifestyle. These advertisements seek to resonate with men's ambitions for strength and virility by framing their products as essential instruments for embodying the idealized masculine image (762).

In essence, Purba concludes that cosmetic ads reinforce gender norms and prejudices via language. While ads for women promote physical attractiveness as a source of empowerment, those for males promote masculinity via strength and physicality. These ads influence customer behavior by intentionally aligning their language with deeply embedded societal expectations and gender norms, reinforcing gender identity and power relations (762).

Another element of media's portrayal, which is worth mentioning according to Neary and Ringrow, is the depiction of race and ethnicity which is heavily scrutinised in the contemporary social context, where 'different' is often overemphasised. Media experts are focusing on the image of perpetrators, Islam, and Muslims in general in the wake of global Islamist assaults, sometimes within the broader context of growing concern about Islamophobia in Western media (10).

Mastro argues that the quality and quantity of ethnic and racial representations may affect various cognitive, emotional, and behavioural consequences, influencing how audiences perceive, feel about, and interact with diverse groups (qtd. in Tukachinsky et al 7). Moreover, persistent media influence allows racial and ethnic prejudices to prevail. Digital technology offers 24/7 access to media content, enhancing its omnipresence. Mobile devices and spectrum frequency accessibility enable consumers to consume audio-visual pictures anytime, anywhere (Castañeda 5).

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Notably, race and ethnicity are only one aspect of stereotyping. The media stigmatises other groups based on gender, age, socio economic position, and sexual orientation. The interaction between race/ethnicity and social categories may lead to subtypes that reinforce stereotypes and marginalisation, such as African American women, elderly Native Americans, and LGBT Latinos (Tukachinsky 4).

Besides, the way journalists cover stories on ethnic relations greatly influences how the general public views and comprehends these topics. According to Pietikäinen's analysis of earlier studies, it appears that journalists play a dual role in shaping public perceptions of ethnic relations. Many people in public discourse and daily life blame the media for promoting racism, sexism, and other forms of ethnic prejudice (17).

Audiences interpret the portrayal of racial and ethnic stereotypes in broadcasts as an accurate reflection of reality, making these representations seemingly authentic and beyond reproach. The prevalent repetition of racial and ethnic stereotypes, along with their intersections with class, gender, and sexuality in the media, establishes circumstances that perpetuate the status quo and strengthen racist, classist and sexist hegemony (Castañeda 5).

In their article, Tukachinsky and his colleagues conducted a content study where they argue that, in terms of the quantity and quality of Black characters on television, the 1980s can be seen as a decade of increased inclusion, a trend that continues to this day. Currently, Black Americans comprise approximately 13% of the total population and account for 14% to 17% of primetime viewers (4).

Mastro and Stamps add that content analysis demonstrates that the representation of Black individuals in primetime television, advertising, and sometimes in movies has progressed to a level comparable to demographic statistics. 13.3% in the United States, according to U.S. Census 2015 (342).

Despite making up over 16% of the U.S. population, Latinos remain the most under-represented ethnic minority on television. Indeed, media experts and advocacy organizations have raised concerns about the quantity and accuracy of portrayals of this group (Tukachinsky et al 4).

Mastro and Stamps approve of the previous argument by stating that Latinos are the biggest ethnic minority group in the U.S., accounting for 17.6% of the population according to the 2015 U.S. Census. Yet, Latinos are hardly featured in the media. They have been under-

represented on television for almost 60 years (346).

Regarding the representation of Native Americans and Asians on television, it is noted that the existing knowledge is limited to the frequency of their appearances. Given their rarity over time, quantitative content studies have mostly excluded them (Tukachinsky et al 4).

Based on the U.S. Census 2015, 1.2% of the population are Native Americans and Alaska Natives (not multi-racial). Regarding media portrayals, they are limited. The examination of 12 primetime TV seasons from 1987 to 2009 found just two distinct, recurring Native American characters among the 2,336 regular characters (Mastro and Stamps 350). However, few quantitative content assessments have examined media portrayals of Asian Americans or their impact on audiences. There is less information available on medium-specific results and the impact of exposure on Asian or non-Asian consumers (351).

Castañeda contends that the media's ability to perpetuate negative stereotypes about minority groups has deep roots in the United States' colonial and exploitative labour histories (4). She adds that although media portrayals of racial minorities differ between ethnic and racial groups, there are commonalities that unite them all. Media portrayals of Latinos, Blacks, Native Americans, and Asians often emphasise sexist, racist, and classist ideas about their sexuality, friendliness, intellect, reliability, and economic status (7).

In *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948*, Barbara Savage contends that African American leaders recognised the significance of the media's representations and the need to influence their depiction. Media outlets are not only platforms for pleasure and information; they are potent social forces that influence our material, social, and political reality (qtd. in Castañeda 4).

She observes that the “highly capitalised, white-controlled national media of film and radio” afforded minimal opportunities for African Americans and Latinos to shape the popular representations of ethnic communities, and that “radio broadcasting remained an inaccessible political medium for the articulation of dissenting views, particularly regarding race” (qtd. in Castañeda 4).

### **2.2.2 Exploring Media Theories: A Closer Look at Two Key Concepts.**

Kellner argues that theories of media and culture are most effectively formed via targeted examinations of particular phenomena situated within the complexities of modern society and history (3).

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Media Theory does not favour any specific theoretical approach, perspective, or tradition in media studies, nor does it merely aim to impartially showcase their diversity or the various theoretical concepts and tools utilised in media research (Dawes 1).

Early media studies examined mass media propaganda and persuasion. Journalists and scholars turned to behavioural sciences to understand how mass media and communications impact society. Scholars have explored various hypotheses and techniques to solve this. These ideas may be used to study the impact of media on culture. (*Understanding Media and Culture*)

The belief that media can captivate, influence, and even manipulate its listeners originates from the early 20th century. The advent of new communication technologies, such as moving pictures, the phonograph, and radio, broadened the mass media landscape that was previously dominated by newspapers (Mwengenmeir).

Nwabueze and Okonkwo define a theory as an explanation of the mechanisms behind a phenomenon or its potential functioning, helping to understand the likelihood of certain events. They highlight that there are various theories in mass communication, including media effects theories, which explore how mass media influence attitudes and behaviours, shaping audience responses to messages. One of the earliest theories in this field is the bullet theory, also known as the magic bullet theory or hypodermic needle theory. This theory suggests that mass media has a direct, immediate, and powerful impact on its audience, with recipients instantly absorbing and accepting the transmitted message (1).

### **2.2.2.1 The Power of Persuasion: A Glance at the Hypodermic Needle Theory.**

Media effects on people are complex and multi-faceted, depending on factors such as individual motivations, cognitive processing preferences, and the extent to which they are able to engage with the content. This fact is increasingly recognised in the expanding corpus of research on media impacts. This new perspective challenges the simplistic assumptions of the magic bullet theory, which states that media technologies have powerful and instantaneous psychological effects on individuals (Sirakaya 5).

The transactional nature of communication and the impact of new media environments are recognised in novel approaches to studying communication effects. These strategies recognise the active participation of both the sender and the recipient in the communication process, transcending traditional one-way, receiver-focused perspectives (Sirakaya 4).

Moreover, investigations into the effects of media have been a fundamental aspect of

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media and communication studies since its start. Research on media affect delineates a broad spectrum of influences, ranging from little to significant impacts. Over the years, ideas of media impacts have shown consistent advancement, particularly regarding their impact on audiences. The belief that the media has significant influence on individuals is a foundational concept in media and audience studies, articulated by the respected American political theorist Harold Lasswell. Subsequently, media researchers used the phrase "bullet theory" interchangeably with "stimulus-response theory," "magic bullet," or "hypodermic needle theory" (Ahmad et al 1425).

Thus, the magic bullet notion was first conceptualised in Lasswell's 1927 publication, "Propaganda Technique in the World War." The Hypodermic Needle Theory posits that media, including all mass communication channels, has a direct and immediate influence on viewers. This effect is both rapid and effective, akin to a magic bullet; once discharged, it will have a significant impact on people who receive it. The idea posits that mass media may elicit specific reactions by disseminating messages to a broad audience (Ahmad et al 1425).

Umoren adds, the Magic Bullet Theory is regarded as one of the first mass media ideas, originating in the 1930s during World War II in both Germany and the United States. Formulated by Harold Lasswell, the idea predominated discourse on the quality and amount of the impact that media messages have on target audience members (76).

Owens claims that the Magic Bullet metaphor asserts that the recipient immediately receives and fully accepts a message. The approach originated partly from the Frankfurt School of intellectuals in the 1930s to explain the ascent of Nazism in Germany. The Magic Bullet Theory posits that audiences are vulnerable to media influences, which may steer passive masses toward a certain perspective. In this image, theatre functions as a weapon, and the person is seen as a passive 'cultural dope' (7).

Croteau and Hoynes simply explain the theory by stating that when one hears the word "hypodermic needle," it conjures up an idea of a deliberate, purposeful, and direct injection of messages into a person (qtd. in *Simply Psychology*). Meaning, passive receivers are instantly affected by the messages that are actively pushed into them by the media.

Alternately, Berger says that as its alternative, "the magic bullet theory," suggests, signals from the media, which are similar to bullets, are blasted into the "head" of the recipient from the "media gun" (qtd. in *Simply Psychology*).

In addition, Griffin and McQuail explain that the bullet or hypodermic needle idea

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suggests that media inject messages into audiences' minds, resulting in changes in behaviour and psyche. According to this thesis, mass media audiences are passive and subject to its content. Therefore, compelling media material leads to desired attitudinal change among target audiences (qtd. in Nwabueze and Okonkwo 3).

In light of this, Baran and Davis point out that according to the magic bullet idea, "the rational mind is a mere facade, incapable of resisting powerful messages" (qtd. in Nwabueze and Okonkwo 3).

Owens says that the Hypodermic Needle Theory is another intrusive metaphor that implies forcing entry into the body. This metaphor assumes the media are infusing a single message into the populace to uniformly think. The language suggests a planned attack on a person or group, a treatment for an illness or a simple answer to a complicated issue (7).

Folkerts and Lacy note that World War II propaganda implied and demonstrated the media had immense authority. Propagandists contended that one could bombard people with information like a bullet, resulting in potent and instantaneous results (qtd. in Kenechukwu 116).

After studying the magic bullet notion, researchers developed theories disproving the all-powerful effect hypothesis. The 1940s research by Paul Lazarsfeld and Herta Herzog was among the first. "The People's Choice" disproved the hypodermic needle idea and examined how propaganda affects voting. Researchers examined 1940 Franklin D. Roosevelt election statistics and concluded that interpersonal opinion impacted voters more than media (Umoren 78).

Kenechukwu contends that despite media academics contesting the validity of the magic bullet idea on the media's potent impacts, it nevertheless has merits. Initially, it established the foundation for future advancements in the examination of media impacts. Before the research on the all-powerful impact, the dominant media theories were linked to the political context inside a specific setting (118).

In conclusion, the Magic Bullet Theory helped explain media power in an age of fast mass communication. The theory's basic idea of audience passivity has been disproven, but it showed media's power. Modern study demonstrates that audiences are varied, critical, and sometimes resistive to media. However, the idea remains fundamental to media studies, showing how communication theories evolve.

### **2.2.2.2 Understanding the Uses and Gratifications Theory: an analysis**

Media interactions occur at cognitive, emotional, and behavioural levels, with the adolescent's appraisal and interpretation determining the patterns of engagement. During assessment and interpretation, adolescents develop preferences of information that aligns with their identity (Mathews 5).

Several ideas, such as the uses and gratifications hypothesis and the hypodermic needle model, describe how people utilise various information mediums. Research reveals that iGeneration children and teenagers spend most of their waking hours utilising media and technology. The iGenerations, or digital natives, were born in the 1990s and beyond. The letter 'i' symbolises digital technology kinds and information access offerings. Technology and media consumption, as well as their passion for internet communication, characterise iGenerations (Salubi and Muchaonyerwa 429).

Lule states that the narratives about the evolution of the U & G Theory are diverse. Initial research concentrated on the function of mass media in propaganda and persuasion, which then shifted to examining the behavioural sciences to elucidate the potential impacts of media and communication on society (qtd. in Egede and Chuks-Nwosu 205). On the other hand, Sheldon assert that uses and gratifications is a heuristic theory that has prompted extensive study on both old and new media, including the Internet and social media (qtd. in Hajdarmataj and Paksoy 28).

McQuail claims that one of the sub-traditions of media impacts research is known as the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory, which is referred to by academics of mass communication today. Furthermore, Cantril argues that during the early stages of study in the field of communication, it was discovered that audiences are drawn to and retained by means of media and material that fulfil their psychological and social requirements (qtd. in Hajdarmataj and Paksoy 24).

Sunder & Limperos argue that thanks to the new breed of audience members that has emerged as a result of the ICT revolution, instead of a passive audience, we now have an active audience of users who actively participate in the content they consume, which is consistent with both the letter and the spirit of the U&G paradigm (qtd. in Mathews 5).

Katz et al. posited "Uses and Gratifications theory asserts that people are active users of media and select how they will use it." More specifically, Lattimore et al. identified that individuals utilise media for entertainment, environmental scanning, diversion, as a substitute

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for personal relationships, and as a means to assess personal identity and values (qtd. in Egede and Chuks-Nwosu 207).

In addition, the U&G framework facilitates the analysis of two distinct categories of inquiries. The first set of inquiries pertains to the forms of media used by users, while the subsequent group addresses the reasons for users' adoption of these particular tools and services. Investigating the reasons individuals incorporate various social media platforms and services into their communication and socialisation practices, routines, and habits has gained significant relevance (QuanHaase 1).

Moreover, it has been suggested by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973,517) that people have the ability to use the media in order to alleviate tensions and conflicts, as well as to draw attention to societal issues and problems (qtd. in Hajdarmataj and Paksoy 25).

Ruggiero asserts that internet-led new media, which use UGT primarily, are characterised by three features not seen in conventional media: asynchronicity, demassification, and interactivity (qtd. in Mathews 5).

One must break down these features in order to understand, so according to Ruggiero Interactivity pertains to the user's authority over the material and the processes involved in communication, signifying that communication is subsequently led and directed. The essence of interaction is in "the human impulse to create interactive representation" (qtd. in Mathews, 6).

Demassification refers to the user's capacity, or rather the liberty, to choose from a diverse menu. In contrast to conventional mass media, emerging media such as the internet provide selective characterisation that enables people to customise messages according to their need (qtd. in Mathews 6).

Asynchrony signifies that "messages may be staggered in time." Information and Communication Technology has transcended the time and geographical constraints associated with conventional postal delivery. On the new media platform, individuals may send, receive, store, or retrieve communications at their discretion (qtd. in Mathews 6).

Medacine explains that UGT is a method of comprehending the reasons and mechanisms by which individuals deliberately pursue certain media to fulfil specific goals. In the analysis of mass communication, it adopts an audience-focused perspective. Unlike other media effect theories that enquire, "What impact does media have on individuals?" UGT

emphasises "what actions do individuals take with media?" (2).

He adds that this communication theory has a positivistic approach, rooted in the socio-psychological communication tradition, and emphasises mass media communication. The primary inquiry of UGT is: Why do individuals use media and for what purposes do they employ them? UGT examines how individuals intentionally choose media that fulfils certain requirements and facilitates the enhancement of knowledge, relaxation, social relationships, distraction, or escapism (2).

Moreover, Mark Levy and Sven Windahl define "active consumer" of media as a voluntary and selective attitude towards communication, as traditionally described by gratifications researchers. The theory proposes that audience members determine their own wants and objectives for media usage, and that active engagement in communication may affect the gratifications and consequences of exposure. It is now believed that audience activity is a changeable construct, with changing types and degrees of activity (qtd. in Medacine 3).

In summary, the Uses and Gratification Theory stresses the audience's choice to actively select media to fulfil their needs, such as entertainment and knowledge. Several scholars have pointed to the fact that many viewers seek to consume media in a way that suits their specific needs and wants. QuanHaase concludes that the U&G method maintains a distinctive and significant position in the fields of communication, sociability, information science, and journalism. The U&G approach appears to be a promising theoretical framework for analysing the types of social media adopted by different population segments and the gratifications individuals derive from their engagement with various social media platforms, sites, and services.

### **2.2.3 Unpacking the Complexity of Cultural Studies Theories.**

Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field whose focus is on how culture shapes and mirrors social and power dynamics. It studies the various forms of media's impact on cultural norms, values, and identities.

The history of cultural studies is characterised by ongoing methodological transformations. This is a typical and beneficial aspect of any evolving area of research, especially one that has expanded significantly in both geographical and institutional contexts, as cultural studies has in recent years (Hall et al 71).

In the years after World War II, a new multidisciplinary discipline emerged in the United

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Kingdom: cultural studies. Founded by Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, it sprang from what its founders saw as an urgent need. Unfortunately, it was born out of circumstances that cast doubt on its legitimacy, as Stuart Hall, its third founder, often admitted (*The British Academy*).

As a matter of fact, the works of the British cultural studies group have made a substantial impact on the study of mass communication and are starting to be seen as the most significant theoretical "break" that academic journals have been interested in since the dominance of traditional sociology in American communication and media studies a generation ago (Hall et al 103).

There is a multi-stranded intellectual movement known as cultural studies. It has a history of antagonism but currently dominates the intellectual engagement among graduate students, where many fields replicate themselves. However, cultural studies is not a field that often allows for direct academic posts (Rosaldo 525).

It starts with Raymond Williams, E. P. Thompson, and Antonio Gramsci as exemplary cultural Marxists whose writings maintain an examination of political economy and a care for human liberation in addition to an awareness of ideology, culture, and human agency. Both culture and power are intertwined in this situation (Rosaldo 525).

Cultural studies needs variety to execute its initiatives. The diversity is somewhat disciplinary. It would be ludicrous for a faction of literary academics to monopolize interdisciplinarity, despite attempts to do so; the self-proclaimed authorities may not consistently acknowledge their own limitations (Rosaldo 528).

### **2.2.3.1 Exploring Power Dynamics: the Key Concepts of Hegemony Theory.**

In November 1926, Antonio Gramsci, the General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party, was arrested and condemned to 20 years in jail by the Fascist State. His lengthy and harsh incarceration, which led to his 1937 death, produced one of the most important contributions to 20th-century Marxist thinking, the doctrine of "hegemony." Unfortunately, his poor condition prevented him from systematically developing this hypothesis before his death in the summer of 1935. The hypothesis is scattered throughout *Quaderni del carcere*, requiring assembly like a jigsaw puzzle. As an archaeologist, historians may create false theories or overemphasise incidental ideas. A post-mortem theory is justified since Gramsci's jail notes coalesce around the notion of hegemony, signalling a natural end to his political experience (Bates 351).

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Bineham states that in the early twentieth century, a basic linear model of media transmission was prevalent. The "hypodermic" paradigm, derived from first studies of audience responses to Western mass media and propaganda, posited that media had a direct impact on its audience and society. The media text conveyed a message that was "injected" into a passive audience, which absorbed, comprehended, and was impacted by it in an unaltered manner (qtd. in, Glasspool)

Martin defines "Hegemony" (egemonia), as both dominance and leadership, is a central idea throughout the Notebooks and is frequently considered the source of their innovations (qtd. in Kasiyarno 19). On the other hand, Holub explains that in Gramsci's theory of hegemony, the concept highlights two key dimensions. First, it examines how the state and political institutions enforce compliance with the status quo through legal frameworks, law enforcement, the military, and incarceration. Second, it explores how political society, alongside civil institutions such as schools, religious organizations, and family structures, fosters a voluntary acceptance of the status quo by shaping cultural meanings and values embedded in societal products (qtd. in Kasiyarno 19).

Hegemony fundamentally pertains to the interplay between meaning and power, a concept that Hall continually underscores and asserts is inadequately understood by both mainstream sociology and textualist cultural studies (Wood 400). Lears says that Gramsci's most compelling concepts are on cultural hegemony, which he used to examine the relationship between culture and power under capitalism (568).

Urbinati argues that the Theory of Hegemony by Antonio Gramsci aimed to achieve power through cultural work. This term mostly relates to conditions of individual and collective subordination. This latter is a dominance relationship that deprives people of their autonomy as individuals and citizens. The term refers to both impotence and the idea of being a captive to an uncontrollable destiny (370).

He adds that Gramsci's life and philosophy were shaped by a certain kind of subordination. The South connected his existential experience to his public and intellectual life. Gramsci's theory of subordination was particularly evident in Southern Italy, which served as his Baconian laboratory for his hegemonic goal. Hegemony involves internal modification of both the individual and its surroundings. Additionally, theorists must shift their critical viewpoint to examine political liberation from the standpoint of the most marginalised. The hegemonic project was established by the "disintegrated masses" of the South, not the Turinese

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working class, who were the least progressive (370).

Furthermore, hegemony was a prevalent phrase in discussions among Russian Marxists, often denoting the dominant position of the working class over its allies within a political alliance. However, it was also used by Italian political theorists in the nineteenth century to envision the slow cultivation of national consent for the new state—"making Italians"—instead of just depending on the application of force. Gramsci integrated these interpretations to depict hegemony as the overarching theory that a social class seeks to attain consensual dominance in its governance by gradually extending its influence across society (Martin).

In addition, Gramsci's analysis of hegemony was partly based on the factual observation that capitalist dominance in advanced Western nations increasingly relies on the cultivation of consent within civil society, rather than exclusively on the use of force via military, police, or judicial systems (Martin).

Moreover, Bates argues that the concept of "hegemony" has long been associated with dominance in western political discourse. In Gramsci's example, his political lexicon stems from turn-of-the-century Russian revolutionaries' polemics. Plekhanov, Axelrod, Lenin, and others used the word to address tensions with "Economists" over "spontaneity." Plekhanov's group promoted the dominant position of the proletariat and party over the peasants, highlighting the need for elite leadership in a culturally regressive society (352).

Recent research explores the concept of hegemony among states as leaders in inter-state systems. This perspective differs from Gramscian analysis, which was state-centric and centred on civil society leadership. Designating a state as hegemonic refers to a unique place on a global political map. Competition among nations creates a distinct sort of territorial hegemony. States in this concept are defined as equal geographical entities with mutually recognised sovereignty (Chase-Dunn et al 363).

The following example raises the counter-hegemonic project, where Gramsci argues that an alternative class coalition may challenge the dominant social class. Translating class analysis to interstate law is problematic. A stable state requires a territorial class alliance due to the economic stratification of societies. In the 19th century, social and national anti-systemic movements built "revolutionary" nations, but failed to build an alternative society. In the 1930s, at the height of the Great Depression, some socialists believed the U.S.S.R. was a unique alternative to the U.S (Chase-Dunn et al 364).

The concluding paragraph by Bates states that the submissive, the uninformed, the imprudent, and the unethical, regardless of the justifiability of their state, will never succeed in establishing a new order. Only those who possess pride, strength, righteousness, and the requisite knowledge may establish a new civilisation and cultivate a new culture, which ultimately demonstrates its historical superiority alone by supplanting the old (366). This latter is relatively worth the link to social Darwinism and the concept of natural selection that promotes the idea of only those who are deemed fit shall survive and thrive in a society.

Finally, Gramsci believed hegemony and dictatorship were interdependent. Like Socialist Russia, Liberal Italy was authoritarian because its hegemony's weakness. The absence of "spontaneous" consent in civil society forced the state to use force in both circumstances. Gramsci called force-dominated cultures "economico-corporative." He meant cultures with no consensus on how to organise society or a worldview that matched economic and social realities. In such cases, politics is the raw manifestation of economic dictatorship (Bates 354).

### **2.2.3.2 The power of Perception: A Guide to Reception Theory.**

When crafting a media message, every designer has the target population in mind. Messages from all facets of society flood the media, overwhelming those who consume them with information. Media outlets have, from the days of the magic bullet or hypodermic needle idea and up until now, encoded their messages in a fashion that suited them, and they want their audiences to do the same (Aligwe et al 1019).

The cultural theorist Stuart Hall played a key role in establishing British Cultural Studies as an academic discipline. Using television to illustrate the multi-stage process of meaning-making in mass media, he expanded upon the work of academics such as Barthes and Eco. Famously published in 1973, Hall's *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* laid forth the fundamentals of the encoding/decoding approach. This model suggests that the process is more intricate than the linear communications model, which has a simple sender-message-receiver hierarchy (Glasspool).

Encoding/decoding is a communication paradigm that provides a theoretical framework for the production, dissemination, and comprehension of messages in media, especially mass media. Popularised in the 1970s, it posits that media consumers may read media materials in several ways. The methods by which media producers encode messages and consumers decipher them are intricately intertwined within a complex hierarchy of cultural distinctiveness and power dynamics (Glasspool).

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Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding Model posits that audience members are not only active in selecting the media they consume but also capable of interpreting meanings that may diverge from the encoder's intended messages. This study aims to critically evaluate Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding Model (Aligwe et al 1020).

Pillai thinks that Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding concept, presented in his paper "Encoding/Decoding," has received both acclaim and criticism. Despite its substantial divergence from conventional mass communication models, including effects research, selective perception theories, and uses and gratifications, it has several limits and requires re-evaluation (221).

According to Hall and Zhao, encoding is the process by which the information disseminator converts the communicated message's meaning, purpose, or perspective, via verbal or non-verbal means, into a symbolic code or informational format characterized by certain principles that facilitate comprehension and translation. The application of codes within the semantic chain of speech structures the encoding process, similarly to any other communication form or language (qtd. in Yuting et al. 190).

In his critique of traditional models, Hall argues that they fail to take into account other aspects of the communication circuit, such as the site of message exchange. Instead, he proposes a new way of thinking about communication as a "complex structure of relations," which is formed through the activities of production, circulation, distribution/consumption, and reproduction. This way of thinking helps the encoding/decoding model to overcome some of the problems that have long plagued traditional models of mass communication (Pillai 221).

