

THE NATURAL HISTORY  
OF THE STATE

AN INTRODUCTION TO  
POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY

HENRY JONES FORD

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# **THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE STATE**

**An Introduction to Political Science**

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## PREFACE

There is in general an attitude of reserve on the part of political science with regard to the social and political implications of Darwinian doctrine which is justified by the present state of that doctrine. Although Darwin's theory of the origin of species by transformism is generally accepted, his account of the factors of the process does not meet with general acceptance but is regarded by many critics as being defective on some points. Meanwhile important data have been accumulating in various fields and it is manifest that the doctrine is deeply affecting the ideas of the times. It is impossible to avoid the subject altogether in the study of political science, but it has been a matter of practical difficulty to provide students with a succinct account of the way in

## PREFACE

which the doctrine now bears on politics. To meet this difficulty the present work has been produced. Although the treatment is concise, the work makes a detailed survey of connections between biology and politics inferable from the doctrine, with notes and references directing the reader to sources of information on the topics discussed. Hence any class of readers interested in scientific opinion as to social and political origins may find the work useful.

H. J. F.

Princeton University

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                       | PAGE |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| CHAPTER I. THE IMPACT OF DAR-         |      |
| WINISM .....                          | 1    |
| § 1. POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS .....     | 1    |
| § 2. THE NATURALISTIC CONCEPT.....    | 2    |
| § 3. EFFECT ON POLITICAL SPECULATION. | 6    |
| § 4. CONTRARIETY OF OPINION.....      | 8    |
| CHAPTER II. EVOLUTIONARY              |      |
| PROCESS .....                         | 10   |
| § 5. TWO MODES OF OPERATION.....      | 10   |
| § 6. THE HUMAN SPECIES.....           | 12   |
| § 7. MENTAL AND MORAL FACULTIES....   | 14   |
| § 8. THE INDIVIDUAL HYPOTHESIS.....   | 20   |
| § 9. DARWIN'S ALTERNATIVES .....      | 22   |
| CHAPTER III. BIOLOGICAL DATA ....     | 26   |
| § 10. THE GENEALOGY OF MAN.....       | 26   |
| § 11. NEW THEORIES ADVANCED.....      | 29   |

# CONTENTS

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| § 12. THE EVIDENCE OF EMBRYOLOGY....                    | 34   |
| § 13. EFFECT OF BRAIN DEVELOPMENT..                     | 36   |
| § 14. ANTIQUITY OF MAN.....                             | 39   |
| § 15. VARIETY OF ANIMAL BEHAVIOR....                    | 41   |
| § 16. MAN A SOCIAL ANIMAL.....                          | 44   |
| § 17. INSTANCES OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION..                   | 47   |
| § 18. BIOLOGICAL SUMMARY .....                          | 49   |
| CHAPTER IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL DATA                          | 52   |
| § 19. DARWIN ON MENTAL POWERS.....                      | 52   |
| § 20. ROMANES ON MENTAL EVOLUTION..                     | 54   |
| § 21. ANIMAL PSYCHOLOGY .....                           | 56   |
| § 22. QUALITATIVE DIFFERENCE IN INTEL-<br>LIGENCE ..... | 63   |
| § 23. ANT INTELLIGENCE .....                            | 65   |
| § 24. REACTION AGAINST BIOLOGICAL<br>THEORY .....       | 68   |
| § 25. DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM.....                    | 71   |
| § 26. HUMAN NATURE A SOCIAL PRODUCT                     | 77   |
| § 27. PSYCHOLOGICAL SUMMARY .....                       | 81   |
| CHAPTER V. LINGUISTIC DATA                              | 82   |
| § 28. THE FUNCTION OF SPEECH.....                       | 82   |
| § 29. THE ROMANES BRIDGE.....                           | 83   |

