
How Hodge's History of Biology and Philosophy of Biology Fit Together

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Abstract

Session: Hodgiana (Radick, Hodge, Hoquet, Ruse, Lopez-Beltran, Bowler) Jon Hodge is a historian of biology's historian of biology. But he is nevertheless someone whose teaching and writings have been philosophically informed and engaged to an unusual degree. How, within the Hodgean oeuvre, does this integration work? I want to explore this question by looking at affinities between one of his recent historical projects and one of his recent philosophical projects. The historical project is to describe the way Darwin understood his analogical argument for the causal efficacy of natural selection and how he came to develop that argument. The philosophical project is to defend a causal interpretation of the theory of natural selection against those – "statisticalistas", he calls them – who see Darwinian explanation not as causal but as mathematical. Of course, one could understand Darwin on natural selection as Hodge does and yet side with the statisticalistas in the present-day debate. But in Hodge's case, the causalist enthusiasm spreads across the history-philosophy divide – not, I will suggest, because he thinks Darwin was right, but because, for Hodge, the Darwinian biological tradition, from Darwin forward to Fisher and Wright and beyond, is a fundamentally causalist tradition, and traditions have origins and integrities that need to be reckoned with.

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