
Charles Darwin's Particular Theory of Evolution

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Abstract

Session: Charles Darwin and the Scientific Revolution (Andrew Inkpen, Richard A. Richards, Richard G. Delisle, and Ron Amundson) For obvious reasons, darwinian scholars have often focused on the *dynamics* at the heart of Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution or change. Yet, Darwin's theory, view, and approach also appeal to numerous explanatory components more properly congenial to a *static* worldview: (1) living matter is inert (not active); (2) life as a whole is seen more as a mechanism than as an organism; (3) because life is passive an external force (natural selection) is required to put it in motion; (4) nature is structured around definite and limited adaptive places in the economy of nature, hence the numerous instances of extinctions; (5) truly directional or lineal evolution is denied and replaced by "horizontal" (side-way) evolution as seen in evolutionary divergences; (6) evolution occurs only when the milieu (biotic/abiotic) is changing, the natural state of living matter being rest, etc, etc. From this list, one wonders if Darwin's Darwinism is as universal as it is often depicted to be. Clearly, Darwin's route to his theory of biological change was anything but straightforward. After all, why not simply postulate (like Lamarck did) the existence of a vital force pushing life forward? This paper is devoted to exploring some of the explanatory components of Darwin's particular theory. More than just being the heir of the British tradition of natural theology, Darwin's worldview was apparently also strongly influenced by a static Newtonianism, both as an epistemological model and a scientific ideology.

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