## CONTENTS

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| § 30. GENESIS OF LANGUAGE.....          | 85   |
| § 31. VIEWS OF PROFESSOR SAYCE.....     | 88   |
| § 32. THE TESTIMONY OF AMERICANISTS..   | 92   |
| § 33. THE ORGAN OF GROUP PERSONALITY    | 96   |
| § 34. INDIVIDUAL RIGHT A LATE CONCEPT   | 100  |
| § 35. LINGUISTIC SUMMARY .....          | 103  |
| CHAPTER VI. ANTHROPOLOGICAL             |      |
| DATA .....                              | 105  |
| § 36. VESTIGIAL STRUCTURE IN SAVAGE So- |      |
| CIETY .....                             | 105  |
| § 37. ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY.....         | 108  |
| § 38. SYSTEMS OF KINSHIP.....           | 111  |
| § 39. THE UNDIVIDED COMMUNE.....        | 115  |
| § 40. THE ORIGIN OF TOTEMISM.....       | 119  |
| § 41. ANTHROPOLOGICAL SUMMARY .....     | 122  |
| CHAPTER VII. SURVEY OF GENETIC          |      |
| DATA .....                              | 124  |
| § 42. THE HUXLEYAN POSITION.....        | 124  |
| § 43. SOCIALITY AN ESSENTIAL.....       | 127  |
| § 44. SPECIFIC IMPORTANCE OF DIFFER-    |      |
| ENCE .....                              | 128  |
| § 45. THE EVIDENCE OF BEHAVIOR.....     | 131  |



# CONTENTS

|  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| § 46. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHASM.....                   | 134  |
| § 47. ALTRUISM AND THE AESTHETIC SENSE               | 140  |
| § 48. COMBINED WEIGHT OF THE EVIDENCE                | 141  |
| § 49. CONCLUSIONS .....                              | 144  |
| CHAPTER VIII. THE STATE .....                        | 146  |
| § 50. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERM..                 | 146  |
| § 51. THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY.....                  | 149  |
| § 52. THE TESTIMONY OF ANTHROPOLOGY                  | 152  |
| § 53. TERMINOLOGY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE               | 156  |
| § 54. THE STATE AN ORGANISM.....                     | 158  |
| CHAPTER IX. METHODOLOGY .....                        | 162  |
| § 55. UTILITY OF THE NATURALISTIC CON-<br>CEPT ..... | 162  |
| § 56. THE FORMS OF THE STATE.....                    | 165  |
| § 57. THE SCOPE OF CLASSIFICATION.....               | 168  |
| CHAPTER X. FIRST PRINCIPLES IN<br>POLITICS .....     | 171  |
| § 58. APPEARANCE AND REALITY.....                    | 171  |
| § 59. DEFINITIONS .....                              | 173  |

## CHAPTER I

### THE IMPACT OF DARWINISM

#### § 1. *Political Implications*

The purpose of this treatise is to examine the foundations of political science from the naturalistic point of view established by the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. It is a corollary of the Darwinian theory that the State has a natural history. In this regard it does not matter what content of meaning be assigned to the term. Whether it be taken as a general designation covering every form of polity, or whether it has reference only to a particular type of polity, the State, according to this theory, is a phase of development from associations formed among animals of a species included in the subject-matter of natural history. Darwin himself made no attempt to develop this corollary, al-

though he predicted that one result of his theory would be that "much light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history."<sup>1</sup> But Haeckel, who was the first to make a systematic exposition of the theory in all its bearings, expressly included political development. In a survey of the scope of biogeny he noted the following category: "*Cormophyly*: Tribal history of races or of social aggregates composed of persons, families, communities, States, etc."<sup>2</sup>

## § 2. *The Naturalistic Concept*

The concept thus supplied to political science gave promise of fruitfulness. Almost simultaneously with the publication of Darwin's own speculations as to the origin of the mental and moral characteristics of humanity, Bage-

<sup>1</sup> *Origin of Species*. Chapter XV., Sec. 822. The references are to the English edition with numbered sections.

Darwin's doctrine of the origin of species by transformism is generally accepted, but the same can not now be said of his account of the factors involved in the process. For the purpose of the present treatise it is not necessary to go into this branch of the subject. A good account of the state of scientific opinion will be found in Professor Kellogg's *Darwinism To-day*.

<sup>2</sup> *Evolution of Man*. Vol. I., Chap. I., Table 1.

hot made a brilliant application of the doctrine of natural selection in explaining the formation of political structure and the development of polity. The first edition of Darwin's *Descent of Man* was published in 1871. Bagehot's *Physics and Politics* was first published in 1873. Expectations were entertained of steady progress in the scientific elucidation of social and political phenomena. Publication of Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, accounting for the growth and development of institutions on the principles of evolution, was begun in 1876 and his survey of political institutions was completed in 1882. His *Descriptive Sociology*, begun in 1867, was planned "to supply the student of social science with data standing towards his conclusions in a relation like that in which accounts of the structure and functions of different types of animals stand to the conclusions of the biologist."<sup>3</sup> The work was carried on for fourteen years and eight volumes containing classified data were published, but the laborious achievement has had no noticeable effect in any branch of social science.