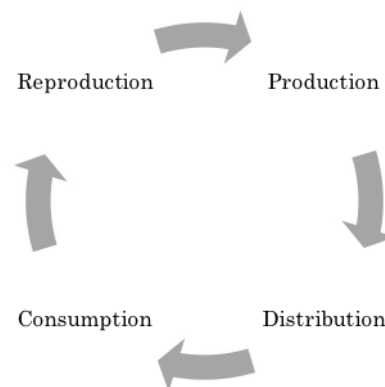


Fig.5. Hall's connected practises. Glasspool, Lucy. Encoding/Decoding – Japanese Media and Popular Culture. <https://jmpc-utokyo.com/keyword/encoding-decoding/>. Accessed 28 Oct.

2024.

Traditional mass-communications research has seen communication as a circulation loop. This paradigm has been criticised for its linearity (sender/message/receiver), focus on message exchange, and lack of a structured view of the intricate relationships between distinct times. One approach to understanding this process is to see it as a structure created and maintained via various moments such as creation, circulation, distribution/consumption, and reproduction (Hall,163).

Per Murdock's explanation, decoding refers to the process by which the receiver reads the code and/or reconstructs the communicated ideology. The decoding or interpretative actions of the decoders illustrated the intricacy of the communication process and the heterogeneity of society. Certain codes, such as easily identifiable photographs of objects or people, communicated a series of possible meanings derived from pre-existing connections formed via social convention (qtd. in Yuting et al. 190).

Initially, Hall combined “preferred meaning” and “preferred reading” as synonymous. Clear distinctions between encoding and decoding methods are crucial, since they are key to his approach. The broadcasting institution's prevalent codes for encoding and media creation influence the meaning of televisual texts. Hall suggests that encoding practices aim to imply a correlation between encoded and decoded concepts but cannot guarantee it. Proper decoding habits lead to a preferred reading (Pillai 222).

According to Pillai, broadcasting frameworks incorporate encoding practices that shape television messages by referencing various events, agendas, professional ideologies, and audience perceptions. These frameworks operate with a degree of autonomy and determinacy in relation to production structures and technological systems. In this process, the encoder applies specific codes to construct the message, while the decoder interprets it based on their own understanding. The message itself circulates as a distinct entity with unique characteristics. Hall argues that the differences in location between the encoder and decoder, along with the variations in their coding systems, determine the level of alignment or divergence in the encoding and decoding processes (227).

Furthermore, Haqu elucidates that during the encoding-decoding process, audiences interpret media signals in a variety of ways. Stuart Hall proposed that the decoding process encompasses three audience viewpoints about the media's conveyed message: first, the

dominant-hegemonic perspective. This position refers to a stance in which the audience accepts the intended interpretation of the media message without contesting its transmitted implications (76). Benshoff adds This role is sometimes referred to as a dominant-hegemonic, preferred, or isotropic reading. The decoder interpreted the text according to the encoder's encoding (qtd. in Yuting et al. 195).

Haqu then moves forward to the Negotiated-Code position, which has a combination of adaptive and selective components. The public concurs with the meaning and information presented by the media, although they integrate their own perspectives shaped by personal experiences of social events (76). Wang states that the negotiated stance had a blend of adaptive and oppositional elements. The decoder comprehended the message partially via the implications of media prompts and mainly through their individual social context. The prevailing ideology and their group's status influenced them to maintain specific consent (qtd. in Yuting et al. 195).

Haqu reveals the final element, known as the opposite code, which denotes a state where the audience understands the significance of media. However, the audience dismisses it by analyzing the discrepancies in the signals conveyed and the information received (77). Wang clarifies this by describing it as a confrontational stance. Drawing on personal experience and background, the audience sometimes assumes a decoding stance that contradicts the prevailing coding, including both reflection and rebellion (qtd. in Yuting et al. 195).

Nevertheless, Pannu and Chopra conclude that Hall's writings include examples from television, although these related notions are also applicable to cinema, particularly in the audience discourse within film reception studies, since both television and film are components of the media domain. Indeed, all forms of popular culture, including television and film, are propelled by themes and messages (qtd. in Yuting et al. 194).

### **2.3 Social Darwinism in the Context of Globalization**

Social Darwinism is a concept based on the principle of “survival of the fittest,” which has profoundly shaped global views on social hierarchies and cultural superiority. Globalisation, on the other hand, is known for enabling diverse regions and cultures to connect and come together as one; this process in turn has helped spread and perpetuate Darwinist ideas and notions of superiority and inferiority globally.

Peter Dickens reckons that, the phrase social Darwinism broadly denotes the application of Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection to social theory, political systems,

economics, and many aspects of human social existence (qtd. in Mogilski 1).

One may clearly differentiate between a broad and a confined interpretation of social Darwinism. Social Darwinism encompasses any doctrines and ideologies that suggest a parallel between natural laws and societal rules, potentially reflecting evolutionism. In a specific context, it refers to activities and policies implemented in accordance with the rules of nature. Social Darwinism connects with eugenics, although they do not fully merge, since not all eugenicists identify as “social Darwinists” (Drouard 686).

Furthermore, Degler notes that sociologists in the United States and Britain developed social Darwinism to defend unrestrained capitalism and large income inequality during the Gilded Age (1870s–1900), a period marked by rapid industrialisation and enormous economic disparities (qtd.in Bayraktar).

In addition, Globalization is a social and cultural process that fosters increased interaction among people from diverse backgrounds across various aspects of life. This growing interconnectedness exposes individuals to new perspectives, cultural values, and evolving family structures. As a result, traditional dynamics are shifting—women are moving beyond the confines of the home, and children are being educated to navigate a world that differs significantly from that of their parents (Dey 75).

Robinson claims that the prevailing interpretation of globalisation links it to the significant reorganisation of global capitalism that started in the 1970s. In his opinion, globalisation is not a novel phenomenon; rather the near end of a centuries-long process including the dissemination of capitalism production relations globally and the replacement of all pre-capitalist relations, sometimes referred to as "modernisation" (158).

Reich claims that globalisation is a frequently used phrase, however its meaning often remains unclear, even to people who use it. Jan Aart Scholte asserts that globalisation is prominently recognised worldwide as a distinguishing concept of late twentieth-century social consciousness. The concept is often defined more by its negation than by its affirmation. However, a thorough study of the term and its spread ought to be discussed in order to comprehend its implications and consequences as well as its history and evolution.

### **2.3.1 Globalization and the Spread of Ideologies**

De Wilde states that the concept of globalisation is now strongly contested in several nations. Advocates and opponents of globalisation are sharply divided on prominent topics such

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as immigration, free trade, and European integration (1).

In addition to examining the presence of a cleavage, the analysis of globalisation ideology is essential for comprehending the evolution of globalisation as a process. Globalisation, propelled by technical advancements that enable more rapid, effortless, economical, and extensive human connection across boundaries, is not an automatic phenomenon (De Wilde 2).

However, Bacchus discusses in his article entitled *The Globalization of Ideas Enriches the World* that international trade's other advantages are less widely understood. Particularly ignored is the fact that products and services cross borders together. They often bring fresh methods of thinking and changing ideas into new technology, goods, and ways of rewriting and preserving human civilisation. Ideas change, move, spread, travel with commerce (Cato Institute).

According to Manfred Steger, globalisation was not only about expanding money and commodities movements across borders. In this multidimensional process, pictures, sound bites, metaphors, myths, symbols, and spatial configurations of globality are as significant as economic and technical forces (qtd. in De Wilde 2).

Maynard believes that analysing ideology involves examining two significant aspects of human beings. Ideological study necessitates acknowledging that various people, groups, organisations, or civilisations possess unique worldviews that significantly influence their political thinking and action (298).

Ideology is seen mostly as epiphenomenal and shaped by the more compelling producing elements of society. Conversely, ideology has been reduced to the manifestation of the person's inner self, resulting in a proliferation of ideologies that corresponds to the number of individual minds (Butters et al. 2).

### **2.3.1.1 The Global Puzzle: Understanding its Core Definition.**

Globalisation is a multifaceted phenomenon that has significantly transformed the world. In order to fully comprehend its ramifications, it is critical to examine its various aspects, encompassing technological progress, cultural interchange, and economic integration. By outlining these facets, one can improve their understanding of the ways in which globalization impacts everyday existence, transforms industries, and modifies cultural environments.

Brown postulates that diverse authors propose characteristics rather than a precise

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definition, which are subsequently grouped together under the umbrella term "globalisation" (5). According to Bucurenciu, there are several perspectives on globalization and a wide range of meanings for the word. Globalisation is at risk of becoming a cliché in our day, representing a notion that embraces everything but fails to provide clear understanding of the current human predicament (51).

By the same token, Vladislav Inosemtsev characterises globalisation as a prominent subject of contemporary sociological analysis while also deeming it an empty concept. Literature first mentioned it around the mid-1940s, but its appearances remained rare until the mid-1980s (qtd. in Cuterela 138).

However, Aggarwal notes that human societies have been observing the globalization phenomenon since prehistoric eras, when they first realized they could exchange locally produced goods for more desirable goods manufactured by distant human societies (180).

According to Reich, globalization is a widely used phrase that is frequently ambiguous in its meaning, even among those who use it. Furthermore, Arthur MacEwan puts it exquisitely in the following quote: "Ever since Adam and Eve left the garden, people have been expanding the geographical realm of their economic, political, social, and cultural contacts" (2). He goes on to mention that from the beginning, when they walked beyond the peaceful borders of the garden, both people and civilisations went on an everlasting journey, exploring other landscapes, establishing relationships, and creating complex networks that go beyond geographical limits.

Furthermore, he states that this continuous narrative has seen the persistent pursuit of trade routes, the formation of political alliances, the sharing of varied ideas, and the development of complex cultural interactions. Meanwhile, Faluszczyk sets forth that ever since Marshall McLuhan first proposed the notion of a "global village" in 1960, the concept of globalisation has been consistently developing (30).

Globalisation has emerged as a prominent area of study in the social sciences and remains a subject of intense discussion. Globalisation lacks a universally accepted definition, and its exact interpretation is a subject of debate among the social sciences (Movius 7).

Additionally, globalisation has always been a means of engaging with the vast universe. Our level of consciousness is solely defined by the pace of this process solely defines our level of consciousness. The paradigm of globalisation relies on ideas like "identity," "culture,"

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"cultural change," "national heritage," and many more (Arsith).

According to Ozer, one way to view globalization's seemingly endless progress is as a web of interconnected systems. This linking happens as a result of expanding webs of interdependences and connections that span more and more distances (3).

Globalisation fundamentally alters our understanding of culture, since culture has traditionally been confined to certain geographical areas for an extended period of time. Does global modernism have the potential to provide us with a worldwide culture? One may argue that this kind of civilization already exists (Toma 33).

Kacowicz and Mitrani mention that in the new millennium, globalization has emerged as a prominent term in discussions within both academic and popular contexts. While references to globalisation have been more frequent in public discourse over the last twenty years, there are still ongoing and unresolved discussions over its origins, development, and unique characteristics (189).

On the other hand, when examining globalisation from a historical standpoint, most academics acknowledge three significant periods that mark the beginning of this phenomenon: the 15th century, the latter quarter of the 19th century, or the final quarter of the 20th century up until now (Salles 7).

The first step towards globalisation was travel. Humans have been on the move for centuries, whether it is to establish colonies, expand their empires, or just find better economic opportunities. Global migrations have been rare throughout history. However, Europeans began their global conquests in the sixteenth century, expanding their empire to include Oceania and the Americas and then colonising Asia and Africa (Held et al. 484). Moreover, Grinin and Korotayev note that some scholars contend that the first migration of people from Africa to other parts of the world is the origin of globalization (10).

In fact, economics has been the most limited and simplistic lens through which to view the globalisation argument, according to Salles. Its origins and consequences span numerous domains, including economics, politics, institutions, culture, ecology, technology, geography, and sociology, among many others. As a result, it has evolved into a complex concept and interdisciplinary subject in academia, touching on these and other topics (2).

Nevertheless, Dey reckons that more people from diverse cultural origins are interacting with each other in more ways than ever before as a result of globalization, a social and cultural

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phenomenon (75). The term globalisation originates from the English language and refers to the development of a worldwide network within an economic and social framework. The word "globalisation" was first used in 1930 in a paper called "Towards New Education" to describe a comprehensive understanding of the human experience in education (Cuterela 137).

Christensen and Kowalczyk define globalisation as the ongoing process of increasing and intensifying economic, political, social, cultural, and legal relations between states on a worldwide scale (1). As, Held et al. note: "When people move, they take their cultures with them (486).

Cerny adds that globalization is defined here as a combination of political and economic processes and structures due to the changing nature of the goods and assets that form the foundation of the international political economy, specifically the rising structural differentiation of those goods and assets (596).

According to the Peterson Institute for International Economics, globalisation refers to the increasing interconnectedness of the world's economies, cultures, and populations. The exchange of goods and services, technology, investments, people, and information across national borders primarily drives this. Throughout millennia, countries have established economic alliances to enable these flows.

Aggarwal defines globalisation as a significant and complex phenomenon that covers several dimensions. Thus, it encompasses several viewpoints and interpretations, but it primarily denotes the process of reducing disparities between nations and dismantling obstacles to international trade, politics, society, culture, and other national attributes (180).

Brown implies that most often, people use the term "globalisation" to indicate a transformation. People often cite the influence of globalisation as evidenced by the massive global fund movements, the rapid advancement of information technology, the emergence of new opportunities for international production and service exchange, and the diminishing importance of nation states (3).

Cuterela argues in her paper "Globalisation: Definition, Processes, and Concepts" that people often use the term "globalisation" to characterise the worldwide expansion of technology for communication, manufacturing, and connection. When people think of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other organisations working to establish a free trade zone for goods and services throughout the world, they usually picture a ambiguous definition of

globalisation (139).

In short, globalisation refers to the interconnections that exist across many parts of the globe, including cultural, criminal, financial, and environmental aspects. These links undergo changes and expansion throughout time (Held et al. 484).

Brown deduces that globalisation is responsible for falling wages, the introduction of student fees, the expansion of international tourism, international currency transactions, the most recent workplace or business agreements, changes in sport, budget cuts in the public and private sectors, and the abandonment of greenhouse gas policies. It has become so all-encompassing that one must question whether it is even useful as a definitional term (5).

Reich concludes that, according to some analysts, the only real opposition to globalisation is the form it has taken as a result of the actions of the world's wealthiest people. There was a dramatic expansion of the wealth disparity. The rhetorical suggestion that globalisation is only the Western imperialism of ideas and values, however, is an enormous and expensive error of judgement (145).

Das comes to the conclusion that the notion did not have a clear and universally agreed definition. In fact, people often use the word "globalization" as a portmanteau. It has become a cliché, overly conventional and has lost its originality through excessive repetition (1).

### **2.3.1.2 Dimensions of Globalization: an Overview.**

Globalisation is a powerful and irreversible force that impacts the globe by facilitating the unrestricted movement of money, services, products, people, and ideas. This process leads to the integration of societies and economies (qtd. in Savrul and İncekara 19).

Rifai states "Globalization is the term that has globalized itself in the past few years". He further explains that from the implications of the procedure to the definition of the word itself, it has sparked heated discussions. Nevertheless, some people think globalisation has had massive effects on every facet of society. Some people do not think much about the term and think people have overreacted (88).

Ferdausy and Rahman specify that the concept of globalisation is subject to many interpretations, according to individuals' specific areas of interest and the extent of their academic inquiry. Scholars not only have divergent perspectives on the appropriate definitions of globalisation, but they also exhibit disagreement on its magnitude, causality, timeline, influence, paths, and policy implications (117).

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However, Das states that globalisation is widely acknowledged to have significant economic and financial aspects. While it should be noted, that globalisation is not only confined to economic factors, despite occasional misconceptions (1).

Ferdausy and Rahman add that globalisation is sometimes seen only as an economic phenomenon, but many proponents of globalisation highlight the other structural changes that have occurred, giving it a multidimensional nature. These changes include political, technological, cultural, social, environmental, and other aspects. Therefore, globalists often examine globalisation by considering a collection of interconnected processes that are not same in every aspect of society (117).

Globalisation is the process of expanding and speeding up worldwide connectivity in several elements of modern social life, including politics, culture, economics, and spirituality. As stated earlier, globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon that goes beyond the mere economic markets. It encompasses a range of dimensions that affect people and cultures worldwide.

### 2.3.1.2.1 Exploring the Economic Dimension:

From an economic standpoint, globalization involves the increasing specialization of labour on a global scale and the growing interconnection of national economies. This process is driven by the exchange of goods and services, cross-border corporate investments, financial flows, and the migration of human capital (Das 1).

Eteria indicates that globalisation encompasses several facets, including economic, political, cultural, social, and for others. Among the various forms of globalisation, the economic factor serves as the foundation and catalyst of the expansion of other forms, including political and social globalisation (90).

Out of all the aspects, economic globalisation is the most significant (Ferdausy and Rahman 123). They further argue that increased internationalisation of production, distribution, and marketing of products and services, along with the knowledge and attitudes that go along with market trade, is what is causing the integration of different economies throughout the globe.

Moreover, Radu mentions that the economic dimension of globalisation is a key factor that influences both the quantity and quality of other aspects of globalisation, highlighting its significant economic relevance (231).

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He further states that the remarkable growth in the quantity and composition of trade in goods, capital, and services, encompassing a majority of nations or international economic entities, primarily supports the quantitative aspect of economic globalisation. Expanding international production, industry relocation, and mass workforce migration further reinforce it. On the other hand, the qualitative aspect of the economic dimension refers to the changing realities concerning the boundaries of human knowledge, primarily influenced by technological advancements and their global dissemination. It also includes the emergence of associated phenomena or side effects that have a significant impact on a nation's social, cultural, and political aspects. These include the popularisation of economic integration, the adoption of common policies to regulate international trade relations, and the issue of environmental pollution (ibid).

Pyle asserts that the expansion of economic activity among nations around the world brings with it a plethora of possibilities and challenges collectively known as economic globalization. The most recent epochs in which it took place include the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the twenty-five years after World War II, and the late 1960s and early 1970s, from whence it continues to this day (4089). Furthermore, it is important to note that economic globalisation encompasses all nation-states, each with varying levels of integration into the global economy (Eteria 90).

When discussing globalization, Rifai refers to this as the highest level. Over the last several years, major multinational corporations like Yamaha, Microsoft, McDonald's, etc., as well as international organisations like the World Bank and IMF, have played significant roles in the economic globalisation of certain affluent nations like the USA and Japan (88).

Furthermore, a significant number of individuals perceive globalization as synonymous with Americanization or Westernization. In addition, as Stiglitz noted, "If globalisation is being used to advance the American model of a market economy, many elsewhere are not sure they want it." (qtd. in Eteria 91).

According to Bottery, economic globalisation may be most accurately described as the coming together of three distinct forces. One key feature is the growing global mobility of money, both entering and exiting a nation, facilitated by advancements in information and communication technology (qtd. in Rifai, 88).

Economic globalisation has led to an increase in the global movement of products and services, money (through portfolio investments or FDI by MNCs), and labour (through

migration for work). Technological advancements have been highly instrumental during this period of globalisation (Pyle 4089).

Pyle explains that people often refer to it as 'neoliberalism' due to its purported emphasis on market dependence (and less government involvement), trade and investment liberalization, and increasing economic openness (4089). On the other hand, Eteria adds that it is worth noting that neoliberalism is the foundational philosophy of contemporary economic globalisation. Since the 1980s, neoliberal economic globalisation has held that, in order for any country to experience economic prosperity, it must adhere to the principles of so-called "small government" and be open to trade and investment (90).

According to Rifai, banks and multinational corporations facilitate extensive integration and accelerated economic interaction through production, trade, and financial transactions, demonstrating the effects of economic globalization. This process involves a heightened involvement of institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the more recent World Trade Organisation, which collectively have significant implications for the global community (89). In the 1980s, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank developed a set of recommendations known as the "Washington Consensus", which reflected a neoliberal perspective on economic globalisation (90).

As a conclusion and based on the information provided, it can be inferred that globalisation is an ongoing and irreversible process. Governments possessing the necessary resources, primarily reflected in their degree of economic development, are the driving forces behind this "phenomenon" (Radu 238).

#### **2.3.1.2.2 Uncovering the Cultural Dimension**

Throughout countless millennia, human societies occupied vast expanses of land without any communication save for their physical attributes, including their eyes, voices, hands, and legs. Since the emergence of urbanised cities over 5,000 years ago and the commencement of economic activity, there have been cultural interactions among people residing in different civilisations (Hassi and Storti 6).

Cultural globalisation is a phenomenon, referred to by Castells as "the emergence of a specific set of values and beliefs that are largely shared around the planet" (qtd. in Movius 6). Furthermore, Tomlinson explains that globalization has made it possible for people in different regions of the world to easily access and experience unexpected and diverse cultural components. The primary impact of cultural globalisation has been the phenomenon of

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'deterritorialisation', wherein culture becomes disassociated from specific physical regions (qtd. in Ozer, 4).

On the other hand, the cultural dimensions of globalisation receive comparatively less attention and appreciation than the global economic dimensions, which receive much more attention and controversy. This is mostly due to the fact that culture is a complex concept with many different aspects and expressions (Ahmad).

However, Movius asserts that almost everyone recognizes cultural globalization, citing ubiquitous examples like Coca-Cola and McDonald's (6). Moreover, technological advances and trade have spread cultural characteristics such as European fashion and football, American movies and music, Japanese anime, and Indian meditation and compassion. In addition, American fast food, along with Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, and Chinese cuisines, has become prevalent in regions far from its original sources (Ozer 3).

Toma mentions that the global expansion of consumer brands through international trade is one of the most prominent and widespread manifestations of globalisation. Additionally, popular cultural icons and artefacts have gained global dominance. Satellite broadcasts simultaneously communicate events to hundreds of millions of people on all continents (31).

Ozer explains that, in general, cultural globalisation provides more opportunities and influences in terms of diverse ways of thinking and acting, thereby establishing a foundation for the process of combining different cultural aspects (3).

It is important to acknowledge that globalisation has significantly impacted and transformed economies, politics, and cultural domains. The cultural dimension of globalisation has emerged as a crucial field for research, and examining how the latter affects cultural practices and identities is essential to comprehending it.

Hassi and Storti state that the relationship between globalisation and culture seems to have existed for a considerable period of time. These interactions have been a subject of debate in literature due to the impact of globalisation on culture. Different theoretical perspectives have been created to analyse these interactions. The aforementioned perspectives will be categorised into three distinct scenarios and further expounded upon in the following parts (7).

Kraidy describes global culture as an integral part of the modern era, often symbolized by a worldwide youth generation immersed in consumer culture—listening to Britney Spears

on a Sony Walkman, wearing Nike sneakers and Gap sweaters, and consuming Big Macs with Coca-Cola. He further argues that for some, these images represent the realization of McLuhan's global village, where a new generation, connected through the shared language of global pop culture, embraces diversity and flourishes in an increasingly interconnected world (15).

#### **2.3.1.2.2.1 Homogenization vs Heterogenization: an Introduction.**

The ongoing discourse on globalisation primarily revolves around two prominent theoretical perspectives: homogenisation and heterogenization, which were established over twenty years ago. Homogenisation favours global uniformity and predicts cultural similarity, whereas heterogenization favours local distinctiveness and anticipates long-lasting cultural variation (qtd. in Cserni 4).

Homogenisation refers to the process of cultural globalisation, whereby the dissemination of Western ideals, goods, images, lifestyles, and social organisation occurs on a global scale (qtd. in Cserni 4). On the other hand, Ritzer puts it simply: heterogenization, also known as differentiation, refers to the obstacles that hinder the exchange of ideas and practices that would lead to cultural similarities. From this standpoint, civilisations retain their distinctiveness from one another (qtd. in Hassi and Storti 7).

The homogenization-heterogenization debate revealed the limited use of the term "difference" in the context of identifying cultural differences. While a certain view claims that globalisation was bringing disparities closer together, another, stronger argument held that it was actually heterogenizing in ways that were both contradictory (Appadurai) and unclear (Tomlinson). However, a distinct perspective on the connection between globalisation and diversity becomes apparent when we discuss diversification (Pieterese) and differentiation (Bourdieu) (cited. in Balmurli 18).

Global cities, proposed by Sassen, are another homogenisation notion; they are the epicentres of the global economy's production, financing, and coordination. These cities no longer participate in economies that are based on territories or nations; instead, they operate mostly within international networks of finance, commerce, and industry as a result of their orientation towards the global economy (Cserni 5).

The convergence thesis, which posits that globalisation leads to global uniformity, underestimates the worldwide circulation of products, ideas, and personalities. Robertson, who critiques the emphasis on processes originating from the United States and their tendency to

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make the world more uniform, supports the concept of heterogeneity. He emphasises the importance of diversity, global flows in multiple directions, and the existence of world processes that are autonomous and independent of other nation-states. These flows do not completely eliminate local cultures, but rather modify some aspects while strengthening others. Similarly, Wiley argues that national cultures, which are constantly evolving entities, have now been integrated into a diverse international cultural sphere (qtd. in Hassi and Storti 8).

While heterogenization researchers acknowledge that globalization has its roots in Western cultures, they reject the idea that one-way cultural exchanges lead to a unified global culture. Rather, they argue that cultural diversity will continue to be prominent (qtd. in Cserni 5). This approach emphasises the importance of local cultural autonomy, diversity, and resistance to the process homogenization similar due to strong local cultural barriers that resist external global influences.

Since capitalist growth is not uniform across countries due to disparities in use and exchange value, there is a need to accommodate diversity as part of globalisation. The goal of globalisation's heterogenizing tendency is to create new distinctions while simultaneously preserving existing ones. Afterwards, these distinctions can play a role in the formation of new identities, structures, hierarchies, powers (Balmurli 19).

