
Against "Evolution"? Non-Darwinian Theorizing and the Hodgean Historiography of Biology

Peter Bowler*†¹

¹Queens University Belfast – History and Anthropology, Queens University Belfast, United Kingdom

Abstract

Session: Hodgiana (Bowler, Hodge, Radick, Hoquet, Ruse, Lopez-Beltran)

Jon Hodge is well known for his work on Darwin and the later development of Darwinian theory, but he has also worked on pre-Darwinian evolutionism, especially the ideas of Lamarck and Chambers. Here he has emphasised the importance of not treating these figures as forerunners of Darwin, because they conceptualized the development of life in a completely different way, invoking mechanisms of predetermined development and parallelism. Hodge has also emphasized the continued use of these mechanisms in later periods, a point I developed in my own study of the eclipse of Darwinism. He argues that the gulf between these theories and the Darwinian conception of common descent is so wide that we should not use the term 'evolution' to denote them. I want to challenge this argument by suggesting that the wide appeal of these ideas in later periods makes them an integral part of what was called the evolutionary perspective, so from this wider perspective we must be careful not to create the impression that they exist in a world apart.

*Speaker

†Corresponding author: P.Bowler@qub.ac.uk