



# Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism

*By Dirk R. Johnson*

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Friedrich Nietzsche's complex connection to Charles Darwin has been much explored, and both scholarly and popular opinions have tended to assume a convergence in their thinking. In this study, Dirk Johnson challenges that assumption and takes seriously Nietzsche's own explicitly stated "anti-Darwinism." He argues for the importance of Darwin for the development of Nietzsche's philosophy, but he places emphasis on the antagonistic character of their relationship and suggests that Nietzsche's mature critique against Darwin represents the key to understanding his broader (anti-)Darwinian position. He also offers an original reinterpretation of the *Genealogy of Morals*, a text long considered sympathetic to Darwinian naturalism, but which he argues should be taken as Nietzsche's most sophisticated critique of both Darwin and his followers. His book will appeal to all who are interested in the philosophy of Nietzsche and its cultural context.

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## **Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism** By Dirk R. Johnson Bibliography

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

"This book makes an important intervention in contemporary Nietzsche studies in the English-speaking world ... Johnson has written a study that merits being read by anyone with an interest in Nietzsche's relation to science, especially Darwinism, and an investment in the stakes of reading one of Nietzsche's masterpieces, *On the Genealogy of Morality*."

Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*

"Dirk R. Johnson *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism* not only argues for the validity of its main thesis, but also presents a valuable overview and critique of the historiography surrounding its subject matter. It will most likely become an important text to contend with, for or against, in future scholarship ... a welcome addition to the scholarship surrounding one of the most penetrating critiques of science to emerge from the nineteenth century."

Benjamin Mitchell, *Isis*

"... the book contains acute and careful readings of a number of Nietzsche's texts, especially the *Genealogy*, and displays an impressive command of the Nietzsche-Darwin scholarship. It is geared toward those interested in Nietzsche studies, nineteenth century philosophy of biology in general, and the Nietzsche-Darwin connection in particular."

David Storey, *Environmental Philosophy*

"Johnson presents readers with a tightly argued case regarding "the pre-eminence of Darwin for the development and articulation of Nietzsche's philosophy" ..."

Matthew Day, *The Quarterly Review of Biology*

"In this readable account, Dirk R. Johnson, associate professor of modern languages at Hampden-Sydney College, disputes a long tradition in which scholars deemed Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas compatible with Darwinism."

Christopher Cumo, *Canadian Journal of History*

"... well-written ... it is a major study and stands out for its methodological juxtaposition of both American and continental scholarship on Nietzsche ... needs to be read by everybody interested in both Darwin and Nietzsche, but also and perhaps especially by those who would like to see a closer engagement between the various global paradigms of Nietzsche research."

Christian Benne, *Orbis Litterarum*

"... a significant contribution to the understanding of the role of Darwinism in Nietzsche's thought and future work in this area will have to engage with it."

Ruth Burch, *The European Legacy*

### **About the Author**

Dirk R. Johnson is Associate Professor of Modern Languages at Hampden-Sydney College, USA.

## **Users Review**

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