In addition, cultural groupings become diverse entities because of varying demands imposed by their environment, as they strive to adapt to its needs. Over time, these groupings grow varied and distinct because of environmental conditions and forces. For example, although the expansion of colonisation led to a decrease in cultural diversity, the retreat of colonisation resulted in new cultural forms and the promotion of cultural difference (Hassi and Storti 8).

Ritzer argues that from the perspective of homogenisation, obstacles that impede the convergence of cultures are feeble, whereas global flows have a significant influence. According to Ritzer, homogenisation, often referred to as convergence, has the potential to reshape local cultures via the influence of more dominant cultures or even a global culture. This viewpoint is seen in several ideas and models, including Global Culture, Americanization, and most notably, the McDonalidization hypothesis (qtd. in Hassi and Storti 8).

Balmurli further argues that following a cultural homogenisation argument leads to believing in related ideas like Americanisation, Westernisation, and commodification. The last one tries to link globalisation more directly to capitalism and modernity, with the goal of making the world more like Walmart, McDonald's, or Disney (6). Cserni adds that

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Americanization is happening all across the globe because American culture is becoming more prominent as a result of neoliberalism, technology, mass communication, and the influence of American corporations abroad (4).

Appadurai and Featherstone argue that while some scholars recognize globalization as being largely driven by Western cultures, they reject the idea that it results in the homogenization of global cultures through one-directional influences. Instead, they suggest that globalization fosters heterogeneity, creating a networked structure where different cultural elements interact and interconnect through shared characteristics rather than conforming to a singular global culture (qtd. in Hassi and Storti 7).

Balmurli states that the overarching claim is that the cultural aspect of globalisation is defined by the exchange of ideas and symbols, and that because the majority of these cultural units are created and disseminated by developed capitalist (American or European) institutions and businesses, there is a threat that the world is becoming more culturally homogeneous (6).

Appadurai's thesis examines the conflict between cultural heterogenization and homogenisation in the global cultural economy. Appadurai illustrates this conflict by identifying "global cultural flows" that follow a similar pattern and create unique images such as meanings, representations, and values. He labels these images as "scapes" and provides a definition for them as universally shared mental representations of the social realm. These scapes depict a distinct division or lack of connection between culture, politics, and economics in global society (qtd. in Cserni 6).

### **2.3.1.2.2.2 Hybridization: an analysis.**

Pieterse refers to cultural hybridization as "the mixing of Asian, African, American, European cultures: hybridization is making of global culture as a global melange" (qtd. in Özekin and Ariöz 187). Additionally, Rowe and Schelling define hybridization as "the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices' (qtd. in Pieterse 5).

Moreover, hybridisation is the process in which global and national cultures coexist and blend together, resulting in the creation of new cultural forms and identities that include components from both. Hybridisation implies the process by which the global is consistently localised and the local is globalised (qtd. in Cserni 5).

Nevertheless, Garcia Canclini argues that cultural hybridisation mostly occurs due to the

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interaction between different cultures, as well as influential factors including globalisation, modernisation, colonialism, international relations, social movements, and cultural activism. These variables contribute to both the increase of cultural hybridisation and to the process of transforming and enhancing cultures (qtd. in Tuncer 87).

Tuncer states that globalization has led to a notable rise in global trade, transportation, and technological advancements. The ease of communication between cultures has increased their interaction. This process facilitates the exchange and interaction between different cultures, leading to the emergence of hybridised cultural elements. Furthermore, he thinks that the influence of globalisation on cultural hybridisation may result in beneficial as well as negative outcomes. The connection between civilizations facilitates the exploration and understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds. The fusion of multiple cultures creates new cultural manifestations, enhancing cultural variety (88).

On this matter, Bhattacharjee argues that globalisation diminishes boundaries and differences across cultures, resulting in heightened cultural interchange and interaction. This connection has the potential to give rise to a novel cultural fusion among many civilisations. She also examines the economic and political dimensions of how globalisation influences cultural hybridisation (qtd. in Tuncer 89).

Moreover, heterogenization and hybridisation theories, commonly referred to as internal globalisation or micro-globalization, view the local as a microcosm of the global. Both viewpoints emphasise the distinct presence of globalisation at the micro level in daily life, rather than the broader implications of global social and cultural systems (qtd. in Cserni 5).

Özekin and Ariöz explain that what sets hybridisation apart from the other two models of cultural globalisation is its perspective of culture as a translocal learning process that looks beyond its own boundaries (188). Pieterse on the other hand points out that the hybridisation thesis posits that culture should be seen in a broader perspective as a universal human software, including a translocal learning process that is not limited to certain territories, ethnicities, or national entities (qtd. in Özekin and Ariöz 188).

Two opposing camps have formed around cultural globalisation. One group sees it as a process that transforms the rich tapestry of human diversity into an overwhelming Western consumer culture. On the other hand, others see cultural globalisation as a continual process of hybridisation whereby altered cultural practices constantly give rise to new cultural expressions. While scenario two focusses on the small scale, scenario one is more concerned

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with the global. Cultural globalisation, according to the former, is nearing "saturation," while the latter views it more as nearing "maturation" (qtd. in Kraidy 17).

Tuncer claims that the phenomenon of cultural hybridisation has seen a significant increase due to the process of globalisation, mostly driven by factors such as migration and diaspora (89). He concludes that, the impact of migration and diaspora plays a crucial role in the process of cultural hybridisation. Diaspora enables the meeting and fusion of civilisations, whereas migration enhances cultural exchange, resulting in the formation of new cultural diversity (90).

Within this framework, cultural globalisation as hybridisation denotes the dynamic and flexible interactions among diverse cultures. According to Cohen, it is "the cross-fertilization between different cultures as they interact: participants select particular elements from incoming or inherited cultures, endow these with meanings different from those they possessed in the original cultures and then creatively merge these to create new varieties that supersede the prior forms" (qtd. in Özekin and Ariöz 189).

As highlighted by Pieterse, hybridisation provides a solution to the cultural differentiation promoted by racial and nationalist ideologies. It does so by focussing on the very experiences that have been excluded, stigmatised, and considered taboo in cultural differentiation (1392).

Nevertheless, the process of cultural hybridisation may give rise to intercultural power dynamics and ultimately result in the extinction of certain cultural identities. Hence, the matter of cultural hybridisation necessitates a comprehensive consideration of its merits and demerits. Failure to recognise the drawbacks may lead to the danger of homogenisation and cultural absorption, rather than fostering cultural variety. During the phenomenon of cultural hybridisation, the dominant culture has the ability to repress or modify certain cultural aspects, resulting in a reduction in cultural variety and the possible eradication of some civilisations. Hence, it is crucial to exercise meticulous deliberation and balance when evaluating the phenomenon of cultural hybridisation. Preserving cultural diversity and uniqueness is of utmost importance, while also promoting interaction and exchange across cultures (Tuncer 87).

Alejla concludes that the trend of globalisation has increased worldwide interconnectedness throughout the years across several domains, including business, commerce, cultural exchange, and technology interactions in the digital era. The notion of globalisation has persistently captivated the interest of governments, politicians, and scholars.

Research studies reveal that globalisation has occurred in several waves, each generating economic, cultural, and technical trends that characterise subsequent waves (43).

## **2.4 The Role of Globalization in Dissemination**

Yalcin claims that a number of factors have contributed to the rise of globalisation; some see it as a product of technical progress, while others trace it back to the market economy. Furthermore, another argument asserts that globalization is a result of capitalism's advancements. Yeates sums up that “globalisation has become an established term in social science” (69). That is, it has gained not only traction but also recognition in social research.

The acceleration of globalisation since the late 20th century has prevailed the globe, fostering increasing international links across numerous domains, including business, commerce, and cultural interaction. Although the sense of connectivity certainly accelerated growth and progress, for others, globalisation just intensified existing inequities and heightened the reliance of some nation-states on others (Alejla 39). The phenomenon of globalisation, characterising the current period, induces complex changes and transformations in the political, economic, technical, and social domains (Ünalán and Doğan 2).

### **2.4.1 Mechanisms behind the spread of ideologies.**

Rizoiu and Ram argue that ideology has consistently been a fundamental component in comprehending our worldview, shaping beliefs, and influencing political actions.

Nonetheless, the internet has transformed the dissemination of beliefs and ideologies, resulting in novel manifestations of online radicalisation. Far-right ideas, characterised by ultra-nationalism, racism, and resistance to immigration and diversity, have spread on various social media platforms (Rizoiu and Ram).

In the context of criticizing conventional ideology, it was first determined to restrict ideologies to collectively held representations of a generic and abstract nature. Ideologies belong to the same category as socially shared knowledge and social attitudes. Ideologies are collective and not manifested as distinct, episodic memories or personal viewpoints (Van Dijk 127).

Wang describes the media's communication operations, as a vital component of human civilisation, not only mirror the fundamental traits of culture but also significantly affect its evolution. The link between media and culture is akin to two sides of the same coin, and its interconnection forms an integral aspect in the development of human civilization (13).

#### **2.4.1.1 From Print to Digital: How Media Influences Ideological Beliefs.**

The globalisation trend has amplified the significance of the media in our lives. The rapid growth of communication globally has united cultures and increased cultural exchange. The expansion of mass media varieties has enhanced information acquisition by offering access to news and data from several sources (Ünalán and Doğan 4).

As time passes, media development swiftly evolves, with increasing sales, ratings, click-through rates, and other metrics. The content is becoming increasingly diverse, encompassing a wide array of entertainment information, including celebrity anecdotes, gossip, unusual external narratives, and cultural and sports news. The primary objective is to satisfy market demands and public entertainment needs (Wang 15).

The media have a vital obligation as a provider of information and perspectives on science and technology for the public. Public perception and attitudes towards these disciplines are profoundly shaped by the representations of scientific information disseminated by the media and other mass communication channels (Carvalho 223).

Furthermore, media affect society. Knowing what is occurring locally and globally is beneficial. It educates us about society and civilisation. The media, including print, broadcast, and digital media, informs us about societal issues such as female foeticide, gender inequality, domestic abuse, dowry, and lack of education for females (Agrawal et al. 959).

Media has a crucial function in democratic society. The MacBride Report, issued by UNESCO, prioritises the media's functions, with a primary focus on the provision of news and information. The media's fundamental functions include the socialisation of individuals, the motivation for social objectives, and the development of social ideals (Ünalán and Doğan 7).

Representations of the world in the media stem from a number of decisions, including the selection of newsworthy issues, the emphasis assigned to them, and the individuals designated to articulate them. The codification of issues within media discourse is guided by perceived interests, societal effects, various "news values," economic factors, and editorial policies (Carvalho 223).

According to McQuail, mass media serves people as follows: Individuals use mass media for information, identification, integration, social contact, and entertainment. They use mass media to learn about the world, get advice on solving problems and making decisions, satisfy curiosity and interest, self-educate, find behaviour models, reinforce values, identify

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with others, and develop social empathy (qtd. in Ünalın and Dođan 7).

However, one must first define mass media in order to grasp its meaning and ramifications, according to Defleur et al., mass media are instruments for transmitting messages over distances or time to achieve mass communication. The phrase mass media refers to the technological means by which information, ideas, and attitudes are disseminated to a wide audience across several regions (qtd. in Taiwo).

Nevertheless, McQuail characterises mass media as a communication medium that functions on a broad scale, engaging and encompassing almost all individuals within a community to varying extents. Media is the plural form of medium, denoting a conduit or vehicle for the transmission of information. Mass media serve as communication conduits in contemporary society, particularly including print and electronic media (qtd. in Taiwo). The media influences the habits and attitudes of individuals by disseminating information. It presents societal standards to the public, aiming to alter their attitudes towards the dominant orthodoxy (Agrawal et al. 964).

Sun tackles another important element, which is the impact of media on our political opinions which has been a contentious issue for several years (15). She adds that the media's significant impact on politics is shown by its facilitation of increased public engagement in the political process and its provision of a platform for political debates and discussions. Furthermore, technology has facilitated enhanced political engagement, enabling individuals to access diverse viewpoints and perspectives on several political matters. Consequently, they have facilitated individuals in becoming more aware and informed about political matters (15).

Nevertheless, the potential impact of media is frequently perceived as undermining individual dignity and autonomy, suggesting that a pro-effects perspective assumes the populace to be a credulous collective, culturally naïve and susceptible to ideological manipulation, as if television were posited as the exclusive catalyst for various social behaviours (Mehraj et al., 57). Thus, numerous studies have been undertaken to assess the impact of media on society, particularly focussing on its effect on violence among children and adolescents (Munene, 925).

Ijeh argues that the widespread availability of information and communication has led many to conclude that mass communication was crucial to human civilization's development and continued existence. This is due to the fact that individuals obtain almost all of the important information that moulds their personality in regard to society via the medium of mass

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communication. They also provide enough knowledge on how to respond to societal concerns and influence how others see such issues (8).

Propaganda's impacts, researched by political scientist Harold Lasswell, are a key component of the media effects paradigm. Lasswell's research on propaganda techniques during WWI led to modern scientific research on mass persuasion. These techniques involved manipulating symbols' associations to achieve desired effects, such as mobilising hatred against the enemy, preserving allies' friendship, gaining neutral cooperation, or demoralising the enemy (O'Neill 323).

He further argues that studying propaganda involves investigating manipulative tactics. The growth of advertising and current public relations tactics coincided with the advancement of mass persuasion and psychological, stimulus-response communication strategies. Mass communication techniques during the interwar period, such as radio and mass media during the Nazi era, Lenin's use of film for promotion, and John Grierson's propaganda for democracy, were based on the belief that mass media significantly influenced behavioural and attitudinal change (323).

Linden reports that a follow-up study highlights the potential of digital footprints in mass persuasion. Across three studies involving over 3.5 million participants, psychologically tailored advertising, where persuasive messages align with an individual's psychographic profile, resulted in a 40% increase in clicks and a 50% rise in online purchases compared to mismatched or generic messaging.

Using a broad perspective on media impacts is crucial for comprehending the vast influence of media and appreciating the diverse studies done by experts. Excessive viewing of "bad" material in daily life often limits media impacts to negative outcomes for others. Many individuals believe that media violence encourages aggression, that sexual images lead to dangerous sexual behavior, and that poor language leads to harsh expressiveness. "Defining Media Effect"

Furthermore, this notion of media influence is, indeed, rather broad. Consequently, it encompasses several elements. The definition serves that purpose. Media messages are relentless and omnipresent resulting in continuous exposure to media information, either directly via media consumption or indirectly through discussions by others on media content. Consequently, one must recognise that the media consistently have an impact on us.

Wang concludes that the advancement of science and technology is continuously evolving, exerting an increasingly significant influence on human civilisation. The rapid development of internet media demonstrates that scientific and technological growth is the primary catalyst for the evolution of human civilisation (16).

#### **2.4.1.2 The Power of Technology: Shaping Ideologies in the Modern World.**

Human civilisations and technology have become intricately intertwined since technological systems such as mobile phones, computers, and televisions are created by people and embody the fundamental demands and lifestyles of a society. While technology enhances human lifestyles, it also poses significant concerns for future generations ('Impact of Technology on Society').

A proper definition of these key terms needs to be addressed. For instance, ideology may be described as a collection of beliefs, attitudes, and values about the essence of humanity, society, the state, and the world. Ideology seeks to examine the past and present, theorises an ideal future, prescribes the procedures and techniques to achieve that ideal, and solicits the people for acceptance and allegiance (Naidu 1). Zajda adds that, the term ideology encompasses various meanings and interpretations, including a collection of ideas, beliefs, or values that justify a system; systematic doctrines; cultural beliefs that legitimise specific social and political systems; and hegemony, or the dominant ideology employed by the state to rationalise power, control, and domination (1).

İşman states that when individuals contemplate "technology," they often see human-made artefacts such as machinery, electrical equipment, scientific instruments, or industrial production processes (207). In addition, the term technology has two components. (Techno) denotes application, art, or talent, whereas (Logy) signifies science and knowledge. The linguistic definition of technology encompasses the techniques and instruments produced by a civilisation to address practical challenges and fulfil communal demands (Younes and Al-Zoubi 82).

As technology advances, it increasingly exerts influence over our lives. Currently, the use of technology is extensively accessible and vigorously advocated within our culture. Although technology facilitates daily living, it also engenders issues for society, including a deterioration of conventional social behaviours (Younes and Al-Zoubi 82).

Technology has evolved from a mere tool into a dynamic, widespread force that influences almost every aspect of our life. Technology is deeply embedded in many facets of

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society, influencing our interactions, information acquisition, and the operations of corporations and governments (Pathak 2).

Researchers consistently emphasised the intricate link between technological globalisation and labour, demonstrating that the former enhances the employment and salary prospects of both skilled and unskilled people in middle-income developing nations (Meschi et al. qtd. in Alejla 40).

Technology is inherently biased. Steven E. Goldberg and Charles Strain articulated that technology should not be seen as a mere tool — an entity deliberately selected to attain a certain objective. In contrast to a hammer or any other instrument, whose application and impact the user, technology is a complex system that might constrain the scope of possibilities for thinking and action (Wasilewski).

However, most sociologists agree that both ideology and technology have significantly influenced the circumstances of living in human cultures. What is unclear, however, is their comparative strength. Which has been more potent, or have their impacts been somewhat comparable? (Nolan and Lenski 23).

Technological improvements in mass communication emerge via innovative media that build upon prior and concurrent forms while also incorporating additional uses. The new applications include distinct modalities of dissemination, involvement, and experience that redefine the conceptualisation of media creation, use, and the function of particular media texts. They provide realms of potential for what may be achieved with a medium, while also undergoing continuous updates and enhancements (Ijeh 3).

Contemporary individuals have a deficiency in engaging in real-life interactions, including personal relationships, problem-solving, and demonstrating mature behaviour. This is impacting our society. Technology impacts culture if we choose to purchase from an online retailer instead of a local one. With each instance that an individual engages with our on-demand digital entertainment, we are influencing culture via technology ('Impact of Technology on Society').

Another key element on the impact of technology is privacy concerns have emerged as a key issue due to technology improvements, as personal information is being used for profit and political advantage. This has elicited apprehensions over security breaches, the theft of personal data, and state surveillance. Concerns have been expressed about the ethical

implications of social media's data methods, resulting in condemnation of the platforms (Subasaranya and Saranya 3).

Iwasiński tackles a significant aspect which is the impact of algorithms on society. He states that it has been thoroughly studied. Social scientists emphasise the performative nature of algorithms; they see them not only as mathematical or computing methods, but as socio-technical instruments for generating knowledge, facilitating sensemaking, and informing critical social choices (26). Roselli et al. explain that AI algorithms function by extracting insights from existing data and aggregating them to automate tasks. Consequently, problems may arise throughout data collecting, system development, and ultimately, during the deployment phase, leading to unfavourable results and biased automated systems (qtd. in Bansal et al. 368).

Joshi summarizes the influence of technical innovations on society as a complex and evolving phenomenon, affecting several facets of our everyday existence. As we traverse the complexities of this ever-changing environment, tangible examples and applications highlight the revolutionary influence of technology in communication, healthcare, education, and industry.

Younes and Al-Zoubi conclude that, research indicates that effective use of new technology requires a thorough comprehension of societal changes occurring within the society. Consequently, this necessitates coordinated efforts through comprehensive collaboration among all societal sectors, from families to governmental institutions, alongside effective awareness programs overseen by these entities and implemented by families to accurately leverage modern technologies, thereby ensuring the safeguarding of future generations (85).

### **2.5 Conclusion:**

The second chapter established a thorough theoretical framework to understand the dissemination of social Darwinist beliefs in today's globalized context. By exploring the intersections of media theory and cultural studies, this chapter put forward the media's influential role in shaping and maintaining cultural norms. One can say that media is a powerful socialization agent that molds societies, identities, and behavior by examining theories like the Hypodermic Needle Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory. It also reveals that media has persuasive power and flexibility, with the audience engaging with and interpreting content differently.

Delving deeper into cultural studies, the chapter also addresses Hegemony Theory and

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Reception Theory, underlining the role of power dynamics and visions on media's ability to form an ideological framework. The hegemony theory highlights how media often reinforces dominant power structures, anchoring beliefs that align with current social and political hierarchies. Whereas reception theory sheds light on the audience's active participation in interpreting media messages, emphasizing how personal and collective experiences shape the reception of media content. These theories highlight the complexity of media's influence on societal beliefs and ideologies, particularly within the context of social Darwinism.

Thereafter, the chapter shifts to an analysis of social Darwinism within the context of globalization. It addresses different dimensions of globalization, from the economic to the cultural, highlighting their functions as ideologies spread. Thus, social Darwinism rises as an ideology in a certain historical and cultural context; it has evolved and acquired popularity in various forms worldwide.

Eventually, the role of modern technology allows the reach and influence of ideologies, where digital platforms facilitate the interchange of ideas through different forms of media, resulting in the spread of ideologies and their acceptance and adherence predominantly. As the thesis moves forward, these foundational concepts will provide a guide to the analysis of social Darwinism on media and how globalization shapes the views and significance of social Darwinist ideas.

**Chapter Three:  
Depictions of  
Social  
Darwinism in  
cinema. Case  
study of *The  
Hunger Games*  
and *Gattaca*.**

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### **3.1 Introduction:**

Cinema has long served as an effective vehicle for exploring intricate social and philosophical themes, including survival, competition and social stratification. The notion of social Darwinism, rooted in the application of Darwinian evolutionary principles to human societies, has often been featured in dystopian cinema. Social Darwinism suggests that only the most efficient individuals or groups will thrive, while the weaker ones will perish. This ideology has been extensively debated, often condemned for justifying inequality and oppression under the pretext of natural selection. Nonetheless, its influence remains profoundly embedded in narratives that explore the struggle for power and survival in hierarchical societies.

Two films that prominently engage with the themes of Social Darwinism are *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *Gattaca* (1997). Both films depict societies where individuals are classified, controlled and ranked based according to their innate abilities or genetic makeup. This chapter will examine the struggles of Katniss Everdeen in the hunger games and Vincent Freeman in *Gattaca*, focusing on the portrayal of issues such as genetic determinism, social hierarchy, and resistance against oppressive institutions. This chapter will first establish a theoretical framework of Social Darwinism before delving into its representation in narrative structure, character development and social constructions of each film, ultimately addressing the central inquiry of whether these films promote and encourage or question and criticise social Darwinism. It also offers insights into contemporary cinema's engagement with these complex ideas.

Ultimately, this chapter seeks to illustrate that both *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* offer compelling critiques of Social Darwinism, questioning the legitimacy of a society where success is dictated by birth or genetic engineering. By analysing these films through the lens of Social Darwinism, they reveal profound insights on free will, resilience, and the ethical challenges posed by a society that prioritizes biological determinism over individual potential. Through this examination, this analysis will enhance and contribute to a broader understanding of how dystopian cinema mirror and reflect the cultural beliefs influencing actual power systems.

### **3.2 Survival of the Fittest on Screen: Exploring Social Darwinism in Contemporary Cinema.**

Social Darwinism is a socio-political theory, which stems from Charles Darwin's biological theory, particularly his concept of natural selection. It applies his principles of natural

### Chapter 3: Depictions of Social Darwinism in cinema. Case study of *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca*.

selection and survival-of-the-fittest paradigm to human societies. According to Dourad, the term was first used to condemn the Spencerian concept of 'the struggle for life' and 'the survival of the fittest,' rather than Darwin's theory of natural selection (686).

Social Darwinism claims that social hierarchies, economic inequalities, and cultural dominance are natural outcomes of competition and evolution. Winlow explains that the classical ideas of social evolution corresponded with the emergence of Darwinian biological evolutionary theory, and the two fields of study mutually affected each other. The use of biological evolutionary ideas in societal contexts normalized social structures and, in several cases, served to justify class and racial inequalities. Nineteenth-century social evolutionary theories often integrated progressionist concepts derived from the Enlightenment, exemplified by the work of British philosopher and social theorist Herbert Spencer (7).

Wojciuk et al. state that the concept of Social Darwinism included several beliefs, sometimes conflicting, including ideologies at odds with Darwin's findings (3). Thus, advocates of social Darwinism used it to justify colonialism, imperialism and class struggle contending that superior individuals or groups were bound to prevail over weaker ones. This term however occurred despite Darwin's efforts to enclose the term strictly to natural selection. Social Darwinism significantly shaped worldwide ideas and policies during its prime.

Bowler, an expert on the historical concept of evolution, cautions that social Darwinism cannot be seen as a straightforward and evident application of Darwinian Theory to humanity. Connections between biology and social philosophy may be formed via several means, each emphasizing a particular facet of the scientific idea (qtd. in Crook, 261). Moreover, Hodgson adds that there is concern that the phrase 'Social Darwinism' has been used in the twentieth century to stifle significant discourse in the social sciences about the impact of human biology on behaviour (2).

Furthermore, Social Darwinism encompasses many societal views that originated in the United Kingdom, North America, and Western Europe during the 1870s, asserting the application of biological principles of natural selection and survival of the fittest to sociology and politics, according to Thomas and Lerato. Social Darwinists contend that the wealthy should experience an augmentation of their riches and power, while the less fortunate should see a diminution of their wealth and influence (2).

Film has a special position as both a reflection and a shaper of cultural values and ideologies. As a narrative art form, it conveys complex beliefs via engaging, accessible stories that appeal to audiences. Films often serve as cultural artifacts that capture the zeitgeist of their

era through character development, plot lines, and visual storytelling.

Moreover, cinema crosses boundaries, serving as a worldwide platform for engaging with and questioning notions such as Social Darwinism. It integrates narrative and visual elements to criticize or promote ideology. Although it has never been explicitly stated, social Darwinism is notably evident in films. This is manifest in societal structures, class conflicts, and the ethical implications of 'survival of the fittest.' Contemporary films simultaneously critique and reinforce social Darwinist views, engaging viewers emotionally and encouraging profound thinking. Consequently, cinema serves as an effective instrument for investigating social Darwinism.

