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E. Mayr - Darwin's Contribution to Philosophy



WHAT DID DARWIN DO?

Downfall of Theism

- laws could not directly explain natural design/individuals
- removal of supernatural from science

Downfall of physicalisms (to help mathematical theories based on universal laws).

- rejection of determinism in biology

Downfall of essentialisms (Popper... constant essence)

"essences": discontinuous \neq constant

Downfall of teleology

adaptions towards goal:
development... genetic programme

Impact of these "Downfalls" on Philosophy logic
but Darwin also made many positive contributions

Sharon: why so long
+ Helen - physical natural selection
Don:

Jonathan: common sense
Paul Greer: Darcy Thompson

John Beckett: can't you reduce it all? - no

the only thing I know
about common sense "that
it's an incredibly rare phenomenon"

Positive Contributions



- * ① incorporation of history into philosophy of science
- intro. of historical causality -- (as carried in genetic material)

② - non-proximate causation

③ rejection of determinism

④ role of chance & contingencies - result only probable

⑤ explanation of components of teleology

⑥ simultaneous causation

⑦ population thinking

- uniqueness of individuals, & larger systems (\neq of indiv. in diff. times/envir)
- can only describe popl as in terms of statistical abstractions

- average is an abstraction -- variation is real

TYPOLOGISTS SAY - variation is anomaly - - - - - average " "

- v. important in racial comparisons

⑧ nature of variational continuity

- popul. variation \rightarrow continuity over time
- 2 kinds of discontinuity
 - polymorphisms -- phenotypic
 - taxonomic

⑨ position of man COMMON DESCENT

- uniqueness of man explained in a different light

