

DESCENDED FROM DARWIN  
INSIGHTS INTO THE HISTORY OF  
EVOLUTIONARY STUDIES, 1900–1970

Joe Cain and Michael Ruse, Editors

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## PREFACE

As long ago as 1999, the Executive Officer of the American Philosophical Society (APS), at that time the distinguished medical researcher and administrator Alexander G. Bearn, had conferred with the Librarian of the Society, Edward C. Carter, II, about the prospect of honoring the beloved and equally esteemed Darwin scholar Frederick H. Burkhardt. In a letter to Robert L. McNeil, Jr., then president of the Barra Foundation, Dr. Bearn wrote, “we propose to honor Dr. Burkhardt. . . . This seems appropriate in light of the fact that not only is he an APS member but also for more than twenty years played an important role in the life of our Library, a research institution which contains the largest collection of Charles Darwin letters and manuscripts outside the United Kingdom (more than 950 items), together with distinguished holdings of Darwin’s forerunners, contemporaries, critics and successors.” In the same letter, Dr. Bearn went on to recount, “For a decade (1974–1984) the APS hosted and actively supported an office of Dr. Burkhardt’s major research and editorial enterprise, *The Collected Letters of Charles Darwin*, published by Cambridge University Press; Dr. Burkhardt and his wife, Anne, worked for many years in the Library after the closing of the Darwin office and are very much thought of as members of our community.” Subsequently, the Barra Foundation generously agreed to support a symposium to honor Dr. Burkhardt and to provide support for the Frederick H. Burkhardt Resident Fellowship in Evolutionary Studies and Thought.

A distinguished committee selected Dr. Joe Cain of the Department of Science and Technology Studies at University College London to take up the fellowship and to continue his already well-established research in the history of evolutionary biology. Besides pursuing his own research, it was envisioned that the fellow would organize a conference or symposium, which Dr. Cain undertook with great enthusiasm with the help of many others, including Librarian Edward C. Carter, II, other APS staff, and the Lucyle T. Werkmeister Professor of Philosophy at Florida State University, Michael Ruse. The resulting conference, “Descended From Darwin: Insights into American Evolutionary Studies 1925–1950,” brought together mostly young scholars (as it was Dr. Carter’s vision to help establish newer voices) with a few distinguished and more senior voices in the discipline. The symposium convened in Philadelphia on October 22–23, 2004.

The conference was conceived to focus on the “synthesis” period in evolutionary studies, when fundamental changes occurred in the discipline. The workshop focused on such key questions as, How does recent scholarship change our understanding of the period? How does it alter our sense of connection across the generations? and How do activities in evolutionary studies relate with developments elsewhere in biology? The papers presented at the conference both informed an assessment of the state

of the history of evolutionary studies and pressed it forward with new and thoughtful scholarship. The best of the presentations made there are the basis of the present book, and collectively these authors have made a significant and occasionally provocative contribution to their field.

For readers who may not be aware why the American Philosophical Society has such a strong interest in the history of evolutionary biology, it should be explained that the Library has long collected the papers of not only Charles Darwin and his intellectual predecessors, successors, colleagues, and detractors but also the science that flowed from our existing strong holdings in natural history—material indeed “descended from Darwin.” APS Library collections are strong in Mendelian genetics and *Drosophila* research, eugenics, and social Darwinism and include a strong array of the papers of influential biologists and geneticists, including the following (among others):

- Blakeslee, A. F.
- Blumberg, B. S.
- Bridges, C. B.
- Caspari, E. W.
- Castle, W. E.
- Chargaff, E.
- Cain, A. J.
- Cohen, S. N.
- Davenport, C. B.
- Demerec, M.
- Dobzhansky, T.
- Dunn, L. C.
- Goodale, H. D.
- Jennings, H. S.
- Kaufmann, B. P.
- Lerner, I. M.
- Price, B.
- Luria, S. E.
- McClintock, B.
- Neel, J. V.
- Pearl, R.
- Schultz, J.
- Sheppard, P. M.
- Shull, G. H.
- Simpson, G. G.
- Stalker, H.
- Wallace, B.
- Wilson, E. B.
- Wright, S.
- Zirkle, C.

As I write this, the APS Library is in the process of acquiring through a generous gift the largest known collection of printed Darwin ever assembled—over 4,000 separate and unique editions of Darwin painstakingly cumulated by the paleobotanist James Valentine. The Library continues to vigorously pursue its collection development in

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the history of science, with a particular emphasis on genetics and evolutionary biology, and scholarship in the Library on the history of science remains vigorous and dynamic. Readers interested in recent acquisitions in the APS Library and in other repositories worldwide can consult a publication of the Library titled *The Mendel Newsletter: Archival Resources for the History of Genetics & Allied Sciences*, back issues of which are available on the APS Web site at no charge. Naturally, readers may also contact the Library or consult the APS Web site for further information about APS holdings and for reference assistance at <http://www.amphilsoc.org>.

This volume has been a labor of devotion for doctors Cain and Ruse, for the editing of it has been fraught with all the difficulties of making so many collaborators' voices cohere in a unified and logical fashion. The work involved may not be readily apparent to the reader, since it would be the lack of this effort and its consequential distraction a reader would be more likely to notice. But it is doctors Cain and Ruse who deserve the credit for devising a structure and working the text through with these several authors so very well as to render this book in its current accessible state.

A final word: I once wrote elsewhere and long ago, in thinking about the rapidity with which genetics and biology in general are advancing the frontiers of knowledge, these are times when historians, so accustomed to looking ever back into the past, are tempted to pause in their pursuits, turn around, and stare hard into the future. This volume, in its thoughtful analysis of the history of the understanding of some of the most fundamental questions of biology, may well have the reader pondering not just the past but also things to come. It would please, I think, Dr. Burkhardt, Dr. Carter, and the Barra Foundation if there were even a kernel of truth in this modest idea.

Martin L. Levitt, Librarian  
American Philosophical Society