From Ingmar Bergman to Woody Allen and beyond, cinema has consistently fulfilled a significant function in presenting philosophical dilemmas to broader audiences. A multitude of philosophers, including Gilles Deleuze, Walter Benjamin, Slavoj Žižek, Stanley Cavell, Stephen Mulhall, and Thomas Wartenberg, have examined the interplay between philosophy and film from diverse viewpoints. *In Thinking on Screen: Film as Philosophy*, Wartenberg enumerates many narrative approaches by which films might articulate philosophical ideas (Russo 74).

Bohas claims that Disney narratives and imagery provide companies with a sociocultural competitive advantage, allowing them to succeed in markets, sectors, and social trends. Consequently, Hollywood's contribution to American power is considered structural, as it shapes perceptions, cognitions, and preferences, leading individuals to accept their roles within the existing order (18). The idea posits that Disney and Hollywood bolster American dominance not by force, but by shaping global culture and ideology, hence fostering widespread acceptance of American values and viewpoints.

The notion of class struggle, integral to Marxist thought, may be used in literary study, especially Marxist film analysis. Marxist film theory is among the earliest types of cinematic analysis. Marxist filmmakers, Marxist culture, and Marxist theory have significantly impacted global cinema culture for more than a century, despite frequent denial of this effect. The struggle for control over film production within the cultural domain is integral to and evolves alongside the overarching efforts of the upper classes to secure complete control over the means of production (Ally and Kasih 109).

### **3.2.1 Social Darwinism Explained: A Foundation for Analysing Struggle and Survival**

Ruse claims that the term "social Darwinism" has almost as many definitions as its advocates (23). On the other hand, Thomas and Lerato refer to social Darwinism as the

erroneous application of Charles Darwin's biological evolutionary concepts to politics, economics, and society (1).

Paul explains that the term 'social Darwinism' was coined at the beginning of the century and gained prominence in the mid-1940s via the American historian Richard Hofstadter. Subsequently, it has become an abusive expression used to describe individuals, policies, and concepts that the author disapproves of (224).

Lungu et al. stress that the contextual examination of evolutionist concepts, as they evolved into social Darwinism, exemplifies the metamorphosis of a theory into an ideology with significant ramifications (76).

Hodgson asserts that social Darwinism has been criticized for offering ideological and pseudo-scientific justifications for the atrocities of the twentieth century. These include eugenics, two world wars, Nazism, and the Holocaust (1).

Furthermore, social Darwinism has justified imperialism, racism, eugenics, and other radical ideas. Hawkins outlines four key aspects of social Darwinism: Biological laws govern all organic nature, including humans. Population growth creates a struggle for survival due to limited food resources. Physical and mental traits provide an inheritable advantage in life or sexual competition. Selection and heredity can lead to the emergence of new species and the extinction of others over time (qtd. in Lungu et al. 77).

Weikart says that Richard Hofstadter, in his influential publication *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (469), laid out Social Darwinism as an ideology that employs a competitive perspective on nature and Darwin's notion of the struggle for life as a foundation for social theory.

Nevertheless, people who assert "social Darwinism" mean "survival of the fittest, in society as in nature." There is cause to lament the term's definition, and historical studies may provide light on its enduring significance. A problematic past is another common source of regret. Some argue that Social Darwinism is unrelated to Charles Darwin (1809-1882) or his work, which includes widely accepted ideas and practices. This approach considers Darwinism a science and social Darwinism a pseudo-science acting as an application of Darwinism (Radick 279).

Although Social Darwinism is often viewed as extremist or reactionary, it was primarily embraced by liberals who saw the struggle for existence as both individual and collective, both within and between nations and races. Similar to liberals, German Social Darwinists saw economic competition as a positive factor and socialism as a negative trend. They advocated

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for minimal competition limits. They shared concepts with laissez-faire economics until the late 1870s, when enthusiasm for it started to decline (Weikart 487).

Proponents of Darwin have generally seen social Darwinism and eugenics as distortions of his theories. Daniel Dennett represents the views of several biologists and philosophers of science by describing social Darwinism as 'an abhorrent misapplication of Darwinian principles' (Paul 214).

It requires unacceptable distinctions from "eugenics," Galton's phrase for scientifically guided breeding of superior individuals. Eugenics was a global affair in the first half of the 20th century, appealing to all parties. Galton introduced the word in 1883, although he had been advocating for it since 1865. He thought eugenics was essential because civilisation was causing "morbific" inclinations in humans. Eugenics was both a type of social Darwinism and an alternative to it, since it addressed concerns about the biological repercussions of reduced fighting (Radick 292).

Germany implemented one of the most extreme eugenics programs. Shortly after Hitler came to power, the 1933 Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring was enacted, targeting a broad spectrum of hereditary conditions. Unlike similar policies elsewhere, this law extended beyond institutionalized individuals, affecting approximately 400,000 people, a significantly higher figure than the 60,000 sterilized in the United States. However, German *Rassenhygiene* went beyond mass sterilization, encompassing a broader agenda of racial and genetic control (Paul 231).

In addition, Wilamowitz established a well-recognised perspective within contemporary evolutionary biology, asserting that racial fusion is a beneficial phenomenon in the development of culture. His concept of 'Rassenmischung', or miscegenation, posits that certain ethnic groups contain distinct inherent characteristics. When the newly formed natural tendencies, such as 'extraordinary vivacity', arise. With these 'natural' attributes, we go farther (Flaig 107).

Another outcome of social Darwinism is reflected in the justification of imperialism. According to Crook, historical analyses of British Imperialism often associate the "new imperialism" of the late nineteenth century with Social Darwinism (1).

He further argues that social Darwinism is shown as a fundamental component of the cultural milieu that fostered expansionist impulses. It is identified as one of the "multicausal factors" that may explain the emergence of aggressive colonial policies. The narrative then transitions to elucidations, whether economic, geopolitical, or strategic, that provide easier access to the many empirical resources accessible for this discourse (1).

In the past few years, Kalva asserts that research in image and video compression has investigated new approaches for achieving high compression using advanced techniques. The next generation of coding methodologies has enabled the encoding and representation of audio-visual situations using objects that possess more semantic significance (qtd. in Dianiya 213).

### **3.2.2 From Theory to Story: Social Darwinism in Modern Film Narratives**

Narrative is prevalent in almost all human communication, serving as a method for understanding, gaining, and organising information, as well as for conveying knowledge to others. Narrative may be seen as a mechanism for the conveyance and assimilation of information (Carmona 7). Moreover, Edward Branigan defines narration as the mechanism by which screen data is converted into a symbolic environment that conveys a certain narrative inside that realm (qtd. in Carmona 7).

Seymour Chatman on the other hand, posits that every narrative has a structure consisting of a content plane, the tale, and an expression plane, the discourse. The narrative comprises events, including acts or occurrences, and entities denoting persons and situations (qtd. in Carmona 8).

A fundamental objective of narrative cinema is to captivate audiences intellectually and emotionally. Effective storytelling in cinema transcends the sheer presentation of events; it engages viewers to empathise with characters, participate emotionally in their journeys, and reflect on the themes and messages inherent in the tale (Jing 141).

When discussing movies, Houseman says that movies have a distinct and inferior beginning compared to TV. Initially, these were low-cost side acts, relying on vaudeville and gallery performances with no audience. Cinema, invented by gadgeteers and used by small enterprises, is primarily a kind of entertainment (qtd. in Dianiya 213).

Jing states that film, sometimes referred to as the seventh art, has a unique status among the many modes of human expression. It is an engaging medium that skilfully integrates visual, audio, and performance components to construct complex tales that transcend time, culture, and language. In a dark environment of a theatre or the cosy atmosphere of a living room, film has a unique ability to immerse people in many realms, elicit deep emotions, and communicate ideas that connect significantly (140).

Nevertheless, film serves as a potent medium for storytelling, integrating visual, aural, and performance components to create immersive tales. It has the distinctive capacity to immerse audiences in many realms, elicit intense emotions, and communicate significant messages. At the core of every exceptional film is its narrative literature, the craft of storytelling

that captivates audiences and maintains their engagement in the plot (Jing 140).

Furthermore, in some television programs, it is recognised that the implications of the message are conveyed to certain audiences. The incapacity of individuals to engage in social life via their own efforts, without reliance on external tools, is a significant societal issue (Cho et al., qtd in Tutar 2).

In addition, film may express deep messages and explore complicated issues as well as amuse. Narrative literature in cinema allows filmmakers to highlight social justice, the human condition, and existential themes. Filmmakers may add meaning to their stories by using dialogue, symbolism, and visual design. Metaphors and allegories invite viewers to explore deeper meanings. Film's unique ability to evoke emotions and provoke contemplation creates an immersive experience that lasts long after the credits roll (Jing 141).

Silva argues that contemporary storytelling is distinguished by its experimental quality, since it does not always adhere to a linear plot structure with a beginning, middle, and conclusion. The focus of such a narrative is not on the plot itself, but in the potential to immerse readers in the continuous flow of the characters' consciousness, facilitating a deeper engagement with the connection of experiences, thoughts, and memories (270).

As a way to link social Darwinism, Lehtonen and Zihang state that social Darwinism, like several disciplines, is communicated to extensive audiences via cinematic productions. Furthermore, cinema and television address events and phenomena pertinent to human existence, Social Darwinism, and contemporary conflicts. The topic of war is constructed and presented to the public based on robust theoretical frameworks, including psychoanalysis and evolutionary theory (qtd in Tutar 6).

Adorno views film as a cultural business under capitalism, similar to other profit-driven sectors. The cultural industry is handled by considering market circumstances, manufacturing costs, earnings, marketing, and competition. Standardization and homogenization are common in cultural items because profit-driven replication and the requirement for consistency across regions (qtd. in Dianiya 213).

Şen states that a primary work addressing the core issue of Social Darwinism is *The Hunger Games*. The film, directed and scripted by Gary Ross, was based from Suzanne Collins' book of the same name (qtd in Tutar 6). This idea will be further tackled in the following parts which will provide a comprehensive view of this matter.

### **3.3 Unveiling Themes of Survival and Competition in *The Hunger Games*.**

This dystopian trilogy comprises *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009), and

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*Mockingjay* (2010). Suzanne Collins asserts that her trilogy is influenced by both modern and classical elements. She had the concept one evening while channel-surfing, transitioning from a reality Tv program to videos of the Iraq War. Collins characterises the protagonist, 16-year-old Katniss Everdeen, as a contemporary Theseus (Curwood 419).

*The Hunger Games* trilogy is set in an indeterminate future inside the dystopian, post-apocalyptic republic of Panem, situated in North America. The nation comprises a prosperous Capitol city situated in the Rocky Mountains, surrounded by twelve (initially thirteen) impoverished districts governed by the Capitol. The Capitol is opulently affluent and technologically sophisticated, whilst the districts experience varied levels of destitution. The trilogy's narrator and heroine, Katniss Everdeen, lives in District 12, the most impoverished area of Panem, situated in Appalachia, where people often succumb to famine (Dzikriya 86).

Although Katniss ultimately spearheads a revolution, *The Hunger Games* starts with her depiction of life in District 12. In a post-apocalyptic setting, Panem comprises a resplendent Capitol surrounded by 13 destitute districts (Curwood 419).

Earlier academics have observed that contemporary dystopian literature, along with its Utopian origins, often critiques a 'postmodern/advanced world gone astray' and advocates for societal reform (Zipes ix).

In the first of the trilogy, Katniss agrees to participate in the tournament in lieu of her younger sister, Primrose, and is joined by the male tribute, Peeta. Katniss and Peeta survive the games by feigning a romantic relationship, opting for suicide rather than combat, which elevates them to national fame. However, they are subsequently re-entered into the games in "Catching Fire," the second installment, as part of a Hunger Games all-star event. *Catching Fire* concludes with Katniss participating in an underground insurrection after the Capitol captures Peeta. In the third novel, *Mockingjay*, Katniss assumes the role of the Mockingjay, the emblem of a rebel force that ultimately dismantles the regime. Equally significant to the narrative is the character Gale, Katniss's closest companion, hunting partner, and romantic interest, who remains in District 12 to dig coal while Katniss competes on television (Hill 6-7).

Upon the release of the first book in 2008, Collins said that the concept for the narrative originated when she was channel surfing between reality television and reports on the Iraq War. She added that the works were influenced by her experiences as the offspring of a traumatised Vietnam veteran (Hill 7).

As retribution for a previous insurrection against the Capitol, known as the "Dark Days," during which District 13 was allegedly annihilated, one male and one female from each of the

twelve surviving districts, aged 12 to 18, are chosen by lottery to participate in an annual event termed *The Hunger Games*. The broadcast event in the games arena involves players, referred to as "tributes," who are compelled to engage in lethal combat inside a perilous public arena. The victorious tribute and their home area are then awarded with provisions, resources, and wealth. The Hunger Games serve to amuse the Capitol and to remind the districts of the Capitol's dominance and its unforgiving nature regarding the ancestral rebellion of the contemporary participants (Dzikriya 86-87).

### 3.3.1 Synopsis of the Narrative: A Review of the Movies

The Hunger Games, written by Suzanne Collins, is a compelling narrative set in a futuristic universe where survival and resilience are paramount. Panem has a prosperous Capitol and twelve adjacent, impoverished districts. District 12, where the narrative starts, is situated in the coal-abundant area that was formerly Appalachia.

The first film, *The Hunger Games* (2012) dives into the story, introducing Panem as a country split into 12 districts governed by the Capitol. We later know that, as retribution for a failed rebellion, each district is compelled to choose two tributes, one male and one female, aged 12 to 18, to engage in a lethal competition in the annual Hunger Games until only one remains alive. After her 12-year-old sister, Primrose played by (Willow Shields) is selected for the 74th Hunger Games, sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) from District 12 offers to substitute for her. She and her companion, Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson), were accompanied to the Capitol by their chaperone, Effie Trinket (Elizabeth Banks), and their mentor, Haymitch Abernathy (Woody Harrelson), the last surviving victor from District 12.

Haymitch emphasises the significance of acquiring sponsors, as they may provide possibly life-saving presents during the games. During training, Katniss watches the other tributes, including volunteers from affluent districts one and two, referred to as The Careers, who have been preparing for the games from a young age.

Katniss endures the mental and physical toll of forging and breaking relationships with other tributes while under the constant pressure to ensure her own survival in the face of threats including famine, injury, and fatal traps. The tributes are used as tools for public entertainment and propaganda by the Capitol, and she has to battle their deceitful techniques. The situation becomes even more complicated when Peeta publicly declares his love for Katniss. The audience is captivated and sympathises with their seeming passion, which becomes a survival tactic.

President Coriolanus Snow (Donald Sutherland) cautions Seneca Crane (Wes Bentley)

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of the turmoil. While Haymitch convinces Crane to amend the regulations to permit two victors, on the condition that they are from the same district, proposing that this would soothe the populace.

As the Games move forward, Katniss opposes the Capitol's regulations and anticipations. Crane subsequently rescinds the regulation permitting dual victors, which pushed Katniss and Peeta engage in mutual suicide by consuming night lock berries instead of killing one another, compelling the Capitol to proclaim them co-winners. This act of rebellion cultivates the seeds of disobedience against the Capitol's oppression, establishing Katniss as an unforeseen but powerful emblem of hope and resistance.

In the sequel to *The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire* (2013). Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark live in Victor's Village in district 12, a wealthy neighbourhood where victors of various Hunger Games reside.

President Snow warns Katniss to suppress the escalating rebellion by perpetuating the illusion of her relationship with Peeta during their Victory Tour. Regardless of their endeavours, the turmoil expands, and Katniss realises her position as an unwilling emblem of resistance. Nevertheless, this led to the 75th overall and the third Quarter Quell, involving tributes selected from previous victors, this latter to maintain control and to warn the districts that even the Victors are not immune to the Capitol and cannot challenge its authority.

Furthermore, Katniss allies with district 4 tributes Finnick Odair (Sam Claflin) and his mentor Mags (Lynn Cohen) and other tributes in the new arena, which is even more dangerous, filled with lethal environmental risks, and cunning traps.

Eventually, the Games end in turmoil when Katniss destroys the arena by shooting an electrified arrow into its force field, accomplished as a part of a planned rebellion strategy. She is knocked unconscious by lightning, and she awakens to find Haymitch, Beetee (Jeffrey Wright), Finnick, and Plutarch Heavensbee (Philip Seymour Hoffman), the head game maker who was revealed to be a rebel against Snow. However, the Capitol has captured Peeta and District 12 has been destroyed. Katniss has become the emblem of an organised revolt against the Capitol, preparing for the ultimate clash in the trilogy.

The third instalment in the film is *Mockingjay Part One* (2014), we are introduced to rescued Katniss Everdeen, Beetee, and Finnick Odair taken to district 13, a below ground district leading the rebellion. Katniss is introduced to President Alma Coin (Julianne Moore), who asks her to become The Mockingjay, the symbol of the rebellion. She visits the ruins of district 12 and meets her film team, including Effie Trinket and Gale.

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While Katniss engages in propaganda movies to motivate the districts, she observes the atrocities of war directly, including the Capitol's savage retribution on subjugated districts. Her broadcasts, characterised by her unfiltered emotions and defiance, serve as a potent rallying call for the rebels. At the same time, Peeta appears in Capitol propaganda films, advocating for a truce, which Katniss perceives as evidence of his manipulation and torment.

President Coin dispatches an elite Special Forces team in a daring rescue mission to retrieve Peeta and the remaining victors. Beetee hijacks the defence system with a video narrated by Finnick to convince more districts to side with the rebellion. Gale's team escapes the capitol easily, indicating the Capitol deliberately reduced its security. However, Katniss is informed that Peeta has been hijacked and brainwashed into trying to kill her, explaining why the capitol allowed them to escape with him. Peeta is placed in solitary confinement while a serum is developed to reverse the hijacking effects.

*The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part Two* (2015) concludes the saga of Katniss Everdeen and her struggle against the Capitol's tyrannical regime. Katniss Everdeen joins an assault on the capitol's armoury after being attacked by a brainwashed Peeta Mellark.

The Capitol airs Snow's condemnation of the rebellion, but the rebels intercept the broadcast, allowing Coin to deliver a powerful eulogy that inspires the resistance. Meanwhile, Katniss and Gale devise a plan to infiltrate Snow's mansion and assassinate him, but their mission is abruptly disrupted by a massive explosion. A hovercraft bearing the Capitol's insignia bombs the crowd, resulting in mass casualties, including the tragic death of Katniss's sister, Primrose.

Coin convenes a meeting with the surviving Hunger Games victors, proposing a final Hunger Games using the children of Capitol leaders as an act of retribution. Katniss agrees to the plan but only on the condition that she is granted the right to execute Snow. However, at Snow's public execution, she turns her weapon on Coin instead, assassinating her. This act incites chaos, and in the ensuing riot, the citizens take justice into their own hands, leading to Snow's death.

With Snow and Coin dead, the conflict ends, and Panem begins restoration. Katniss returns to District 12, coping with her trauma and seeking comfort in Peeta, who has recovered from his brainwashing. The film ends with hope as Katniss contemplates her path while raising a family with Peeta, determined to protect her children from the atrocities of the past.

In conclusion, *The Hunger Games* film series provides a compelling tale that tackles themes of survival, sacrifice, and rebellion against injustice. Throughout the trilogy, Katniss

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Everdeen's narrative transitions from a young girl battling for survival in a deadly arena to a determined symbol of rebellion against an oppressive system.

### **3.3.2 Social Stratification and the Arena:**

From a historical and sociological perspective, a truly classless society does not exist. All communities display forms of ranking in which people are categorised into positions that are higher or lower, superior or inferior, prestigious or inconsequential, relative to one another (qtd. in Oyekola and Eyitayo 126).

Although stratification theory maintains its traditional emphasis on class, the impetus to address class divides, which is central to the sociological heritage, has diminished, rendering stratification methods perhaps rather peripheral to contemporary sociological discourse (Floya 836).

Oyekola and Eyitayo explain that social stratification is a classification system characterised by structured inequality, where individuals are classified according to certain criteria, hence restricting their access to money, power, and opportunities (126).

Although class remains a fundamental element of social relations, despite claims that it has diminished in significance as a catalyst for social change, it is crucial to reconsider its integration into a more comprehensive framework of social stratification (Anthias 837).

Pakulski and Waters claim that although stratification theory maintains its emphasis on 'class', the impetus to address class distinctions, which has been central to the sociological tradition, has diminished, rendering stratification methods rather peripheral in contemporary sociological discussions. The emergence of more consensual forms of class politics in the West has coincided with the imminent decline of 'class' as a central site of conflict, as reflected in contemporary scholarly discussions and political discourse (qtd. in Anthias 836).

Nevertheless, social stratification is a framework through which a society organises individuals into a hierarchical classification (Surya). Furthermore, society may be stratified in several ways. It may relate to economic factors, religious beliefs, political ideas, cultural identities, or biological elements such as gender and race. In what seemed to be a method of stratifying society (Surya).

Anurin defines social stratification as a fundamental idea in sociology. Derived from the root word *stratum*, social stratification denotes the hierarchical ordering of individuals or groups within a society (qtd. in Azarkevich 1).

Wallimann et al explain that various ideas categorise society into distinct classes; nevertheless, those of Marx and Weber are regarded as foundational (qtd. in Azarkevich 1).

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Furthermore, Karl Marx introduced the idea of Marxism, which suggests that an individual's place and rank in society are reliant upon their contributions and efforts within the social, economic, financial, and developmental structures of society. The idea emphasises the problems associated with class conflicts under capitalist dominance (Muhammad et al. 92).

The fundamental breach in this structure originated from the presence of a third group in the urban sector of European society, subsequently identified as the "bourgeoisie," since the Middle Ages. This group is often seen as having supplanted the landed aristocracy, as industrial capital, rather than land, emerged as the principal means of production, leading to the formation of a new subordinate class known as the "working class" or proletariat (Parsons 17).

The class conflict arising from social bias is a significant characteristic of dystopia under capitalist governance. The assessment of individuals across different socioeconomic classes raises several issues related to economic and social behaviour (Muhammad et al. 92).

In *The Hunger Games*, Panem's society exhibits pronounced socioeconomic stratification, with money and privilege centralised in the Capitol, while the districts endure hardship and exploitation. This separation is vividly depicted in the arena. Furthermore, the story revolves around several themes of social, political and economic oppression caused by the capitol.

Moreover, the fundamental tenet of Marxism is the preservation of the ruling class's authority. This philosophy applies to *The Hunger Games*, illustrating how the Capitol used the games to impose its values and way of life onto the inhabitants of all districts.

According to Muhammad et al., *The Hunger Games* serves as an embodiment of power wielded by the Capitol, initiated after the Capitol's victory over the rebels of District 13. President Snow initiated a competition among the inhabitants of the twelve districts, requiring them to engage in combat until only one-survivor remains, in order to demonstrate that the true authority rests with the Capitol (92).

They further claim that in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, it is apparent from the start that all authority resides with President Snow in the Capitol. He alone determines major decisions and matters in Panem. Residents in districts are not allowed to make choices regarding their own future (92). Linderoth adds that Marxism posits that one class consistently dominates and exploits another. This concept parallels *The Hunger Games* Trilogy, where the Capitol, particularly the President, has complete authority (5).

As explained in chapter one, Marxist theory posits that the history of all prior societies is characterised by class conflicts. Marx discusses the conflict between the bourgeoisie,

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representing the middle class, and the proletariat, denoting the working class. Marx posits that the proletariat will ultimately initiate a violent uprising against the capitalist class. In *The Hunger Games*, the socio-political dynamics are clearly delineated, with the Capitol representing the bourgeoisie and the districts embodying the proletariat. Moreover, The Career Tributes from affluent districts, trained for the Games, symbolise the rich elite, whilst tributes like as Katniss and Rue epitomise the challenges faced by the impoverished.

Upon the transfer of players from each district to the games, they are controlled by the Games Makers employed by the Capitol, representing the bourgeoisie. This is another core of Marxist power in *The Hunger Games*, since the game makers exert total control over events after the players are sent to the arena. They control the climate, food, water, and any other resources available to the players.

Furthermore, the control the Game makers have over the games is the same that the Capitol has over the districts emphasising their dominance and instilling the idea that another rebellion would cause more suffering rather than change.

In addition, the arena serves as a controlled environment that mirrors the inequalities and dominance of the larger society. In other words, the arena serves as a tiny replica of Panem's socioeconomic stratification, with tributes entering under significantly disparate circumstances. Likewise, the Capitol's design of the arena and the Games serves as a deliberate instrument of control, strengthening the power disparity between the Capitol and the districts. The tributes' misery captivates the Capitol elite while serving as a reminder of the districts' oppression.

Karl Marx states, "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and therefore the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society" (*Communist Manifesto*). Therefore, the Capitol maintains its economic dominance by regulating the means of production, namely the Districts and *The Hunger Games*. *The Hunger Games* serve as a strong mechanism to instil fear and thereby maintain control over the means of production. To govern the means of production, the Capitol must ensure that production continuous (Linderoth 6).

As outlined in Chapter One, capitalism is an economic system that permits private ownership of resources and fosters competitive markets. Similar to President Snow, individuals in a capitalist system are driven by self-interest. However, unlike Snow, they cannot rely on coercion or violence to achieve their goals. In contrast, the Capitol imposes strict control over its citizens, restricting their freedom to choose where they live, work, or conduct business. The districts operate under a state-enforced monopoly, where all economic activities are dictated by

the Capitol's authority. Panem's economy is fundamentally based on exploitation, resembling an imperial structure in which each district exists solely to serve and sustain the Capitol.

