
Darwin Studies: A Theorist and his Theories in their Contexts by
M. J. S. Hodge

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Ashgate's Variorum Collected Studies Series collects and republishes the shorter works of senior scholars. The Ashgate volumes differ from the traditional Festschrift but have a related function. This function is particularly important in the case of M. J. S. Hodge, for he has worked at the length of articles rather than books, and some of the articles first appeared in obscure places. Hodge's articles covering the pre-1800 period were contained in an earlier Ashgate volume, published in 2008. His articles in this volume all have to do with Charles Darwin.

Hodge's overall orientation as a historian of science is as a historian of ideas. The title of his Ph.D. dissertation from 1970 indicates his scope: 'Origins and Species: Study of the Historical Sources of Darwinism and the Contexts of Some Other Accounts of Organic Diversity from Plato and Aristotle on'. Thus, while the 10 articles or reviews that appear in this 'Darwin Studies' volume all pertain to Darwin, they rest on Hodge's assessment of an intellectual tradition going back to the Greeks. As Hodge put it, 'Philosophy learns from history how to relate the short run to the long run' [VII.249]. Thus, in a contribution from 1985 to a French symposium, Hodge began discussion by commenting on Aquinas, noting that, for Aquinas, no new forms may come into matter within what Hodge termed the 'administrative course of nature, because such initial introductions are completed in the constitutional work' [VII.229]. Hodge's approach has had more in common with such scholars as Stephen Toulmin and John Greene, both of whom were active when Hodge began his work, than it does with younger historians, many of whom are more oriented towards social history, or younger philosophers, many of

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whom are more inclined towards prescription or analysis. Hodge's orientation towards intellectual rather than political and social history was also indicated by his reprinted reviews of the work of Robert Young, Adrian Desmond, and Jim Moore.

The bulk of the volume is devoted to articles that reflect Hodge's great strength: close descriptions of the process of reasoning shown by Darwin as he absorbed and evaluated such influences as the work of his teacher at Edinburgh Robert Grant and the monumental writings of Charles Lyell. In separate articles, Hodge covered Darwin as a 'lifelong generation theorist,' as a follower of Lyell ('the Lyellian origins of his zoonomical explanatory program') and (in an article written with David Kohn) as a reader of Malthus ('the immediate origins of natural selection'). Hodge's focus was primarily, though not entirely, on the early Darwin—the medical student at Edinburgh, the naturalist on H. M. S. Beagle, and the London theoretician. As perhaps befits the inherent interest in continuity that underwrites the discipline of the history of ideas, Hodge avoided making any one period in Darwin's development supreme. For example, he viewed Darwin's stay at the Galápagos as important rather than pivotal.

Since the centennial year for the *Origin of Species* was celebrated in 1959, there has been a magnificent outpouring of scholarship devoted to understanding Darwin's work and its intellectual context. M. J. S. Hodge has been a well-read and constructive member of the community of scholars working on that subject. His collected writings are unique, engaging, and permanently valuable contributions to scholarship.