<sup>3</sup> Preface to *Descriptive Sociology*. Vol. I.

#### 4 NATURAL HISTORY OF THE STATE

In 1885 Professor Seeley of Cambridge University proposed a scheme of political science that coordinated it with natural history. The lectures in which he described the scheme were collected after his death by Professor Sidgwick, and published in 1896 under the title *Introduction to Political Science*. Seeley virtually adopted the same methodological concept that Haeckel had indicated. He based political science upon the concept of the State as an organism, the development of institutions being the result of the effort which an organism makes to adapt itself to its environment. Pointing out that in its traditional form political science concerns itself only with the civilized State, excluding the wild and confused associations in which savages and barbarians may seem to live, he condemned such exclusion as unscientific.

“An inductive method of political science must begin by putting aside as irrelevant the distinction of barbarous and civilized, and by admitting to impartial consideration all societies held together by the principle of government. We must

distinguish and arrange the various kinds of the State in the same purely observant spirit which a Linnaeus brought to plants or a Cuvier to animals. We no longer think of excluding any State because we do not like it, any more than a naturalist would have a right to exclude plants under the contemptuous name of 'weeds,' or animals under the name of 'vermin'."

Referring to the fact that in the animal kingdom the majority of the numerous classifications are assigned to strange organisms in which the vital principle is developed in such a manner that the being has little external resemblance to what is popularly called an animal, Seeley said that if political entities were studied by the same method "It would not be surprising if all the States described by Aristotle, and all the States of Europe into the bargain, should yield but a small proportion of the whole number of varieties, while those States less familiar to us, and which our manuals are apt to pass over in silence as barbarous, yielded a far greater number."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Opus cited, pp. 33, 34.

Notwithstanding this promising start the methodizing of political science upon an objective basis in connection with natural history has halted, and little work has been done in that direction. The naturalistic concept has apparently been abandoned by political science and has been taken over by sociology, the subject-matter of which is not primarily the State but the associational process of which the State is but one among many manifestations. The present tendency in political science is away from the naturalistic standpoint. The suggestions of Darwinism instead of supplying social and political criteria appear to be a source of distraction and perplexity.<sup>5</sup>

### § 3. *Effect on Political Speculation*

Apart from its transient effect upon political science, the impact of Darwinism has had marked effect upon the general tenor of political speculation. In this field the naturalistic concept has been extremely fertile. The concept of society as an organism and of the

<sup>5</sup> G. Lowes Dickinson's brilliant little volume *A Modern Symposium* portrays the situation with comprehensiveness and appreciation.

development of social structure through struggle and conflict was grasped by Marx before Darwin's theory was propounded. In 1859, the year in which the *Origin of Species* was published, Marx issued his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in which he stated his theory of economic determinism later developed in his treatise on *Capital*. In the preface to the first volume of that work, published in 1867, he said: "The present society is no solid crystal, but is an organism capable of change and is constantly changing," and he declared that the purpose of his treatise was "to lay bare the economic law of motion in modern society." This school of thought accepted Darwin's theory as a biological confirmation of the philosophical basis of Socialism, and it has been vigorously exploited in that respect ever since. There is now a voluminous literature in all the principal countries of Europe expounding Darwinism in accord with schemes of social and political reconstruction, and its influence extends wherever the touch of civilization is felt. The naturalistic concept of human origins is familiar to the literati of



India and Japan and in those countries too social ferments are at work from this cause.

§ 4. *Contrariety of Opinion*

Thus it appears that while the movement to methodize political science according to the naturalistic concept has apparently miscarried, yet that concept has obtained wide acceptance as the basis of political speculation. When the character of this political speculation is considered it appears that incompatible conclusions are reached by trains of reasoning all starting from naturalistic premises. Socialists reach the conclusion that the State should be the universal capitalist and employer. Anarchists reach the conclusion that the State should be abolished altogether. From the writings of Spencer, Huxley, Taine, Marx, Kropotkin, Galton, Nietzsche, Kidd and Hobhouse one might draw the most widely divergent interpretations of the ethical and political significance of Darwinism. Such marked disagreement in conclusions suggests that divergent notions exist as to premises. If some reasoners make one assumption while others