The world of Panem on a smaller scale is expressing processes that intricate parts of global economies, with each district providing the necessary resources that is district one provides luxury goods, district four provides fishing, district eleven does the agriculture and district twelve provides coal mining. One may conclude that, the concept of comparative advantage is applicable to the twelve districts of Panem, each of which specialises in distinct industries according to their comparative advantage.

Faccarello explains that, it is intended to elucidate the direction of economic flows between nations and ascertain the benefits each country derives from its involvement in international exchanges. This constitutes a compelling case in support of free trade among countries (1). For background information, the notion of comparative advantage originates from international trade literature and is often credited to David Ricardo (1821). The basic argument posits that a nation may benefit from trade with another, even if it has superior efficiency in the production of every product (Somaya 1).

Dev Gupta further argues that the Ricardian model posits constant productivity due to the singular component of production (labour), resulting in constant (opportunity) costs that result in total specialisation (11).

Another element worth mentioning according to Linderoth is that The Capitol ensures that all inhabitants can watch since it serves to manipulate the populace of Panem and disseminate its propaganda. Consequently, the media plays a crucial role in influencing the populace. The Capitol uses media to manipulate *The Hunger Games*, allowing its citizens to vote for their preferred tribute and provide them with supplies. The Capitol ensures that the tributes and the Districts are aware of their surveillance, which serves as an effective means of maintaining authority and control (7).

At a basic level, investigating the world of the hunger games in relation to capitalism and colonization helps understand how the system work. In *The Hunger Games*, resources and labour are exploited from the districts to the Capitol. The Capitol uses the districts resources to create all this fancy, futuristic machinery; while the districts that are providing the resources see none of the benefits of their own labour. They are ruled by strong police presence called peacekeepers that keep people in line and are representative of the Capitol. *The Hunger Games* is not just mimicking the historical process as a colonization but the continued global processes of free markets capitalism that perpetuate colonization.

With regard to Çapoğlu, he argues that the history of *The Hunger Games* exemplifies hegemony, since it represents the Capitol's early endeavour to create a society under the absolute authority of President Snow (115). Nevertheless, for Gramsci, hegemony is not fixed; it arises from class conflict and exerts influence over subordinate groups via the prevailing ideology (Noreen).

Firstly, it is essential to recognise that hegemony encompasses a broader spectrum beyond mere physical or economic power. The conceptual framework of hegemony includes a significantly wider array of elements, including, but not limited to, ideologies, social values, and cultural norms (Çapoğlu 112).

In simple terms, hegemony refers to a prevalent phenomenon, shaping how news reporters deliver information, guided by dominant values. It affects our perception of society, reflecting dominant institutions and social processes which are products of capitalist ideology.

However, cinematic hegemony highlights social factors that promote a certain advantage, often marginalising less dominating narratives. This intentional emphasis is a frequent occurrence, quietly reinforcing existing conventions and views in the minds of viewers.

### **3.3.3 Survival and Competition**

*The Hunger Games* depicts survival through various means, the arena's diverse terrains, the characters and their individual struggles, and the socioeconomic conditions of their home districts that have fuelled the underlying tensions leading to the Games.

Suzanne Collins intended to highlight human desensitisation to violence when channel surfing between a reality program and the Iraq War; in their complete form, the Games combine both concepts according to the New York Times. She was able to complete a trilogy that combined elements of survival, competition, violence, and totalitarianism.

In a futuristic world where survival is staged as entertainment, competition transforms into a brutal struggle for existence. *The Hunger Games*, written by Suzanne Collins, depicts a savage competition where contestants, known as tributes, must outsmart, endure, and combat each other to live. This enforced "survival of the fittest" ideology, which highlights both the fundamental impulses necessary for survival and the significant personal and societal consequences such a system illustrates. An analysis of *The Hunger Games* reveals how this competition simultaneously feeds and challenges Social Darwinist ideologies.

Nevertheless, *The Hunger Games* Trilogy aligns perfectly under the lens of social Darwinism and the notion of "survival of the fittest". It also embodies a "survival of the fittest"

paradigm. The rules dictate that only one participant may survive, requiring tributes to depend on their physical ability, mental sharpness, and strategic flexibility.

Moreover, districts must compete against each other not only for the sake of survival but also to expose the unfit through the hardships of the Games. In terms of physical and mental downfalls. The first signs of struggles revolve around the competition for resources. Thus, completed *Hunger Games* represent more than a terrifying notion; they rewire the psychological and emotional states of Panem society's inhabitants via mass psychological manipulation.

However, the "fittest" are sometimes defined by the Capitol's manipulation rather than by actual superiority. Tributes from affluent areas possess many advantages, including access to training and resources, while those from impoverished districts have considerable challenges. The gap underscores the inherent injustice of a system that seems to reward merit but is, in reality, manipulated by social imbalances. The subsequent rebellion, partially fuelled by the Games, signifies a rejection of this worldview and an appeal for a more just society.

Similarly, Mohamad goes on to say that determining who lives and who dies is a prerogative reserved for sovereign authority in a totalitarian government. In *The History of Sexuality* (1978), Foucault elucidates how those in power use the privilege of life and death as a means to safeguard their purported sovereign authority (Mohamad 96).

To elaborate on the analysis of the recurring themes of survival and competition in the trilogy of *The Hunger Games*; one must first point out to a phrase that became a symbol of the Capitol's propaganda and its attempt to glamorize oppression under the guise of tradition and entertainment. During the Reaping ceremony, when tributes are chosen to compete in *The Hunger Games*, Effie Trinket says "Happy Hunger Games, and May the odds be ever in your favour", this phrase introduces the selection process and sets the tone for the event.

The phrase "Happy Hunger Games" is a juxtaposition of a reality that embellishes a deadly and brutal tournament. Nevertheless, this irony underscores the Capitol's exposure to violence and its attempt to portray the Games as joyful rather than the oppressive and cruel mechanism that it actually represents.

Subsequently, the slogan is an important element in the Capitol's propaganda. With a cheerful tone, it contrasts heavily with the obscure and grim reality of the games, fostering a psychological manipulation and dominance over the districts.

The second part of the phrase, "May the odds ever be in your favour," implies that survival relies on luck or chance, shifting focus from the structural inequalities of the games to not only the Game makers but also certain benefits that some tributes have over others. As an

example, the Careers, who start training from an early age, allowing them hold at an advantage, while poorer districts lack resources and the necessary assets, putting them at a significant disadvantage.

Therefore, this sentence despite its simplicity carries a profound significance. It symbolises the Capitol's manipulation, a façade of fairness, which conceals a systemic oppression and injustice. The layers of irony that this phrase conveys can be summarized into the following words: propaganda and the Capitol's power, which are the essence of the dystopian nature of Panem.

Hence, this expression resonates through one's ear but also in one's mind. *The Hunger Games* is not merely about competition but also about survival. When one thinks of the games and how cruel and manipulative the entire institution is. How every facet of the games works to suppress the empathy and humanity of a whole society. Nevertheless, every facet of the games fosters conflict among individuals at all levels, diminishing the value of their own humanity and that of others. The Games achieve this through two primary elements: competitiveness and spectacle. They do this in a distinctive manner for each segment of Panem's highly stratified society.

Debord's concept of the society of the spectacle is a societal structure in which capitalists or the ruling class govern individuals via the manipulation of ostensibly authentic images and representations. These pictures are integrated into media, entertainment, and games that captivate individuals' attention. This excessive attraction obscures individuals' perception of societal realities and the dictatorial nature of capitalism, which enforces inequity and animosity among people (Sasani and Darayee 31).

In short, competition and survival are carefully intertwined within a dystopian narrative that questions authority, injustice, and human nature. The competition within the games illustrates the Capitol's power, where survival relies not just on strength or talent but also on sliding through structural tyranny and social inequity.

#### **3.3.4 Rebellion against Oppression: a rejection of social Darwinism**

As stated before, the central theme of *The Hunger Games* is survival. Katniss and her other tributes are compelled to participate in a brutal competition in which only one may prevail. The work clearly depicts the despair and ability necessary for survival. Katniss's hunting abilities and her will to protect her loved ones propel her to embody resilience.

In examining the Trilogy's narrative, Collins seems to have been influenced by the political reality of hegemony. Güneç claims that within this hegemony, Collins' civilisation is

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characterised by famine and an unyielding central authority, safeguarded by the Capitol and governing twelve adjacent regions. The Capitol easily controls the districts due to their economic conditions, and despite the abundance of food in the Capitol, it does not distribute it to the districts (1090).

Historically, revolutions have not always been a unified front of ideologies but rather tangled mess of the rich wanting power or workers wanting rights and liberation. Foreign countries wanting concessions and agreements. Politicians and elites wanting more control over the system. Ideologies envisioning futures that are challenging, if not unattainable, may possess tenuous connections while opposing the regime. Although they share a common objective, once that objective is achieved, these connections become increasingly strained, ultimately leading to a potential collapse.

Foucault says that citizens in exploited countries are perpetually vulnerable to having their lives devastated by exploitative nations, since the rulers possess economic power but citizens cannot afford to jeopardise their own authority. “Power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (qtd. in Güneç 1094).

In *Catching Fire* (2013), President Snow told Katniss “People viewed your little trick with the berries as an act of defiance. Not as an act of love.” He says this to highlight the political ramifications of her actions in the 74<sup>th</sup> annual Hunger Games, where she and Peeta threatened to eat poisonous berries instead of killing each other. This act triggered a revolution, a rejection of the regime and sparked a rebellion across the districts. Snow views this act not as a romantic gesture, but rather as a dangerous and challenging act against the Capitol’s authority.

By characterising it as “an act of defiance”, Snow emphasises that the districts saw the berry act as an act of revolt against the Capitol’s control and authority, inspiring them to challenge its oppressive rule. This action weakened the Capitol’s power by showing that the tributes could question and overthrow the games’ rules, thereby making Katniss as a symbol of resistance.

He goes on to say “And if a girl from District 12, of all places can defy the capitol and walk away unharmed. What is to prevent them from doing the same? What is to prevent say... an uprising? That could lead to a revolution.” This line further emphasises President Snow’s apprehension over the destructive power of symbols and its ability to spark rebellion. Snow stresses the disadvantaged background of Katniss confronting the Capitol and avoiding accountability, allowing the likelihood of her acts to inspire other districts, showing them that

rebellion is possible, even for the most vulnerable.

Moreover, Snow's rhetorical question "What is to prevent them from doing the same?" highlights the potential domino effect Katniss triggered. If her defiance remains unaddressed, it could inspire numerous uprisings, jeopardising the Capitol's authority.

Thus, revolution is not one marked by bloody war and ugly consequences; it may also emerge through individual action, the choices of one person at a time. It is about human empathy. These forces overcome injustice, alienation, and desperation that is the theme of the movie. The message that Katniss carries throughout the movies.

*The Hunger Games* Trilogy exemplifies the panopticon idea, illustrating monitoring and control between the Capitol and the districts. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* illustrates the oppression of people via repression and discipline, the methods totalitarian governments use to retain control, the surveillance of citizens through intimidation and punishment, and the transformation of Panem's population into submissive bodies (Güneç 1090).

In *The Hunger Games* Trilogy, rebellion against the Capitol is not only a struggle for survival and a quest for liberation but also a direct rejection of social Darwinism. Namely the idea that only the "fittest" individuals or groups deserve survival and prosperity. The Capitol embodies social Darwinism by implementing a system where the strong exploit the weak. This philosophy is further reinforced by the games, in which tributes compete against each other in a survival contest designed to perpetuate the Capitol's dominance.

The Capitol administration system establishes a dictatorship over the districts. Pavlik states that the Capitol's true purpose is disclosed through its authoritarian nature: "antidemocratic actions; political and economic dominance by an elite; monopolistic control over mass media, military forces, and weaponry; and a policy of systematic violence and terror against those labelled as systemic enemies" (qtd. in Güneç 1093).

Indicators of revolt are evident throughout the series; to illustrate this latter one must dive into the movie and document notable and impactful symbols of revolution. As an example, "the odds are never in our favour," a phrase written as graffiti on the wall in District 12 is a bitter inversion of the Capitol's famous slogan, "May the odds be ever in your favour." This phrase summarises the harsh reality experienced by districts, especially the poorer one like District 12.

Moreover, the graffiti acts as a silent act of defiance, representing the despair and struggle of the subjugated citizens of District 12. It reflects their anguish and encapsulates their exploitation and the systemic inequalities they face. This detail enhances the visual narrative,

reinforcing the notion of rebellion.

Another essential element Sasani and Darayee discuss is fire. They state that the fire serves as a reminder of a revolt and act as a trigger of a revolt against the Capitol, which utilises modernity and technology to further the exploitation of individuals (39).

Besides, in *Mockingjay Part One*, Katniss says, “You can torture us and bomb us, and burn our districts to the ground. But do you see that? Fire is catching. And if we burn... you burn with us!” It may be one of her most powerful affirmations of resistance to the Capitol. It symbolizes the unstoppable nature and essence of revolt once it has emerged, comparing it to a spreading fire. The metaphor also illustrates how rebellion is spreads and becomes difficult to contain once it is initiated.

“And if we burn... you burn with us!” this could be seen as a direct threat to the Capitol. Katniss’s statement uses powerful imagery and a tone of defiance to unite and empower the rebels against the Capitol, possibly enhancing their morale and will to combat.

In summary, the series cements Katniss as the face and emblem of the revolution, representing the resilience and solidarity of the districts. It embodies the series’ central theme, which is the fight against oppression and the strength of collective resilience. More importantly, Katniss and Peeta have to contend with the power of media narrative and propaganda, examining how it shapes perceptions of injustice and can subsequently incite revolution. Nevertheless, the Capitol seeks to manipulate media to distort reality. The inhabitants of Panem only observe content sanctioned by the Capitol.

### **3.4 Exploring Genetic Determinism in *Gattaca***

Science fiction films have historically examined the ethical and societal ramifications of genetic advancements, offering warning narratives about humanity's aspiration to manipulate and enhance life. These films explore dystopian realms influenced by genetic engineering and examine the boundaries of human potential, highlighting the conflict between technological advancement and its consequences.

The recent surge in films featuring genetic engineering, from the very popular *Jurassic Park* (1993) to the commercially unsuccessful *Alien: Resurrection* (1997), clearly demonstrates that science fiction cinema serves as a platform for discussing the implications of biotechnology on society and the natural world (Kirby 1).

Resnik and Vorhaus say that genetic determinism may be broadly characterized as the perspective that genes (genotypes) dictate characteristics (phenotypes) (3). Sanka adds that genetic determinism is the conviction that hereditary factors mostly, if not completely, influence

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phenotypes, overshadowing the roles of epigenetic and environmental variables, especially regarding complex qualities like behaviour and personality (qtd. in Carver et al.).

Moore reckons that numerous plausible explanations account for the widespread prevalence of genetic determinism. Certain school classes in which educators regularly assert that genes dictate certain qualities, mass media headlines on the identification of genes linked to features, and personal observations of characteristic development that seem unaffected by environmental factors (qtd. in Kampourakis 471).

Among the movies that stands out as a poignant exploration of genetic determinism is *Gattaca*, presenting a future where DNA determines one's destiny and inviting viewers to reflect on the moral dilemmas of a genetically stratified society.

In order to address this film, one must first examine the underlying theory, deconstruct it into essential components and address them methodically. The layers of this film need to be scrutinized to illustrate all facets of genetics and its implications. Jimenez claims that genetic determinism poses a significant barrier to a comprehensive knowledge of genetics and its societal ramifications (qtd. in Kampourakis 471).

The 1997 film *Gattaca*, written and directed by Andrew Niccol, depicts a "not-too-distant" future where societal organization is mostly influenced by genotype-based predictions (Ogbunugafor and Edge 1).

*Gattaca* addresses the bioethical concerns associated with contemporary eugenics and posits that these difficulties stem from social endorsement of genetic determinism. Essentially, *Gattaca* seeks to escape the confines established by genetic scientists who depict a gene-dominated universe (Kirby 7).

Sesardic states that the film *Gattaca* depicts a dystopian future where individuals from the genetic underclass, referred to as invalids, have terrible life prospects due to their inferior DNA profiles, which preclude them from attaining coveted occupations (642). On the other hand, Olivia Banner contends that *Gattaca* depicts a post-racial society where genetic supremacy is the criterion, but it reinforces the dominance of whites inside its narrative (qtd. in Ranjitkar 101).

Moreover, in the Production Notes for *GATTACA*, co-producer Stacey Sher asserts that "GATTACA is a science fiction thriller exploring the potential implications of emerging scientific capabilities...; [it] constructs a comprehensive and plausible future world grounded in the genetic testing that is increasingly becoming a reality today." (Kirby 8).

Conversely, Francis Fukuyama in *Our Post human Future* examines the potential ethical

and social ramifications arising from the expansion of biotechnology, referencing Huxley's *Brave New World*. He asserts that advancements in technology and bioengineering represent a double-edged sword, as both their detrimental and advantageous effects have been exaggerated (qtd. in Ranjitkar 101).

### 3.4.1 Summary of the Narrative.

Intelligence, strength, health, appearance, and even lifespan—what happens when scientific advancements allow children to be genetically engineered to meet these ideal traits? And what becomes of those born outside this eugenic selection process? These questions form the foundation of the 1997 dystopian film *Gattaca*. At a time when alien invasions dominated the sci-fi genre, *Gattaca* offered a quieter, more introspective approach to envisioning the future of humanity. The film presents a society where the genetically superior, known as "valids," enjoy limitless opportunities, while those born naturally, labeled as "invalids," are systematically excluded from meaningful participation in society.

*Gattaca* is a 1997 dystopian sci-film starring Ethan Hawke as Vincent Freeman, Uma Thurman as Irene Cassini and Jude Law as Jerome Eugene Morrow. The film is set in the near future, where eugenics has become a societal norm. Individuals are judged and classified based on the quality of their DNA, which determines their suitability for employment. Although genetic discrimination is technically illegal, it remains a widespread practice. Before birth, parents have the ability to select every aspect of their child's physical traits, ensuring the child is free from genetic defects or disadvantages. These genetically engineered individuals are known as "valids," while those born naturally, referred to as "invalids" or "children of God," face severe limitations. They are often excluded from prestigious careers and relegated to low-status, menial jobs.

Vincent, an invalid, dreams of going to the stars but struggles to get hired at the Gattaca aerospace corporation due to his lack of genetic credentials. He meets Jerome Eugene Morrow, a valid with excellent genetics who agrees to let Vincent become a borrowed ladder. Vincent rises through the ranks at the corporation and is due to fly to Titan. However, a murder occurs before the flight, and Vincent's eyelash is discovered near the crime scene.

Following many close calls, the inquiry ultimately concludes with the arrest of Director Josef (Gore Vidal) for murder by the chief investigator overseeing the case (Alan Arkin). The Director reveals that he assassinated the mission director to gain more time for the launch, since the chance for the launch occurs only once every seventy years, and it is now too late to halt the launch. Nevertheless, when Vincent seems to be exonerated, he encounters a detective, who

is revealed to be his estranged brother, Anton (Loren Dean). Anton attempts to get Vincent to accompany him for safeguarding prior to Vincent's discovery. Nevertheless, it quickly becomes evident that Anton is motivated mostly by insecurity and is preoccupied with how Vincent has outperformed him, despite his alleged genetic superiority. Vincent and Anton resolve their rivalry like they did in their youth, by determining who can swim the furthest into the water. As he had previously done in their youth, Vincent successfully rescues his brother from drowning once again. This is only due to his refusal to save any energy for the return swim; he is prepared to jeopardize everything for success. In contrast, his brother was concerned about maintaining enough strength to swim out and back, and these anxieties prevented him from exploring his full capabilities.

As the launch day approaches, Jerome bids farewell to Vincent, expressing his intention to travel as well. He discloses that he has preserved a sufficient quantity of DNA material to sustain Vincent for two lives. Overcome with gratitude, Vincent expresses his appreciation to Jerome for "bestowing" upon him the identity that facilitated his success at *Gattaca*. Jerome responds, asserting that he should be the one expressing gratitude, since Vincent entrusted him with his aspirations. While traversing the *Gattaca* complex en route to the launch site, Vincent is halted for an unanticipated DNA test. Vincent hesitantly consents to undertake the examination, despite lacking any of Jerome's genetic material to conceal his identity. The test result reveals Vincent's "invalid" status, and Dr. Lamar (Xander Berkeley) discloses that he has been aware of Vincent's true identity from the beginning. Lamar subsequently alters the test result to enable his advancement, admitting that his son idolizes Vincent and aspires to become an astronaut like him, despite an unexpected genetic anomaly that would disqualify him. As the shuttle ascends, Jerome is seen ending his life inside his home's incinerator.

### **3.4.2 Eugenics and Genetic Engineering: The Foundation of *Gattaca's* World.**

In the film *Gattaca*, humanity has attained expertise in genetic sequencing and DNA manipulation. Parents possess the option to modify their offspring's DNA during fertilization. Diseases may be eradicated and unpleasant features and physical attributes can be erased. According to Russo, the title of the movie derives its name from the initials of the nitric bases of DNA (guanine, adenine, thymine, cytosine) (81).

Furthermore, human lifespans have significantly increased, allowing individuals to gain the advantages of prolonged and healthy living. These genetically modified infants have become commonplace and are recognized as legitimate members of society. Despite this development, some individuals continue to be conceived and birthed normally. Individuals who

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are naturally born and conceived are regarded as second-class citizens, pejoratively referred to as faith-births or God children, and categorized as invalids.

A conceivable reality is precisely what *Gattaca* aims for with an emphasis on the future of genetic engineering using principles of the time, to understand how *Gattaca* borrows from real world science it is helpful to capture a brief snapshot of what is known about genetics.

By definition, genetic engineering is the technique of altering an organism's DNA to introduce novel features or correct genetic disorders. This technology entails exact modifications to the genetic code, facilitating progress in enhanced agricultural products, pharmaceutical research, and the treatment of genetic illnesses.

Per Kirby's words, genetic engineering is fundamentally a comprehensive term used to denote any method that enables scientists to alter an organism's genetic makeup. Genetic engineering comprises three distinct categories of gene manipulation. First, recombinant DNA technology (rDNA technology), which entails the combination of DNA from two different species. Second, the cloning of multicellular organisms, wherein a new individual is produced from a single cell, bypassing sexual reproduction to create genetically identical offspring. And third, human gene therapy, which involves the direct manipulation of human genes (2).

Robert and Baylis on the other hand claim that genetic engineering encompasses several approaches for the deliberate modification of genetic material, particularly deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), to change, repair, or improve its form or function (35).

Russo on the other hand, asserts that genetic engineering is an incredibly controversial subject across several fields, including medicine, bioethics, and biotechnology. Aside from the challenges related to the actual technical and scientific feasibility of modifying human DNA, other ethical and legal concerns arise. Although often debated within the scientific community, only a limited number of issues get media coverage and capture public interest. Nonetheless, emerging techniques have societal ramifications and often imply a worldview that is dystopian, if not apocalyptic (73).

The film seems to entirely reject eugenics, as the protagonist strives to defy expectations and demonstrate his ability to perform the role of a genetically superior individual. Kirby says that eugenics may be succinctly described as any endeavor to accelerate human evolution via the enhancement of human genetic composition. A crucial difference must be established between goal-directed evolution and the human-directed evolution referred to as eugenics (3).

To understand eugenics, it is essential to provide a thorough definition of the latter. *Eugenics and Scientific Racism* elucidates that eugenics is a scientifically erroneous and

unethical idea advocating for "racial enhancement" and "selective breeding," which became prominent in the early 20th century. Eugenicists globally believed that they could enhance humanity and eradicate perceived societal ills via genetics and heredity. They contended that using methods such as forced sterilisation, isolation, and social rejection would eliminate persons they considered unsuitable from society.

The term eugenics originates from the Greek word εὐγενής, including two components: εὖ (good) and γένος (race). It means "good race." Eugenics is the field that seeks to "perfect" the human species by modifying genes or selectively breeding the most advantageous races to cultivate desirable traits for societal engineering (Delgrosso et al. 51).

Nevertheless, historically, eugenics has primarily been examined in the contexts of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Nazi Germany; however, it is now recognised that eugenic ideology was prevalent in various other regions, impacting academics, authors, scientists, and policymakers across nearly all non-Catholic Western nations and beyond. Scholarly analyses of eugenics movements exist for Canada, France, Japan, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Romania, China, Latin America, and other locations (Leonard, 203).

Muller claims that liberal eugenics, characterized by voluntary involvement, shapes societal values in *Gattaca*, placing significant pressure on parents to engage in the pursuit of genetic perfection, which is a prevalent aspiration among many individuals. In the film, an individual with a grade of 9.3 signifies a genome of superior quality, presumably devoid of defects, while the grading system remains ambiguous. This standard exceeds that of the average citizen (94).

Stone concludes that the history of eugenics generally focuses on the significance attributed to class and race. Class-stratified societies in Britain and the USA experienced a sense of entrapment between the prevailing elite and the growing working class. The disparity in birth rates between the upper classes and rapidly reproducing lower groups was seen as the foundation of the eugenics movement, enabling the middle classes to articulate their anxieties and ambitions (398).

### **3.4.3 Discrimination by Design: Social Hierarchies Based on Genetics.**

Kirby states that *Gattaca* (1997) is an exception in the science fiction genre, having surpassed its mediocre box office performance to become a prevalent reference in dialogues about human genetic modification technology (184). Furthermore, the film centres on Vincent Freeman and Jerome Eugene Morrow (name translations: a free man conquers, and a genome-eugenic future) (Müller and Dalzotto 94).

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*Gattaca* examines the concepts of determinism and the breakdown of humanity to its constituent elements, while arbitrarily assigning value to certain genetic traits. Despite the bleak, hollow, and cold world devoid of empathy and humanity, the central characters Vincent, Jerome, and Irene possess deeply human story arcs. Regardless of how oppressive, discriminatory, or inhibiting society may be, the inherent adaptive nature of humanity ultimately discovers a way to prevail and provides an outlet for the human soul to thrive. In addition, the public depicted in the film places a mass value judgment where genetically perfect people are viewed as much more valuable than others.

