



Darwin and Reductionisms: Victorian, Neo-Darwinian and Postgenomic Biologies

<http://www.firstlight.cn> 2010-12-31

This article compares the open-ended Darwinism of Charles Darwin, George Lewes, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy with reductive post-Weismann and early eugenist views and more recent neo-Darwinian ideas including literary Darwinism. It argues that some Victorians had a clear sense of the complexities of the natural world, and of the centrality of environment to life. This awareness contrasts with the processes of divorce and isolation that underpin neo-Darwinian understandings of evolutionary development. But biologists and philosophers of biology are now emphasising the complex and dynamic relations between organism and environment in ways that would have appealed to Darwin's contemporaries. The article establishes that there are significant parallels between mid-Victorian and postgenomic thought.

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