In some circumstances, human hierarchies are clearly articulated (e.g. official and institutionalised systems of precedence or seniority), whilst in others, they may be rather implicit, inferred from the behaviours and attitudes of others. Humans consistently establish and traverse both formal and informal hierarchies (Redhead and Power 2).

Van der Kooij and Sandi claim that the emergence of social hierarchies was first demonstrated in traditional research conducted on chickens by Schjelderup-Ebbe in the 1920s, which described a pecking order that determined the order of access to food among individuals. Since then, the recognition that social dominance manifests across several species — including invertebrates, vertebrates, and humans has garnered interest from multiple disciplines, including evolutionary biology, genetics, neurology, psychology, sociology, and economics (52).

The social hierarchy in *Gattaca* is structured around the division between valids and invalids. In this world, genetic discrimination is not just a possibility but a reality. Children born without genetic modification are labeled as invalids or natural-born individuals, placing them at an inherent disadvantage. With little hope of escaping poverty or securing careers beyond low-skilled labor, invalids are systematically excluded from society's opportunities. As a result, they are not only economically marginalized but also socially ostracized, reinforcing a rigid, genetically determined class system.

Moreover, *Gattaca* illustrates a future society where parents are encouraged to choose the genetic composition of their progeny prior to birth. In this society, not everyone has access to technology, and those who are not genetically altered face significant discrimination (Kirby 8).

The journey of Vincent Freeman is just one of these examples. Vincent was born naturally instead of through a eugenic process. He is therefore more susceptible to illness, has poor eyesight and has a heart condition that gives him a higher chance of dying young. Invalids

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like Vincent run into more closed doors than their valid counterparts, they are often relegated to lower paying jobs, differing educational treatment and they even have a harder time dating, since couples have a habit of checking each other's DNA before committing to a relationship. These are all key components in a traditional story of class struggle. Although Vincent remarks that instead of racism or social status, the future has discrimination down to science.

Due to scientific intervention, society operates under the assumption that genetically engineered individuals are inherently superior, while those predisposed to genetic weaknesses are systematically denied opportunities. Career prospects are determined primarily by biological aptitude and potential, reducing individual ambition and effort to mere genetic probability. As a result, the world depicted in *Gattaca* is sterile, rigid, and devoid of creativity, lacking character, initiative, or true human depth. The film suggests that the pursuit of perfection comes at a cost, stripping society of its diversity, spontaneity, and the very qualities that make humanity unique.

Kevles adds that although *Gattaca* is regarded as the quintessential genetics film, its primary themes pertain to widespread prejudice. The video illustrates that prejudice manifests across several dimensions (e.g., race, religion, gender identity), with biology serving as the mechanism of discrimination in this fictional realm. The field of genetics has historically been closely associated with prejudice, notably via the eugenics movement (qtd. in Ogbunugafor and Edge 2).

Kirby states that screenwriter and director Andrew Niccol's formulation of *GATTACA* as a bioethical narrative emphasizes three principal issues: 1) Genetic discrimination against individuals who are not genetically modified, 2) The societal ramifications of predictive genetics (genetic prophesy), and 3) The elimination of "undesirable" features and human defects (9).

Moreover, the use of setting cleverly reinforces the idea that in this new world only the valids truly fit into society, just as the building they occupy fits within the physical landscape. Along with these structures anchoring the story are plenty of motifs, symbolisms and imagery that reinforce the themes of the movie. Jerome's spiral staircase represents the double helix DNA structure, the clothing worn by invalids is drab in stark contrast with the ultramodern suits inspired by mid-century fashion worn by the valids. Imagery of trash is used often in close proximity to the invalids while cleanliness is associated with the valids. Furthermore, Vincent embodies these two concepts with his meticulous ritual of cleaning away loose skin and hair to avoid leaving evidence of his identity while he attempts to pass himself off as a valid member of

society.

Is it ethically justifiable to genetically engineer humans? If given the choice, should parents enhance their children to maximize their chances of success? What truly defines a person—their genetic makeup or something beyond biology? *Gattaca* raises these profound moral questions, urging viewers to reflect on the deeper implications of genetic selection. The film challenges the viewer to consider whether approaching a scientific breakthrough that could revolutionize human potential or a dangerous path toward genetic discrimination, ultimately pushing humanity toward an unforeseen catastrophe.

Clearly, this would imply criticism of a purely science-based and biological evaluation of a person's worth and presenting a somewhat mechanical view of mankind. Limitations are set by body parts and no account is taken of spirit, determination and courage in the face of adversity. All of which may compensate for physical weakness, or indeed come about as a result of deficiencies, nor is account taken of the fact that parts judged to be potentially defective may function perfectly well, even if they don't conform to set standards.

*Gattaca* unequivocally illustrates that genetic programming entails societal injustice, since access to this service is limited to a select few. As a result, a novel kind of social rank emerges within this sort of civilisation. This film supports multiple theses, prompting reflection on a hypothetical future where humans possess total control over their genetic heritage. A comprehensive and flawless forecast of an individual's potential based just on DNA may be unattainable, since personal commitment and free will have significant value. This video does not critique a particular stance of the scientific community, such as naïve determinism, but rather addresses a potential philosophical deviation that is logically articulated from believable premises (Russo 84). Essentially, the film serves as a cautionary narrative on the ethical and philosophical implications of genetic engineering, prompting reflection on the equilibrium between science, free will, and social justice.

#### **3.4.4 Challenging the Norm: Vincent's Struggle as a "Natural-Born."**

*Gattaca* is a compelling and thought-provoking film that explores the societal and individual consequences of genetic engineering. Set in the near future, humanity is divided into two distinct classes: *valids*, who have undergone genetic intervention to enhance their potential, and *invalids*, whose genetic traits are left to nature or fate, making them more susceptible to perceived weaknesses. In this world, individuals are assessed based on statistical probabilities of genetic defects, reinforcing a rigid system where one's biological makeup dictates their fate. The film raises critical ethical questions about identity, equality, and the dangers of a genetically

stratified society.

To be a “natural-born” for Vincent implies a multitude of things, notably the fact that he was conceived naturally, without genetic manipulation or selection. This distinguishes him in a society that emphasises genetic engineering, where the majority are born via eugenics-based selection to guarantee superior physical and cognitive attributes. Thus, his DNA determines his social status, employment prospects and even the perception of his value by others, that is employers use Genoism, or discrimination based on genetics, to assess job eligibility instead of skills and abilities. For the sake of explanation, Genoism refers to the discrimination of individuals based on perceived inferior genetics. The word Genoism, a neologism<sup>11</sup> introduced by Andrew Niccol, the director and writer of the 1997 film *Gattaca*, refers to unethical and unlawful genetic discrimination (‘Genetic Information Discrimination Attorney New York City’).

Vincent exists within a strict, eugenics-driven system that disadvantages people according to their genetic composition. In this society, genetic engineering dictates an individual's prospects, with "Valid" individuals, those born through genetic selection—gaining preferential access to esteemed occupations and social standing, whilst "Invalids" such as Vincent, who are naturally conceived, endure institutional prejudice. Employers depend on genetic profiling instead of merit, perpetuating a society where DNA determines fate.

Moreover, society views Vincent as inferior and undeserving of prestigious possibilities just because he was naturally conceived, labelling him as an "Invalid." From birth, genetic screening determines his expected lifespan, health risks, and professional constraints, confining him to a predestined fate. He is denied chances not due to his ability, but because his DNA defines him as weak and untrustworthy. Vincent, however, rejects these notions and retaliates by adopting the persona of Jerome Morrow, a genetically superior "Valid." Through unwavering will, intensive training, and subterfuge, he demonstrates that human potential transcends hereditary limitations. His success in infiltrating *Gattaca* and realising his aspiration for space flight challenges the conventional notion that DNA dictates fate, demonstrating that

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<sup>11</sup> A new word, usage, or expression. “Neologism.” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 15 Jan. 2025, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neologism](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neologism).

desire and tenacity outweigh biological superiority.

Additionally, Vincent possesses qualities that extend beyond traditional measures of IQ or genetic superiority. Traits such as guile, cunning, resourcefulness, and ingenuity play a crucial role in his ability to sustain his deception and ultimately achieve his dream of space travel. Despite the limitations imposed by his genetic makeup, it is these intangible human qualities—determination, resilience, and adaptability, that allow him to defy societal constraints and prove that success is not solely determined by DNA.

Furthermore, the nature versus nurture argument in psychology examines the significance of an individual's inherent characteristics (nature) compared to their personal experiences (nurture) in shaping individual variations in physical and behavioural features. Although initial theories prioritised one element, modern perspectives acknowledge a complex interaction between genetics and environment in influencing behaviour and development (*Nature vs. Nurture in Psychology*).

Besides, the current phrase "nature versus nurture" was introduced by the English Victorian polymath Francis Galton to analyse the impact of genetics and environment on societal progress (Achife et al. 95). Nevertheless, *Gattaca* offers a compelling criticism of genetic determinism within the context of the nature vs nurture argument. The film argues that while genetics (nature) may provide a basis, human desire, tenacity, and contextual factors (nurture) significantly contribute to the development of an individual's potential.

To further elucidate this concept, Vincent Freeman, the protagonist, was born naturally, known as an "invalid". This means that he did not benefit from genetic upgrades. His DNA indicates a significant likelihood of heart failure and a short lifespan, resulting in discrimination and restricted opportunities.

Notwithstanding his "inferior" genetics, Vincent overcomes his predetermined destiny through unwavering determination and hard work. His success in joining the elite space program challenges the idea that genetics determine and define ability. The film emphasises the significance of human will, ambition and determination, elements that foster Vincent's accomplishment beyond his biological constraints.

*Gattaca's* ultimate message is that nurture triumphs over nature. As Vincent secures a spot on the space expedition, despite his genetic "inferiority." This undermines the film's central idea that DNA determines success and that we are more than our genetic makeup.

Sesardic contends that Vincent's conversations with his friends, Irene and Jerome, together with his reflections on his previous conduct via voice-over, provide significant insights

into his objectives, considerations, and decision-making processes. However, he never articulates the reasons for his belief that he may transcend the restrictions encoded in his double helix. His statements exhibit much animosity and bitterness, coupled with unrealistic aspirations for accomplishment, but without any substantive rationale to support his persistent optimism (646).

*Gattaca* serves to remind viewers that we are more than our genetic identity. *Gattaca*'s effectiveness at blurring the line between fiction and reality is at the core of its appeal. While critics praised the film as a work of art, it also left an impact on the world of genetics.

At first glance, this seems to be a science fiction picture; nonetheless, it has several features of a philosophical film, since it encourages contemplation and emphasises thoughts. It articulates the possible ramifications of genetic engineering in a captivating manner, implying that reducing humanity to mere scientific deconstruction and subsequent rebuilding signifies a failure to comprehend the essence of humanity, perhaps hindering its advancement. This picture may not have performed well at the box office, although it significantly contributes to the genre of introspective cinema, which does not depend on action or humour to engage the audience's attention. It is a meticulously designed and well performed work that merits far more recognition than it received upon its premiere.

In conclusion, *Gattaca* has had a great resurgence and relevance in recent years. The concept just continues to grow more pertinent with time. One of the themes explored is the existence of a pre-determined reality as a timeless philosophical ponderable. While advanced reproductive technology has given rise to multiple bio-ethical issues.

### **3.5 Conclusion:**

The themes of survival, competition, and social stratification explored in *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* provide a compelling framework for analysing the impact of Social Darwinism in dystopian narratives. Both films portray societies where individuals are evaluated, classified, and constrained based on their inherent traits, whether genetic or socioeconomic, reflecting the ideological tenets of Social Darwinism. *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* not only endorse these concepts but also critically examine and ultimately challenge the belief that human value and achievement are solely determined by biological or societal predispositions.

The protagonists of both films serve as powerful arguments to the deterministic frameworks imposed upon them. Moreover, their stories highlight resilience, free will and the ability for individuals to challenge rigid classifications, reinforcing the notion that talent and

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perseverance can overcome societal boundaries. Furthermore, both films alert about the dangers of a society that adheres excessively to social Darwinist ideals. *The Hunger Games* depicts the brutality of a world where the elite use competition to maintain control, while *Gattaca* warns of the ethical consequences of a genetically divided society that limits human potential based on arbitrary genetic criteria. In doing so, these films challenge the notion that society progress should be governed by the survival of the “fittest,” instead promoting a deeper comprehension of human potential, one that acknowledges the influence of both individual will and structural systems.

Ultimately, these films present the ethical and social ramifications of a society where status and success are determined by birth or biology. By rejecting the deterministic worldview promoted by Social Darwinism, *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* advocate for a society in which opportunity, equality and human resilience prevail over hereditary privilege. They provide a hopeful vision and optimistic perspective, one where individuals are characterized not by their origins or inherent attributes, but by their choices and the obstacles they overcome.

**Chapter Four :**  
**Cinematic**  
**Reflections**  
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### **4.1 Introduction:**

Film has long served as a reflection of society, mirroring its struggles, ambitions, and fears through engaging narratives. Dystopian cinema establishes itself among many genres by questioning current structures through its representations of alternative futures. These films do not merely portray distant, fictional worlds; rather, they emphasise pressing current issues, reframing them in dramatized or futuristic settings. Dystopian narratives challenge viewers to reconsider the path of contemporary society and the potential consequences of its present course, whether addressing economic disparity, tyrannical governance, or the ethical implications of technological progress.

This chapter explores the influence of cinema on social ideology, particularly through its portrayal of dystopian themes that transcend borders. Films such as *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* offer insightful criticisms of issues that extend far beyond their fictional narratives, addressing real-world matters such as class conflict, genetic determinism, and structural discrimination. *The Hunger Games* presents a vivid depiction of economic inequality and social hierarchy, highlighting the lasting effects unchecked capitalism and authoritarian governance. *Gattaca*, on the other hand, explores the ethical ramifications of genetic engineering, raising questions about eugenics, individual autonomy, and the illusion of meritocracy in an increasingly technology-driven society.

This chapter also considers the wider influence of globalization in disseminating dystopian narratives, in addition to the thematic complexity of particular films. The emergence of global media and streaming platforms has enabled these narratives to reach diverse audiences, promoting cross-cultural interpretations and adaptations that reflect both universal and specific concerns. Dystopian films display the fast technological advancements, changing political landscapes, and expanding socio-economic disparities that societies grapple with, while also encouraging critical discussion.

### **4.2 The Influence of Cinema on Public Perception and Social Thought.**

Cinema has historically served as a potent cultural instrument, profoundly shaping our worldview, self-perception, and interpersonal interactions. Films, as an art form that merges visual narrative with auditory elements, have the distinctive capacity to elicit emotions, stimulate contemplation, and incite action. The influence of cinema on society encompasses several domains, including cultural evolution, social consciousness, individual conduct, and political dialogue.

The Filmmaking exemplifies human ingenuity and technical advancement. Historically, cinema has endured significant transformations, influencing the narrative techniques and

viewer engagement on screen. Cinema is a dynamic art form that has evolved significantly since its inception (Babbar 1).

Furthermore, it focuses on how films shape the way people see the world, understand issues, and form opinions. Films have the capacity to elevate social concerns to the forefront of public awareness, sometimes accomplishing what conventional advocacy finds challenging. Films elicit empathy and raise awareness of significant social issues by depicting authentic hardships via engaging narratives.

Films frequently represent the values, beliefs, and ambitions of a civilization or culture. They may illustrate societal trends, social dynamics, and cultural customs, offering insights into the way people live and interact. By depicting individuals from diverse backgrounds and viewpoints, films may promote inclusion and foster understanding among different populations. Films may analyze and reflect on social, political, and cultural topics via social commentary (Lu 70).

Since the introduction of the movie industry, films have consistently mirrored societal themes on the big screen. Films serve as a means to raise awareness within society about numerous social concerns (Inglis, n.d.) (qtd. in Mohamed.S.H et al.).

The use of sound in film represents a pivotal technological advancement in cinematic history. The incorporation of sound transformed the medium, evolving silent films into "talkies" and irrevocably altering the cinematic experience. Prior to synchronised sound, films were devoid of audio, relying solely on live music or narration. The emergence of "talkies" revolutionised the film industry, significantly enhancing the viewing experience for audiences globally. The sound era commenced with the inaugural successful sound film, "The Jazz Singer." This 1927 production, featuring Al Jolson, showcased synchronised musical sequences and limited dialogue, bringing an era of change in filmmaking (Babbar 1).

### **4.2.1 Film as a Medium for Social Commentary.**

Movies serve as a mirror to society, offering reflections, critiques, and influences on culture, politics, and social norms. According to Edeh and Bernard, films have the power to engage both the emotions and intellect of audiences, and when used effectively, they can spread awareness and inspire transformation on a global scale. Through storytelling, cinema shapes perceptions and opinions about the world and its people. Filmmakers often shed light on hidden struggles, whether exposing injustices against marginalized groups or portraying the heroic journey of an individual leading change. In either case, film serves as a powerful tool for raising awareness and prompting critical conversations (11).

Fiona and Bryn add film significantly influences society by shaping attitudes, values,

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ethics, and promoting social change. It serves as a powerful catalyst for significant discussions about complex subjects. Film possesses the capacity to challenge societal norms and illuminate significant social issues, thereby catalysing change and fostering a deeper comprehension of our surroundings. It captivates audiences and evokes emotional reactions, resulting in transformations within individuals and communities (qtd. in Mohamed.S.H et al.).

Furthermore, film seamlessly integrates three fundamental elements—images, narrative, and sound to provide depth and meaning to the unfolding story. Through these elements, movies explore universal themes such as love, hope, death, good and evil, violence, and peace (Edeh and Bernard 10). Meanwhile, Aldredge, as cited in Lu (69), classifies films into major genres, including action, comedy, drama, fantasy/science fiction, horror, mystery, romance, and western. These genres shape the storytelling approach, influencing how narratives are presented and experienced by audiences.

Thus, cinema has long served as an effective vehicle for social criticism, mirroring and challenging dominant beliefs through its narratives and visual representation. From early silent films to modern blockbusters, filmmakers have used this form of entertainment to criticque cultural norms, question authority, and inspire change.

Nevertheless, movies have a major influence on individuals and society, shaping emotions, perceptions, and behaviours in numerous ways. They induce profound emotional reactions by making us laugh, cry, and feel fear. This emotional engagement enables audiences to connect with characters and stories. Furthermore, watching uplifting movies can influence mood and enhance happiness.

In addition, media giants like Disney and Warner Bros. have arisen in the development of capitalist civilizations, producing a succession of worldwide blockbusters. The films created by these companies have attracted many admirers and generated a range of Intellectual Properties (IPs<sup>12</sup>), resulting in the establishment of theme parks globally. The characters shown

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<sup>12</sup> It refers to creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images used in commerce. "What Is Intellectual Property?" *WIPO*, [www.wipo.int/about-ip/en/#:~:text=Intellectual%20property%20\(IP\)%20refers%20to,and%20images%20used%20in%20commerce](http://www.wipo.int/about-ip/en/#:~:text=Intellectual%20property%20(IP)%20refers%20to,and%20images%20used%20in%20commerce). Accessed 2 Oct. 2025.

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in these films function as both children's imaginations and adult heroic embodiments, significantly impacting individuals' lives. Consequently, films have expanded their impact beyond the screen (Lu 70).

Through storytelling, movies affect perceptions and worldviews, introducing viewers to different cultures, customs, and historical contexts, promoting global awareness and understanding. They either reinforce or challenge stereotypes and foster moral and ethical reflection. Additionally, on a social and political scale, films can raise awareness and exposure to essential matters and even serve as propaganda to influence public opinion. Movies like *Schindler's List* (1993) or *12 Years a Slave* (2012) educate viewers about historical and social injustices.

Since movies have the ability to shape perspectives and maintain cultural heritage, some films transcend fiction to depict real-life events with emotional and historical depth, ensuring that significant moments in history are not overlooked. One such film is *Schindler's List* (1993), which is a historical drama directed by Steven Spielberg. It is based on the actual account of Oskar Schindler, a German businessman who rescued more than 1,100 Jewish individuals during the Holocaust. Adapted from Thomas Keneally's novel *Schindler's Ark*, the film depicts Schindler's evolution from a profit-oriented opportunist to a compassionate saviour as he uses his factory to save Jews from Nazi persecution. Filmed primarily in black and white, the movies combine elements of realism and emotional resonance, making it one of the most powerful depictions of the Holocaust. Themes of morality, redemption, and human resilience are central to the narrative, featuring Liam Neeson delivering a compelling performance as Schindler, and Ralph Fiennes as the ruthless Nazi officer Amon Göth and Ben Kingsley as Schindler's Jewish accountant, Itzhak Stern.

The Nazi ideology depicted in the film is strongly anchored in Social Darwinist thought, notably its belief in the so-called superiority of the Aryan race and the dehumanization of Jews and other oppressed groups as "inferior" or "unfit" for survival. Amon Göth, the cruel Nazi commander, embodies this ideology through his random killings and merciless treatments of Jewish inmates, operating under the conviction that the strong have the right to subjugate or eradicate the weak.

Whilst, Oskar Schindler's transformation implies a rejection of Social Darwinism.

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Initially motivated by business and self-interest, Schindler gradually recognizes the inherent worth of human life beyond race or social status. His choice to save Jews at great personal risk undermines the Social Darwinist narrative by illustrating that morality, empathy, and collective responsibility hold greater significance than power or the survival of the fittest. The film ultimately analyses the dangers of implementing Social Darwinist principles to society, showing how such ideologies can lead to genocide, while also emphasizing individual's ability to reject and fight these destructive beliefs via compassion and ethical courage.

Thus, the impact of films on ethical standards may shape individuals' attitudes and principles. They may illuminate social inequalities and marginalised populations, fostering awareness and encouraging action towards social equity. Films may evoke empathy, challenge traditional conventions, and foster constructive social change via narrative and visual depiction (Mohamed.S.H)

Films that address race and racial injustice are essential in shaping cultural awareness and historical understanding. These movies often examine themes of discrimination, systemic injustice, and resilience, challenging viewers to reflect on the past and its lasting impact on society. From historical to present-day narratives, racial films serve as a platform to expose the truths of racial inequity and to advocate for marginalised voices.

One such film is *12 Years a Slave*, which offers a poignant portrayal of slavery in 19<sup>th</sup> century America. The film, inspired by the actual story of Solomon Northup, a free black man who is kidnapped and sold into slavery, offers a vivid depiction of the brutal reality of enslavement. Through its compelling narrative and emotional impact, *12 Years a Slave* is a key contribution to the genre of racial cinema, highlighting the ongoing struggle for justice and human dignity.

*12 Years a Slave* (2013), directed by Steve McQueen, is a historical drama based on the 1853 memoir of Solomon Northup, a free Black man from New York who is abducted and sold into slavery in the American South.

The films portray Northup played by Chiwetel Ejiofor, as he is conned by two men and abducted, and forced into harsh labour on Southern plantations. He suffers years of physical and psychological abuse under many slave owners, notably from Edwin Epps played by Michael Fassbender. Throughout his journey, he witnesses the suffering of other enslaved people, including Patsey, played by Lupita Nyong'o, a young woman subjected to heinous abuse.

Despite the dehumanization, Northup maintains hope and seizes an opportunity to communicate with his friends in the North and is eventually rescued and reunited with his

family after twelve years of enslavement. The film is a tragic and compelling depiction of the brutality of slavery and the endurance of humans.

Nevertheless, a Social Darwinist interpretation of *12 Years a Slave* including both Solomon Northup's 1853 story and Steve McQueen's 2013 film points to the use of the "survival of the fittest" ideology to justify slavery and racial hierarchy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century America.

Different elements are derived from the movie, which can directly be linked to Social Darwinism, first, the justification of slavery. Slave Owners like Edwin Epps exhibit Social Darwinist ideology by treating enslaved people as members of inferior class doomed for subjugation. Epps' conviction that African Americans are naturally prone to slavery aligns with 19<sup>th</sup> century pseudoscience suggesting that Black people were inherently suited for slavery.

Second, the economic exploitation framed as biological superiority in the plantation economy relied on Social Darwinist ideology to justify its existence, arguing that enslaved labour was crucial to progress. Additionally, the film as well as the memoir reveals that this matter transcends "fitness" and is about systemic injustice and profit-driven brutality instead.

Moreover, Declich and Rodet add that emotions are crucial in films about slavery as they seek to recover and convey the painful experiences of the slaves, whose memories and legacies continue to resonate as living histories for Afro-descendants globally.

Nevertheless, both *12 Years a Slave* (2013) and *Schindler's List* (1993) are historical dramas that illustrate systematic oppression, including American slavery and the Holocaust. Using media theories such Hegemony Theory and Reception Theory, one can examine how these films convey their messages and how different audiences interpret them.

As a foundational review, hegemony is the fundamental concept through which Antonio Gramsci formulated a humanistic, neo-Marxist perspective on revolutionary transformation. Gramsci elevated the role of ideas, challenging Marxism's economic determinism, rather than subordinating the superstructure of ideas to the economic foundation. Gramsci's technique fundamentally revolves on the dialectical interplay between hegemony (consent-support) and domination (coercion-force) (Kurtz 747).

In other words, it refers to the mechanisms through which dominant groups maintain power by shaping cultural norms, ideologies, and beliefs thereby rendering them natural or inevitable. In media, films contribute to the reinforcement or dispute of existing beliefs.

First, *12 Years a Slave* questions the concept of American exceptionalism by exposing the barbaric practises of slavery, undermining mainstream narratives that often downplay its tragedies. Second, *Schindler's List* fits with prevailing Western narratives of World War II,

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stressing the idea of moral heroism through the character of Oskar Schindler, a German who saves Jewish lives. Although it condemns Nazi ideology, it depicts resistance as an individual “saviour” rather than as a manifestation of collective Jewish activity.

In both cases, hegemonic narratives shape audience anticipations, *Schindler’s List* adheres to prevalent Holocaust remembrance, while *12 Years a Slave* drives American viewers to cope with an unsettling past.

Every media message designer considers the audience throughout the creation of the messages. As a result, the media is saturated with messages from many sources, leading to the viewer being overwhelmed by an abundance of messages. Since the era of the hypodermic needle or magic bullet idea, media providers consistently encode their messages to align with their objectives, anticipating that the audience would interpret them similarly (Aligwe et al. 1019).

For the contextual purposes, encoding is the process by which the information disseminator converts the communicated message, meaning, purpose, or perspective, whether verbal or non-verbal, into a symbolic code or information format governed by particular rules that facilitate comprehension and translation. In contrast, decoding refers to the process by which the receiver reads the code and/or recreates the conveyed ideology. The decoding or interpretative actions of the decoders mirrored the intricacy of the communication process and the diversity of society (Yuting et al. 190).

Subsequently, Stuart Hall’s Encoding/Decoding Theory offers a framework for understanding the production and interpretation of media messages by audiences. According to Hall, filmmakers (encoders) inject films with messages derived from cultural, historical, and ideological contexts, while audiences (decoders) interpret these messages through the lens of their own backgrounds and perspectives. Thus, both *12 Years a Slave* and *Schindler’s List* are encoded with powerful messages on historical crimes, attempting to educate viewers and trigger emotional reactions.

In *12 Years a Slave*, director Steve McQueen encodes a glaring, unfiltered portrayal of slavery, challenging previous narratives that idealized or softened the brutality of American slavery. The movie conveys a potent message on dehumanisation, resilience, and the systematic nature of racial oppression through its cinematography, character development and graphic realism. McQueen also challenges prevailing cultural narratives that often diminish the horrors of slavery, compelling viewers to engage with the past in its rawest form.

*Schindler’s List*, directed by Steven Spielberg, on the other hand, encodes a narrative of courage and survival set against the context of the Holocaust. The film focuses on Oskar

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Schindler, a German businessman who rescued more than a thousand Jewish lives, encoding a message of redemption and ethical responsibility. Spielberg employs black-and-white cinematography, poignant storytelling, and symbolic images to highlight the sharp juxtaposition between innocence and destruction. The film stresses the value of remembrance and the role of individual action during moral crises. Moreover, audiences decode films according to their cultural background, historical understanding, and personal beliefs. Hall identifies three main methods through which viewers perceive encoded messages, dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings.

First, a dominant or preferred reading occurs when viewers completely embrace the filmmaker's intended message. Audiences seeing *12 Years a Slave* through a dominant perspective view it as an accurate and essential depiction of slavery, acknowledging its importance in enlightening individuals about systemic racism and historical injustice. Similarly, a dominant reading of *Schindler's List* sees it as emotional and essential tribute to Holocaust victims, reinforcing the moral lesson that resistance and courage can triumph even under the darkest times.

Second, in a negotiated reading, audiences partially accept the intended message while interpreting elements of the films that align with their own viewpoints. Some viewers of *12 Years a Slave* appreciate its historical realism but criticise its emphasis on suffering rather than independence, arguing that it perpetuates a tradition of films that stress Black pain while insufficiently addressing resistance. Likewise, some audiences of *Schindler's List* acknowledge its importance but question its white saviour narrative, noting that the focus on Schindler shifts attention from the wider Jewish resistance throughout the Holocaust.

Third, an oppositional reading occurs when an audience rejects or criticises the film's encoded meaning. Some critics of *12 Years a Slave* argue that it is overly violent or exploitative, seeing it as perpetuating trauma without offering new insights. Others reject it as a film designed mostly for white viewers to engage with slavery in a way that detaches them from modern racial issues. In the case of *Schindler's List*, an oppositional reading criticises its simplified Hollywood narrative, contending that it portrays the Holocaust in a way that is more appealing for western viewers but fails to capture the complex nature of historical reality.

As a conclusion, both *12 Years a Slave* and *Schindler's List* are carefully encoded with deep and powerful messages about historical atrocities, although viewer interpretations vary widely. While some embrace the intended messages as essential and informative, others reinterpret or reject aspects of the films according to their personal perspectives. Hall's Encoding and Decoding Theory clarifies that meaning is never fixed; rather, it is shaped through

the dynamic interaction between filmmaker and the audience, mirroring broader cultural and ideological contexts. Thus, both films serve as influential historical narratives, yet they are perceived differently due to audience perspectives and prevailing hegemonic discourses. While *Schindler's List* aligns with dominant Western memory culture, *12 Years a Slave* challenges national myths, leading to diverse audience receptions.

Spigelman concludes that in terms of its effect on decision makers outside the subject community, film can communicate emotions in a manner which print cannot; unorthodox ideas are more likely to be accepted if presented in emotional as well as intellectual terms. A filmed interview has the touch of sincerity and immediacy, which print, can never convey (79).

### **4.2.2 The Global Reach of Dystopian Narratives.**

Cinema is a leading cultural medium today, much like poetry in ancient Greece, architecture in the Renaissance, or the novel in the 19th century. Films have a significant potential to evoke emotions; yet, we often see them as mere entertainment neglecting to recognize their fundamental purpose. This constrains both film and our experience with it. Moreover, the therapeutic potential of cinema extends to its examination of society's deepest worries and concerns. From the evil aspects of technology to oppression under totalitarian regimes, environmental disasters, and the loss of individuality, we remain inexhaustibly captivated by dystopian ideas. The appeal of dystopian novels has increased throughout the decades.

For a deeper understanding, it is essential to first tackle the foundational idea behind dystopia. The phrase 'utopia,' which literally translates to 'no place,' was introduced by Thomas More in his book of the same title. *Utopia* (1516) explores a hypothetical island in the Atlantic Ocean and serves as a satire on the condition of England. The English philosopher John Stuart Mill introduced the term 'Dystopia,' or 'bad place,' in 1868 when criticizing the government's Irish land policy. He drew inspiration from More's discourse on a utopia ('Dystopian Fiction').

In addition, dystopian narratives depict a society, whether fictional or real, that is hopelessly corrupted due to specific issues. The broad nature of dystopian fiction has historically attracted extremist ideologues (Berger).

Dystopia is a genre that examines worlds beyond our own. A dystopia is an imagined society characterized by fear, suffering and oppression, despite an outward semblance of stability. Dystopian narratives focus on repressive structures, unlike apocalyptic fiction that features external dangers such as monsters or zombies. The fascination surrounding these myths drives further investigation into their appeal.

Nevertheless, dystopian books have captivated readers for more than a century, with

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timeless classics such as *Fahrenheit 451*, *1984*, and *Lord of the Flies* preserving their popularity. Their appeal may stem from their capacity to confront societal conventions and present individualistic protagonists, concepts that deeply connect with teenagers, who are inherently predisposed to inquiry and critical thought (Gander).

An article published by the New York Times, published in 2017, states that George Orwell's classic novel *1984*, which depicts a dystopian future marked by the repression of critical thinking under a totalitarian regime witnessed a surge in sales this month. It soared to the pinnacle of Amazon's best-seller in the United States, leading its publisher to produce tens of thousands of new copies (Freitas-Tamura).

When Susan Watkins, a Professor of Women's Writing in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences in Leeds Beckett University in England, was asked about the rising popularity of dystopian fiction and our current obsession with it, she pointed to a growing cultural fascination with bleak and unsettling narratives, she said:

I think most recently it's been about COVID. The pandemic is probably the most dystopian experience people, and particularly young people, have been through. Think about all the direct ways the state infringed on our personal liberty. You can't go outside. You can't see your friends or family. You can only exercise once a day. The restrictions were so dystopian; the fears about disease were dystopian. I think that explains the interest in it, because people need to work out imaginatively what they're experiencing. Which is the purpose of literature, as far as I'm concerned.

In recent years, dystopian literature has progressively shifted its target audience from adults to young adults. This change was mostly influenced by the success of *The Hunger Games* (2008), which although not the first dystopian book with a teenage point of view, considerably enhanced the genre's popularity among young readers. The trilogy became a global phenomenon, with sales over 100 million copies and leading to blockbuster film adaptations. However, this raises the inquiry why do young people find a narrative about a tyrannical regime forcing children into deadly combat so compelling?

Dystopian films appeal to those with a dim outlook on the future, those who believe that while the past and the present are bad, the future will be even worse. These "dystopophiles" see the future as a dreadful fusion of past atrocities combined with unprecedented wickedness. The exaggeration of future horrors may serve as both a cautionary tale and a means of closure, though those excessively hooked on dystopian cinema could benefit from going outside and getting a fresh perspective (Queenan).

Jones and Paris claim that dystopian fiction is particularly potent due to its intrinsic

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political nature. This analysis centers on the totalitarian-dystopian genre, which depicts a bleak and unsettling alternate reality whereby dominant forces systematically oppress and manipulate populations, routinely contravening essential ideals. Although post-apocalyptic tales, particularly those including zombies, may be classified as 'dystopian', their typical context is politically distinct, highlighting chaos and the disintegration of societal order, which therefore impacts individuals in many ways.

They add that dystopian fiction provides a compelling perspective on the ethics of politics and power. Such tales may positively influence individuals' awareness of potential injustices across several contexts, including climate change, artificial intelligence, and global authoritarian resurgences. However, an abundance of dystopian narratives may also foster extreme, Manichaeic viewpoints that oversimplify the intricate and genuine origins of political discord.

Moreover, the increased popularity of dystopian literature today indicates a growing need for social criticism. It is essential to differentiate between dystopian literature intended for younger audiences and that for adults. Young adult dystopian literature, like *The Hunger Games*, often addresses issues of totalitarianism to encourage critical and independent thinking among young readers. These themes are especially relevant in an age of information overload, when challenging authority and seeking truth are of paramount significance (Hickey).

Schmidt, on the other hand states that a possible explanation is that these films enable us to contemplate the brutal facts of our current circumstances, which are hard to face directly. Although seemingly situated in the future, the post-apocalyptic genre serves as a lens for examining and analysing the present, as posited by Fredric Jameson in his analysis of science fiction and utopian literature, *Archaeologies of the Future*.

Thus, dystopian films maintain an influential audience due to their ability to tackle fundamental human apprehensions. Regardless of geographical or cultural contexts, individuals globally cope with issues of political oppression, economic inequality, and technological advancements that may threaten individual liberties. These films transcend borders, making dystopian films relevant and appealing to diverse audiences.

Dystopian narratives examine fears that are relevant to several civilizations and periods. Themes like governmental monitoring as in the case of *1984* and *The Circle*, severe social inequality like *Elysium* and *Snowpiercer*, and authoritarian oppression namely *V for Vendetta* and *The Hunger Games* appeal to the viewers regardless of their geographical location. These apprehensions are made worse in the modern era, as governments and corporations exert more authority over individuals' data, liberties, and economic stability.

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Nevertheless, technological concerns further contribute to worldwide allure of dystopian cinema. The emergence of artificial intelligence, social media algorithms, and mass surveillance, movies such as *Black Mirror* and *Minority Report* depict fears around the loss of privacy and autonomy in a technology-dominated society. This issue is particularly relevant in nations with extensive governmental surveillance, however it echoes globally as digital technology becomes more embedded into everyday life.

While dystopian films address universal issues, they also mirror the distinct socio-political and historical backgrounds of different cultures. Western and non-Western dystopian films examine similar themes, but from distinct perspectives. Diebel adds that amidst the current obsession with dystopia, several individuals ponder the factors contributing to the genre's allure. The reasons for its widespread popularity are several. Individuals tend to see societal collapse and assert, “this is where we draw the line” and “we will never go this far.”

Furthermore, the international appeal of dystopian films can be thoroughly examined through the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which investigates how audiences actively interact with media to fulfil psychological and social needs. In contrast to passive consumption, UGT asserts that all individuals seek out certain media content to satisfy distinct needs, such as information, personal identity, social interaction, and entertainment. Dystopian films, characterized by their strong storytelling and thought-provoking themes, uniquely fulfil these needs, making them fascinating across cultures.

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch assert that people might use media to alleviate conflicts and tensions while highlighting societal conditions and issues (qtd. in Hajdarmataj and Paksoy).

As outlined above, audiences are drawn to dystopian films mostly because they reflect contemporary social and political issues, particularly those related to government control, surveillance, and media manipulation. Due to this, Sumner states that one of the greatest threats to our privacy comes not from cyber criminals, or profiteering corporates, but from those we elect to govern us (17). As a result, films like *1984* and *The Circle* portray authoritarian states that track and control people, highlighting real-world concerns about digital surveillance, data privacy, and the loss of personal liberties. For the record, the risks associated with a high level of control over information in social media extend beyond democratic access and distribution of information and knowledge; they also encompass potential systems of social surveillance that may be implemented using this information (Mantelero, Vaciago 178).

Hence, viewers use dystopian films to gain insight and critically evaluate modern challenges. Watching these films helps viewers navigate real-world concerns about government overstepping and technological progress, increasing their awareness of possible societal risks.

Given the spread of mass surveillance in nations like China, as noted by Feldstein, China is a prominent worldwide supplier of AI surveillance technology, with firms such as Huawei, Hikvision, Dahua, and ZTE delivering systems to 63 nations, including 36 participating in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Additionally, the US and the UK, where governments and corporations gather substantial data on citizens, making these themes universally relevant, boosting the global attraction of dystopian narratives.

### **4.3 The Hunger Games: A Reflection of Economic and Social Stratification**

Suzanne Collins in *The Hunger Games* depicts a dystopian society deeply rooted in economic and social inequality that mirrors real-world disparities. Panem, the fictional society in which the story unfolds, exemplifies a class-divided world where the wealth of the Capitol is at odds with the Districts' poverty. This economic stratification critiques capitalism, social hierarchy, and institutional oppression, making the book and its film adaption compellingly portray real-world issues. Moreover, Collins urges readers and viewers to confront the crushing truth of class conflict and the mechanisms that sustain economic injustice by creating a society where a select elite controls power and privilege while the masses struggle for survival.

*The Hunger Games* series not only condemns economic injustice but also provides a lens for analysing class struggle, global inequities, and the mechanisms that maintain social hierarchies. Furthermore, the massive disparities between the Capitol's extravagance and the Districts' misery illustrate the intentional withholding of wealth and resources to maintain power dynamics. The Districts, compelled to labour for the Capitol, have no access to the luxuries they produce, exposing an exploitative economic paradigm whereby a few would prosper at the cost of the others. This reflects both historical and modern systems of economic domination, where the systematic oppression of the working class enables wealth accumulation for a privileged minority. Additionally, the novel and its film adaptation address the psychological aspects of poverty and control, stressing how economic suffering can be leveraged to suppress resistance and enforce obedience.

Thus, the work relates to real-world battles against economic injustice by exploring capitalism and class conflict. Additionally, the series' themes of resistance and rebellion align with contemporary social movements, indicating how literature can inspire political engagement, especially among younger generations.

#### **4.3.1 Capitalism, Class Struggle, and Global Disparities**

As a foundational overview, capitalism is an economic system characterised by private

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ownership of capital assets by people or enterprises. Simultaneously, entrepreneurs engage employees who earn only remuneration; labour does not own the instruments of production but utilises them on behalf of capital owners ('What Is Capitalism').

To expand upon this idea, capitalism, as an economic structure, has historically been a subject of both praise and criticism. Advocates assert that it promotes innovation, economic growth, and individual opportunity, but opponents highlight its contribution to systemic inequalities, labour exploitation, and wealth concentration.

Moreover, class struggle, a notion fundamental to Marxist thought, emerges directly from capitalism, in which the ruling elite (bourgeoisie) maintains control over resources. In contrast, the working class (proletariat) remains oppressed through economic reliance. Capitalism thrives in hierarchical structures that classify individuals and countries into different economic strata. The system prioritises profit over human welfare, ensuring that resources remain concentrated among the elite while the working class maintains the system through labour. The central characteristic of capitalism is its dependence on surplus value, the idea that workers produce more value than their wages, enabling capitalists to gain wealth. This fundamental economic disparity engenders systemic class struggle, as workers seek better wages and conditions while capitalists reject compromises to optimise profit.

In *The Hunger Games*, Panem's economic structure reflects a capitalist paradigm, with the Capitol embodying the elite ruling class that controls resources and production. At the same time, the Districts serve as exploited labour forces. The extreme disparities between the Capitol and the Districts are not merely economic but also via institutional dominance, propaganda, and force. The Capitol exhibits extravagance, advanced technology, and excessive consumerism, while the Districts struggle with poverty, hunger, and dangerous working conditions. These wealth gaps mirror real-world capitalist economies, where developed nations enjoy economic prosperity at the cost of impoverished areas that provide raw materials and cheap labour. The concept of neoliberal capitalism is a policy model that integrates political and economic dimensions. It promotes private entrepreneurship and aims to shift the control of economic elements from the government to the private sector ('Neoliberalism'). This means that it is characterised by deregulation, privatisation, and free market policies, further amplifying these inequalities by eroding labour protections and favouring corporate interests above societal welfare.

Additionally, class struggle emerges when the working class recognized its oppression and launched a battle against the systems that perpetuated economic disparity. Throughout history, labour movements, protests, and revolutions have arisen as reactions to capitalist

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exploitation. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels theorized that class struggle was an inevitable outcome of capitalism, as the proletariat would ultimately rebel against the bourgeoisie in the quest for economic justice. Although capitalism claims to provide equal opportunities, it effectively marginalizes the lower classes through wage suppression, job instability, and limited access to education and healthcare.

In *The Hunger Games*, class struggle is a central theme, as the Districts become aware of their shared oppression and plot resistance against the Capitol. The Districts are conditioned to compete against one another, promoting a divide-and-rule strategy that inhibits collective opposition. This illustrates real-world capitalist tactics, where workers are often set against one another due to wage disparities, racial and ethnic differences, and competition for limited employment opportunities. The ruling class fosters division to maintain the split of the working class, diminishing the likelihood of rebellion.

Besides, *The Hunger Games* serves as a mechanism of social control, punishing rebellion and entertaining the elite. The spectacle of the games diverts attention from systemic oppression, similar to how capitalist nations use mass media and consumer culture to distract from economic inequalities. Theorists like Guy Debord explain in *The Society of the Spectacle* that the spectacle explores the citizen's passive, quasi-visual engagement with the social realm. He claims that government, business, and other institutional domains manifest as outward, legally governed natural entities, expanding upon Marxian concepts of reification and alienation. The individual, detached from the collective creative practice that shapes the social realm, is reduced to consuming captivating corporate tales that reinforce our passivity while exalting the freedom and purposeful existence of our leaders and elite celebrities (Kaplan, 458).

In addition to its national consequences, capitalism also operates globally, increasing economic disparities. The global economic order is designed to enable wealthier nations to control financial markets, trade policies, and labour distribution while developing nations remain economically dependent. This dynamic is often sustained through mechanisms such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, that impose structural adjustment programs on indebted countries, compelling them to implement neoliberal policies prioritising foreign investment over local economic growth. As a result, economic sovereignty is compromised, and wealth continues to be concentrated in wealthy countries.

Furthermore, the structure of Panem in *The Hunger Games* reflects this global capitalist order, with the Capitol symbolising the economic core that thrives at the expense of peripheral Districts. The extraction of resources from the District without fair compensation reflects how global capitalism takes advantage of the labour and resources of impoverished countries for the

benefit of multinational firms and wealthier economies. The Districts' forced reliance on the Capitol ensures that resistance is difficult, as economic existence and survival are linked to the ruling class' control over distribution.

Nevertheless, the Districts' increasing awareness of their collective power and eventual rebellion serves as an analogy for anti-colonial and anti-capitalist movements that have emerged throughout history. The film adaptation of *The Hunger Games* captures the intensity of these conflicts, highlighting the need for collective resistance against economic oppression.

In conclusion, *The Hunger Games* offers a dystopian analysis of capitalism, class struggle, and global inequalities, exposing the exploitative nature of economic hierarchy and the systems used to maintain them. The narrative challenges audiences to scrutinise the frameworks that perpetuate inequality by drawing parallels between Panem and actual capitalist economies. The extreme wealth disparities, labour exploitation, and social control mechanisms shown in the narrative illustrate the perils of unchecked capitalism and the need to struggle against economic oppression.

In real-world societies, the persistence of wealth concentration, worker exploitation, and global economic imbalances indicates the significance of class struggle in modern discourse. Addressing these structural issues requires confronting the status quo through local action, labour movements, or governmental changes. By engaging with narratives like *The Hunger Games*, individuals are inspired and encouraged to question prevailing economic paradigms, promote a more just, and equal society. As global capitalism evolves, it is essential to remain critical of its structures and actively seek alternatives that value human welfare over profit.

### **4.3.2 Resistance and Rebellion in a Globalized World**

Resistance and rebellion are key traits of fictional and real-world struggles against tyranny. Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* transcends a merely dystopian narrative to serve as deep exploration of power, control, and the potential for collective resistance. The film adaptation further enhances these ideas, offering a visual and emotional representation of how authoritarian governments exert control and how mass resistance movements arise in response. The themes of rebellion depicted in *The Hunger Games* align with modern social movements that challenge systemic inequalities, state violence, and economic exploitation. The film's portrayal of the oppressed Districts uniting against the tyrannical Capitol reflects actual resistance movements.

Furthermore, the uprising in *The Hunger Games* is not simply a response to individual suffering but a unified revolt against systemic oppression. The Districts, long subjected to economic misery and political oppression, rise against the Capitol in reaction to decades of

injustice.

A noteworthy link between *The Hunger Games* and contemporary movements is the role of governmental brutality in maintaining power. In Panem, the Capitol blends propaganda, economic domination, and militarized force to suppress opposition. This reflects how authoritarian regimes and even democratic governments respond to protests and revolutions. During the Arab Spring, state forces used violence to suppress demonstrations and maintain control over populations, advocating for democratic reforms. Similarly, the police response to movements such as the Black Lives Matter and pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong illustrate how governments use coercion to crush calls for justice. The Capitol's peacekeepers, who enforce laws by harsh measures, operate like contemporary militarised police forces, illustrating how state brutality serves as a tool to silence opposition.

Another key theme in *The Hunger Games* and modern movements is the deliberate use of media and propaganda. The Capitol controls the narrative by broadcasting censored news akin to authoritarian regimes that manipulate media to maintain public compliance and cooperation. However, as the rebellion intensifies, rebels use counter-media to expose the Capitol's atrocities. This reflects how activists in actual movements use social media and alternative news outlets to challenge dominant narratives. The Hong Kong protests and the #MeToo movement have used online platforms to bypass governmental and corporate media control, exposing injustices and inspiring global support. In both Panem and the real world, the battle for information control is a viral element of resistance, highlighting the power of digital activism in the fight against injustice.

Moreover, *The Hunger Games* illustrates the crucial function of symbols in uniting resistance forces. Once a little gesture of defiance, the three-finger salute evolved into a widespread emblem of resistance against the Capitol. This has tangible real-world correlations, as protest movements often use symbols to unite supporters. Pro-democracy activists in Thailand and Myanmar have adopted the three-finger salute as a symbol of resistance against authoritarian regimes. The gesture was first seen during a coup in Thailand in 2014 and has since symbolized unity and resistance across the region, according to Quinley. Similarly, movements like Black Lives Matter have used slogans and gestures, such as kneeling, to convey unity and defiance. These parallels highlight how *The Hunger Games* illustrates the mechanisms by which movements acquire momentum, demonstrating the efficacy of symbolic resistance in the fight for justice.

Beyond its condemnation of authoritarianism, *The Hunger Games* has considerably inspired young activism. The film's themes of rebellion and defiance against systemic injustice

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have profoundly connected with younger generations, who often see parallels between their struggles in the narrative. Youth-led movements are gaining prominence in global politics, and *The Hunger Games* acts as both a metaphor and a direct influence on their activism.

A primary reason *The Hunger Games* appeals to young activists is its portrayal of youth as central figures in political opposition. Despite being an unwilling revolutionary, Katniss Everdeen becomes a symbol of defiance against the Capitol. Her story reflects the experiences of many young activists who are propelled into political movements out of necessity rather than desire. Figures such as Greta Thunberg, Malala Yousafzai, and the Parkland student activists have similarly taken on leadership positions in movements advocating for climate justice, right to education, and gun control despite considerable personal risks. Like Katniss, these young activists challenge strong institutions, often facing backlash and state opposition. The film thus reinforces the notion that youth are capable of political involvement and often lead movements for systemic change.

In real-world movements, youth are often hailed for activism and seen as naïve or manipulated. The cinematic version of *The Hunger Games* highlights the tension between genuine youth-led rebellion and how institutional powers attempt to manipulate narratives related to activism. This theme is especially pertinent in the age of social media, as young activists face extensive support and attempts to undermine their initiatives via misinformation and political attacks.

Furthermore, the structure of *The Hunger Games* as a worldwide media phenomenon illustrates how activism is often commodified. The uprising in Panem is genuine; nonetheless, an element of performativity exists, as Katniss is forced to keep a public image that aligns with the resistance's expectations. This mirrors how activism in the digital era is often mediated through social media, where movements acquire traction based on how they are presented and perceived. The rise of "clicktivism" and the commodification of social justice initiatives raise questions over the efficacy and the authenticity of digital activism. Although digital platforms have undoubtedly contributed to the mobilization of movements, *The Hunger Games* warns against the potential for activism to be manipulated for political gain.

To conclude, *The Hunger Games* provides a compelling analysis of resistance and rebellion, making it a crucial text for understanding contemporary social movements and youth activism. The portrayal of governmental violence, propaganda, media manipulation and symbolic resistance closely mirrors actual conflicts against authoritarianism and structural injustice. The film's ability to inspire youth activism underscores its cultural importance, demonstrating how fictional narratives can influence political awareness and incite collective

action.

As resistance movements continue to expand worldwide, *The Hunger Games* remains a pertinent and powerful narrative, reflecting both the challenges and victories of political engagement. The story of Katniss Everdeen illustrates that resistance often begins with little acts of defiance, which may evolve into movements capable of confronting established power structures. In a world where youth activism increasingly influences political landscapes, *The Hunger Games* serves as both a reflection and an inspiration for real-world struggles against injustice.

### **4.4 *Gattaca*: The Ethics of Genetic Engineering in the Age of Biotechnology**

The 1997 film *Gattaca*, directed by Andrew Niccol depicts a dystopian future where genetic engineering determines human potential, intensifying social divisions and strengthening genetic determinism. The film examines the ethical dilemmas related to genetic enhancement, eugenics, and the commodification of human life, offering a reflection on current discussions over biotechnology.

As breakthroughs in science, especially CRISPR gene editing, approach the reality of genetic manipulation, *Gattaca* continues to serve as a pertinent criticism of the possible ramifications of human genetic engineering. The video prompts viewers to reflect on the ethical ramifications of designer babies, genetic discrimination, and the commercialisation of human existence, emphasising the risks associated with an unrestrained quest for genetic "perfection." In a time when bioethics is paramount, *Gattaca* poses urgent enquiries about the convergence of science, ethics, and social justice in the biotechnology era.

#### **4.4.1 The Global Debate on Genetic Determinism and Eugenics**

One of the key themes of *Gattaca* is genetic determinism, the belief that an individual's destiny is defined entirely by their genetic makeup. In the film, genetic information is used to classify humans into "valids" (those born by genetic selection) and "in-valids" (those conceived naturally, with genetic defects). This tight classification system determines access to work, education, and social mobility, reinforcing a genetic, social order that closely mirrors historical and present discussions on eugenics.

To provide contextual information, eugenics, traditionally linked to efforts to "improve" the human race through selective breeding, has been extensively rejected due to its association with racist and classist ideologies, especially in the 20th century. *Gattaca* posits that a new form of eugenics, enabled by advancements in genetic engineering, could emerge under the guise of

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"genetic enhancement." Although the state often enforced traditional eugenics, modern genetic technologies raise concerns about market-driven eugenics, where wealthy individuals may improve their progeny, resulting in increased social inequalities.

The film questions the notion that genetics only define human potential by depicting Vincent Freeman, the protagonist, as an "in-valid" who transcends his genetic limitations with unwavering determination and resilience. Despite his genetic "inferiority," Vincent exceeds those genetically engineered for perfection, showing the shortcomings of genetic determinism. His journey challenges the simplistic perspective that one's fate is predetermined at birth, emphasizing the role of personal ambition, work, and contextual influences in determining success.

In real-world bioethics discourse, *Gattaca* reflects on ongoing apprehensions over genetic essentialism, the idea that genes dictate all aspects of a human. Scientific research has progressively shown that while genetics play a role in traits such as intelligence and athletic ability, environmental factors and individual choices remain essential to success. The film thus warns of overreliance on genetic determinism, promoting a more comprehensive understanding of human potential.

The ethical implications of genetic enhancement are primary issues in both *Gattaca* and modern biotechnology. The film depicts a society where parents select the best possible genes for their children, creating "designer babies" with enhanced characteristics. This perspective on reproductive technology involves significant ethical questions: should parents possess the authority to determine their children's genetic makeup? Will such technologies automatically result in increased social inequalities?

The concept of genetic enhancement is beyond the realm of science fiction. The development of CRISPR-Cas9 and other gene-editing technologies has made it possible to modify DNA with unparalleled accuracy. While these technologies can potentially eliminate genetic diseases, they also introduce ethical dilemmas about defining the line between medical needs and enhancement. *Gattaca* depicts the potential for genetic engineering to shift from medical uses, such as preventing hereditary diseases, to non-essential enhancements, like intelligence, height, or physical strength selection.

One of the significant ethical challenges associated with genetic enhancement is the potential to intensify existing social inequalities. If genetic modification becomes a privilege available only to the wealthy, it may result in a society where genetically modified individuals hold considerable advantages over those born through natural reproduction. This scenario mirrors the world of *Gattaca*, where naturally born individuals are systematically marginalized,

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leading to a rooted class split based on genetic superiority.

Additionally, the film emphasizes the loss of genetic variety as a possible outcome of gene selection. In a world where parents can "design" their offspring, there may be a tendency toward homogenization, prioritizing qualities deemed socially or economically advantageous. This may diminish genetic diversity, potentially making human populations vulnerable to unexpected illnesses or environmental changes.

Furthermore, *Gattaca* highlights apprehensions about genetically stratified society's psychological and social implications. The need to conform to genetic norms may result in increased discrimination against those who fail to satisfy specific genetic criteria, hence reinforcing prejudice and other forms of exclusion.

The ethical debates explored in *Gattaca* have gained significance with the emergence of CRISPR gene-editing technology. CRISPR enables researchers to make exact alterations to DNA, offering potential cures for genetic disorders but also provoking apprehensions about the prospect of human genetic enhancement. The He Jiankui case, the Chinese researcher who shocked the world by asserting his involvement in the birth of the first genetically modified human babies, Lulu and Nana, with a third pregnancy in progress, according to Science Journal. Alonso and Savulescu explain that his experiment involved the editing of embryos from HIV-serodiscordant couples using CRISPR to alter the CCR5 gene to develop HIV resistance (1).

Moreover, CRISPR technology raises questions about unforeseen consequences. While gene editing seeks to eradicate undesirable features, the intricacy of genetic relationships may result in unintentional mutations or unanticipated consequences. This is particularly alarming in germline editing; according to Bergman, germline human genome editing modifies the genome of a human embryo at its first stages. This may influence every cell, implying an effect not just on the individual but also on their offspring. Consequently, its use has significant limitations. *Gattaca* highlights the ethical dangers of unquestioningly embracing genetic modification without fully understanding its long-term consequences.

In conclusion, *Gattaca* remains a compelling and relevant critique of the ethical dilemmas associated with genetic engineering, eugenics, and genetic determinism by depicting a future where genetic selection dictates an individual's destiny, cautioning against the dangers of reducing human potential to just genetic codes. As gene-editing technologies like CRISPR advance, the possibility of gene enhancement comes closer to reality; thus, *Gattaca* provides a cautionary framework for analyzing biotechnology's ethical, social, and political ramifications.

The film challenges the idea that genetic perfection corresponds to human excellence, highlighting the importance of resilience, ambition, and individual autonomy. It also raises

critical questions about the possible ramifications of genetic engineering and the ethical dilemmas related to parental choice and consent.

### **4.4.2 Discrimination and the Illusion of Meritocracy**

In Andrew Niccol's *Gattaca* (1997), genetic determinism governs an individual's value, opportunity, and societal status. The film critiques the illusion of meritocracy, a system that seems to reward people based on ability and effort while, in reality, perpetuating structural injustices. In *Gattaca*, genetic engineering has resulted in a hierarchical society where individuals with "superior" genes, or "valids," thrive in employment, education, and healthcare, whilst those born naturally, or "in-valids," encounter institutional prejudice despite their potential. This genetic elitism symbolizes real-world disparities in privilege and access, directly paralleling current challenges of socioeconomic inequality, racial discrimination, and obstacles in education and employment.

In *Gattaca*, genetic engineering has led to a biological caste system, where an individual's genome dictates their professional opportunities, health insurance, and social standing. Although society seems to be an assertion of meritocracy, where the best candidates are selected for prestigious roles, the reality is that genetic discrimination overcomes personal capability. This reflects real-world disparities, where race, class, and socioeconomic status often determine success more than talent itself.

A notable aspect of *Gattaca* is how genetic fingerprinting replaces traditional forms of discrimination. Employers now evaluate applicants only through a DNA test rather than focusing on resumes, interviews, or experience. Vincent Freeman, the protagonist, denies his dream of becoming an astronaut not due to a deficiency of ability but because his genetic profile suggests a higher probability of health issues. This reflects how modern hiring practices, particularly AI-driven recruitment, often perpetuate existing biases. Algorithms trained on biased data sometimes preferentially choose people from wealthy backgrounds, hence making it harder for marginalized individuals to secure high-paying jobs.

Moreover, the film exposes the illusion of meritocracy in education. In *Gattaca*, genetically modified people have access to more opportunities, whilst those conceived naturally are systematically excluded from elite institutions. This reflects real-world inequalities in educational access, where wealth dictates one's ability to enrol in esteemed colleges. Countries with high tuition fees provide a framework wherein only those with financial means can afford the best education, perpetuating cycles of inequality.

Similarly, healthcare in *Gattaca* is stratified according to genetic purity, much like how real-world healthcare systems tend to favour those with wealth and privilege. In many nations,

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access to adequate healthcare is determined by socioeconomic status, resulting in disadvantaged people experiencing shorter lifespans and higher disease rates. This echoes the film's portrayal of a society in which "valids" get better medical care simply because of their genetic profile. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the increasing death rates among disadvantaged people due to pre-existing socioeconomic disparities.

*Gattaca* also raises significant ethical dilemmas regarding genetic enhancement and the future of human inequality. Technologies like CRISPR-Cas9 allow gene editing, making the prospect of designer babies a tangible reality. While these advancements offer medical advantages, including the eradication of inherited disorders, they also introduce the risk of exacerbating class disparities.

In conclusion, *Gattaca* condemns genetic elitism and the illusion of meritocracy, illustrating how biological determinism can reinforce institutional injustice. The film's dystopian vision parallels current debates on privilege, employment bias, education inequity, and healthcare disparities. By exposing the false promise of meritocracy, *Gattaca* forces audiences to acknowledge that factors beyond individual control often dictate success, whether genetics, socioeconomic status, or hereditary privilege.

### **4.5 The Role of Globalization in Disseminating Dystopian Ideals**

Globalization has altered the spread of ideas, narratives, and ideologies across cultures, influencing public awareness and shaping discourse on current topics. Dystopian films, which question power structures, social inequalities, and technological advancements, are among the most important cultural exports of the modern era. Films like *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *Gattaca* (1997) function as cautionary narratives that challenge audiences to reflect on systemic oppression, surveillance, and genetic determinism. These films, initially creations of Western cinema, have gained global relevance through globalization, reaching diverse audiences via international media markets, streaming platforms, and cross-cultural adaptations.

At the same time, globalization affects the framing and adaptation of these narratives. Major media corporations promote dystopian ideals while also influencing the ideological content of these films, sometimes moderating their extreme criticisms for mainstream consumption. Moreover, many cultures reinterpret and reuse dystopian motifs according to their unique histories and political realities, resulting in specific interpretations and adaptation. This chapter investigates how globalization promotes the dissemination of dystopian ideals, studying the influence of global media on narratives and how different societies engage with dystopian storytelling in a globalized context.

#### 4.5.1 The Rise of Transnational Media and Streaming Platforms

The globalization of media has enabled the widespread distribution of dystopian films, allowing narratives such as *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* to reach audiences beyond their countries of origin. Traditionally, Hollywood films were limited by regional distribution systems and tangible media types (e.g., DVDs and theatrical releases). The emergence of digital streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ has enabled real-time worldwide access to media material, allowing dystopian films to be seen simultaneously by varied audiences.

This rapid expansion has made dystopian cinema a form of entertainment and an ideological force that shapes cultural and political perspectives globally. For instance, *The Hunger Games*, including themes of rebellion and systemic oppression, became popular with activists in countries undergoing political upheaval. As stated earlier, pro-democracy demonstrators in Thailand adopted the three-finger salute from the film as a symbol of resistance against authoritarian governance. Similarly, *Gattaca*, which condemns genetic discrimination, has gained newfound significance in the era of CRISPR gene-editing technology, raising ethical questions in bioethics conversations across multiple nations. The worldwide accessibility of these films guarantees that their themes reach areas where debates about inequality, surveillance, and genetic engineering are most pressing.

While globalization has enabled the spread of dystopian ideals, the corporate control of media narratives significantly influences the framing of these concepts. Transnational media giants like Warner Bros., Disney, and Netflix hold significant power over dystopian films' financing, marketing, and distribution. These corporations function within capitalist structures, indicating that dystopian narratives are often commercialized and deliberately tailored to appeal to global markets.

This generates apprehensions over the potential compromise of the ideological content of dystopian films for mass consumption. For example, while *The Hunger Games* condemns wealth disparity and governmental oppression, its blockbuster appeal must balance political messages and mainstream entertainment value. Certain critics argue that Hollywood dystopias commercialize resistance, turning radical criticisms into marketable products without confronting the systemic structures they depict. Furthermore, dystopian films produced by huge businesses often promote Western-centric perspectives, eclipsing local narratives from non-Western regions that may provide alternative criticisms of power and globalization.

Notwithstanding these apprehensions, transnational media remains a powerful instrument for social and political engagement, as dystopian films continue to promote

discourse on resistance, surveillance, and human rights. The availability of these films through global streaming platforms guarantees that dystopian narratives remain relevant in contemporary debates about democracy, technology, and ethics.

### 4.5.2 Cross-Cultural Interpretations and Adaptations

As dystopian films travel globally, they are reinterpreted through the socio-political contexts of diverse cultures. The meanings audiences take from *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* are affected by their lived realities, political histories, and cultural narratives. For example, in the United States, *The Hunger Games* is often seen as a critique of economic inequality, corporate power, and the surveillance state, mirroring apprehensions over income inequality and authoritarianism in a neoliberal framework.

These regional adaptations illustrate how globalization enables dystopian films to be repurposed for local activism and resistance. Instead of being passively consumed, different audiences actively reinterpret these films, impose their own cultural and political frameworks to derive meanings. Globalization does not only entail the passive reception of Western dystopian films by other cultures; it also promotes cultural hybridization whereby local influences reshape the storylines of these films.

For example, non-Western adaptations of dystopian themes have emerged in response to Hollywood's dominance in the genre. In South Korea, films like *Snowpiercer* (2013) offer alternate dystopian narratives emphasizing class struggle and resistance, merging Hollywood-style action with Korean socio-political issues. In Japan, anime films like *Akira* (1988) and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) present dystopian futures that condemn governmental surveillance, corporate control, and biotechnology, mirroring themes in *Gattaca*.

Moreover, several societies deliberately alter dystopian narratives to align with cultural norms. In China, international dystopian films often undergo censorship, where politically sensitive content is edited or removed to conform to governmental narratives. This raises questions about the authority over interpreting dystopian ideals since governmental intervention can shape public engagement with these films.

Cultural hybridization guarantees that dystopian narratives remain dynamic, adapting to historical and political contexts while preserving their fundamental role as critiques of power structures. As globalization accelerates, dystopian tales will continue to evolve, mirroring emerging societal concerns about technology, governance, and social control.

## 4.6 Conclusion

The globalization of dystopian cinema has radically altered the consumption,

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interpretation, and repurposing of these themes across cultures. Through global media and streaming platforms, films like *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* reach diverse viewers, shaping global discourse on authoritarianism, inequality, and technological ethics. The corporate dominance of media generates concerns about whether dystopian films retain their radical critiques or become commercialized products for global markets.

At the same time, cultural reinterpretations and hybrid adaptations ensure the continued relevance of dystopian ideas across different socio-political contexts. Globalization influences the evolution of narratives through activist movements using symbols from *The Hunger Games*, ethical discussions on gene editing inspired by *Gattaca*, and the rise of alternative dystopian films from non-Western countries.

Ultimately, dystopian films are not merely Western exports; they are universal narratives that transcend cultural boundaries, perpetually reshaped by the people who engage with them. In an era of expanding media networks and technological advancements, dystopian storytelling will remain a crucial lens for understanding the intricacies of power, resistance, and the human experience in a rapidly globalised context.

# **General Conclusion**

## General conclusion

The quest for knowledge in the field of civilization is fuelled by an inherent desire to understand the forces influencing human societies, including scientific theories, cultural narratives, and ideological frameworks. This thesis emerges from a critical inquiry into how Social Darwinism, an ideology based on evolutionary thought, has been reinterpreted and disseminated across various historical periods and socio-political contexts. The motivation behind this research stems from a keen interest in the interplay of science, ideology, and media and how narratives of survival, competition and hierarchy persist in shaping modern discourse.

In a world constantly driven by globalisation, technological progress, and media saturation, examining how these narratives arise and manifest in modern storytelling is essential. Films, as powerful cultural artefacts, not only mirror society's concerns but also shape public perception of fundamental issues.

Furthermore, this study seeks to clarify how ideological structures persist, adapt, and influence collective thought by engaging in interdisciplinary views, notably evolutionary theory and media studies, through cultural criticism and globalisation discourse. Ultimately, this work attempts to understand how historical legacies affect modern discourse and how fiction serves as a medium for society to interact with its past, present, and future.

Thus, this research examines the intricate relationship of evolutionary theories, Social Darwinism, media influence, and their representation in modern film. This study sought to analyse the interpretation, propagation, and reflection of Social Darwinism in contemporary society, interpreted through the prism of media and cinema. By tracing the historical background of evolution and its social consequences, it evaluated the role of media's influence on public perception and studied the portrayals of social Darwinism in *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca*, giving readers an in-depth understanding of how survival, competition, and genetic determinism continue to shape societal ideologies.

Chapter One laid the foundation by delving into the historical development of the concept of natural selection; an examination of pre-Darwinian theories was tackled to introduce and understand the intellectual context that shaped Darwin's ground-breaking work. The chapter then explored how Darwin's concepts evolved into the doctrine of Social Darwinism, which was later used to justify economic disparity, imperialism, and eugenics through an investigation of figures like Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner, an illustration of how the concept of "survival of the fittest" was implemented to reinforce social hierarchies.

## General conclusion

Additionally, an investigation of the consequences of Social Darwinism was needed to discuss its influence on the emergence of eugenics, the ideologies behind Nazi Germany, and the socio-political structures that preserve inequality.

Building upon this historical background, Chapter Two elaborates on a theoretical framework that explains the dissemination of Social Darwinist ideology. Media theory and cultural studies provide key insights into the role of media as an instrument for ideological transmission. Theories such as the Hypodermic Needle Model, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Hegemony Theory, and Reception Theory were applied to illustrate how media influences and reinforces social ideas. Additionally, the chapter explored globalisation's role in spreading these ideologies, emphasising how global media, technical progress, and cultural hybridisation contribute to the worldwide exchange of social and political narratives. Through analysing the mechanisms by which ideas invade societies, we established a framework to understand the impact of cinema on public awareness.

Chapter Three served as the analytical crux of this research, providing a comprehensive analysis of Social Darwinism in cinema. *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* were selected as case studies to demonstrate how popular films condemn and reframe survival, competition, and genetic determinism themes. *The Hunger Games* delivers a vivid depiction of a hierarchical society where individuals are forced to compete against each other in a "savage" contest, highlighting the ramifications of extreme Social Darwinism. The chapter also explored rebellion as a counterforce to oppressive ideologies, illustrating how resistance occurs in response to systemic inequity. Similarly, *Gattaca* presented an unsettling depiction of a future in which genetic engineering dictates human worth, pointing out the ethical issues of eugenics and the absurdity of meritocracy. These films reveal how dystopian narratives behave as instructional stories, averting audiences of the dangers of uncontrolled scientific and social ideals.

Ultimately, Chapter Four expanded the discussion by examining the broader implications of cinematic representations of Social Darwinism and how dystopian films influence public perception and affect socio-political discourse. Upon analysis of capitalism, class struggle, genetic determinism, and global inequalities, the relevance of these narratives to the current social issues was demonstrated. Moreover, the chapter addressed the impact of globalisation in spreading dystopian ideas, showing the ability of global media to shape universal ideologies. The increasing availability of dystopian cinema via streaming platforms and international adaptations further indicates the worldwide significance of these themes.

## General conclusion

The far-reaching conclusion of this research states that Social Darwinism, despite its historical origins, continues to manifest in society through different forms. Initial interpretations of Darwin's theories sought to elucidate biological evolution; the extension of these concepts to social and political spheres has had significant consequences. Media, particularly cinema, is a critical lens for analysing and criticising these ideologies. Films like *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca* transcend mere entertainment; they challenge audiences to contemplate issues of power, injustice, and the ethical dilemmas of technological progress.

Moreover, the influence of globalisation in the spread of these themes is unquestionable. In an increasingly linked world, media serves as an instrument for ideological interchange, enabling narratives to overcome cultural and national barriers. The global reach of dystopian cinema reveals that reservations about socioeconomic injustice, genetic determinism, and systemic oppression are not confined to specific societies but are universal human concerns. As a result, these films take part in a more profound discourse on ethics, government, and the path of human progress.

Ultimately, this research underlines the need to engage with media representations of social and scientific beliefs critically. By understanding the historical origins of Social Darwinism in contemporary narratives and identifying its effects on global discourse, we gain a deeper grasp of how ideologies shape our world. As technology progresses and society faces inequity, the lessons embedded in dystopian movies remain profoundly relevant. Future generations need to assess these narratives objectively and actively participate in constructing a more equitable and just society, free from the biases of misapplied scientific theories and oppressive social frameworks. Future generations need to critically evaluate these narratives while actively constructing a fairer and just society devoid of the distortions caused by the aforementioned frameworks.

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## Abstract

This research explores the concept of Social Darwinism in the era of globalization, examining its cultural and cinematic portrayals in *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *Gattaca* (1997). Social Darwinism, based on the notion of "survival-of-the-fittest," has historically influenced social, political, and economic structures. Furthermore, globalization has further fuelled competition, reinforcing hierarchies rooted in genetics, wealth and social status. Moreover, this study provides a historical and theoretical overview of Social Darwinism and globalization, examining their intersections and impacts on modern society. The study then investigates the depictions of Social Darwinism in *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca*, highlighting issues of genetic determinism, systemic inequality, and the struggle for survival within dystopian contexts. This thesis ultimately examines the significant influence on culture and ethical ramifications of these films, emphasizing their reflection of real-world issues like social stratification, bioethics, and the ethics of genetic engineering. Thus, by analysing these cinematic narratives, this research elucidates the persistent relevance of Social Darwinism in the 21st century. It suggests that whereas globalization has generated opportunities, it has simultaneously reinforced survival-based competition, reflecting the themes explored in *The Hunger Games* and *Gattaca*. This thesis essentially adds to the discourse on how popular culture mirrors and criticises modern societal structures.

Keywords: Social Darwinism, globalization, dystopia, *The Hunger Games*, *Gattaca*, genetic determinism, social inequality, bioethics.

## Résumé

Cette recherche explore le concept de darwinisme social à l'ère de la mondialisation, en examinant ses représentations culturelles et cinématographiques dans *The Hunger Games* (2012) et *Gattaca* (1997). Le darwinisme social, fondé sur l'idée de la « survie du plus apte », a historiquement influencé les structures sociales, politiques et économiques. De plus, la mondialisation a intensifié la compétition, renforçant les hiérarchies fondées sur la génétique, la richesse et le statut social. Cette étude propose également un aperçu historique et théorique du darwinisme social et de la mondialisation, en examinant leurs intersections et leurs impacts sur la société moderne. Elle analyse ensuite les représentations du darwinisme social dans *The Hunger Games* et *Gattaca*, mettant en lumière des questions telles que le déterminisme génétique, l'inégalité systémique et la lutte pour la survie dans des contextes dystopiques. Cette thèse examine finalement l'influence culturelle et les implications éthiques de ces films, en soulignant leur réflexion des problématiques réelles telles que la stratification sociale, la bioéthique et l'éthique du génie génétique. Ainsi, en analysant ces récits cinématographiques, cette recherche met en évidence la pertinence persistante du darwinisme social au XXIe siècle. Elle suggère que si la mondialisation a créé des opportunités, elle a simultanément renforcé une compétition fondée sur la survie, reflétant les thèmes explorés dans *The Hunger Games* et *Gattaca*. Cette thèse contribue essentiellement au discours sur la manière dont la culture populaire reflète et critique les structures sociétales contemporaines.

**Mots-clés :** darwinisme social, mondialisation, dystopie, *The Hunger Games*, *Gattaca*, déterminisme génétique, inégalité sociale, bioéthique.

## المخلص

*The Hunger Games* (2012) تستكشف هذه الدراسة مفهوم الداروينية الاجتماعية في عصر العولمة، من خلال تحليل تمثيلات الثقافة والسينمائية في فيلمي *Gattaca* (1997) و *The Hunger Games*، مما عزز الهياكل الهرمية القائمة على الجينات والثروة والمكانة الاجتماعية. وتقدم هذه الدراسة أيضاً عرضاً تاريخياً ونظرياً للداروينية الاجتماعية، مع تحليل نقاط التقاطع بينهما وتأثيراتهما في المجتمع المعاصر. ثم تبحث في كيفية تصوير الداروينية الاجتماعية في مبرزة فضائياً مثل الحتمية الجينية، وعدم المساواة النظامية، وصراع البقاء في سياقات ديستوبية. وتناقش هذه الأطروحة في النهاية التأثير الثقافي والانعكاسات الأخلاقية لهذين الفيلمين، مع التأكيد على انعكاسهما لمشكلات واقعية مثل التراتبية الاجتماعية، والأخلاقيات الحيوية، وأخلاقيات الهندسة الوراثية. وبالتالي، ومن خلال تحليل هذه السرديات السينمائية، توضح الدراسة استمرار أهمية الداروينية الاجتماعية في القرن الحادي والعشرين. وتشير إلى أنه رغم ما أتاحتها العولمة من فرص، فإنها عززت في نفسهم هذه الأطروحة في إثراء النقاش حول *The Hunger Games* و *Gattaca*. كيفية تجسيد الثقافة الشعبية للهياكل الاجتماعية المعاصرة ونقدتها.

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