

Paper title: Non-origin of species  
Version: version #4 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2006  
Author: Tim Gough MA(Cantab) DipArch  
Correspondence address:  
92 Ambergate Street, London SE17 3SA  
email: [tim.gough@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:tim.gough@kingston.ac.uk)  
Institution: Senior Lecturer, Kingston University School of Architecture and  
Landscape  
Faculty of Art Design and Architecture  
Kingston-upon-Thames, UK  
tel: 07966 377609 or 020 7820 9929 or 020 7582 8992  
fax: 020 7820 8084

This is an electronic version of an article published in *Culture and Organization*,  
December 2006, Vol. 12(4), pp. 331–339. Culture & Organization is available  
online at: [www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=jour~content=g762365727](http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=jour~content=g762365727)

## Non-origin of Species

### Abstract

Why is the meme *Darwinian evolution* successful? This paper will argue that its continuing propagation is related to the following claims regarding *On the Origin of Species*:

- within its theory, species - the thing itself, fully defined - does not exist
- it implies and implements a differential strategy. *Species* is an effect of the analysis of differences, and these differences provide an underlying “structure” to the work
- the milieu of this differential strategy is excessive, conforming to a general (not restricted) economy
- at the limit, it implies no origin of species
- its argument and structure are capable of being turned back upon itself (as illustrated in the first sentence of this abstract)

In showing that these characteristics share a structure with the meme represented by a tradition of thought extending from Nietzsche’s differential anti-nihilism to Deleuze’s philosophy of difference and Derrida’s thought of *différance*, the argument is made that this structure marks and allows the effectiveness of the meme.

### Keywords

Darwin  
différance

Derrida  
Origin

Deleuze  
Species

Bataille  
Eternal Return

## Non-origin of Species

### *Species do not exist*

In 1968, Jacques Derrida writes and delivers a short essay entitled *Différance*. If, in Archilochus' terms (Diehl 1930: frag 103, quoted in Berlin 1966: 1), Derrida is a hedgehog with one significant "idea" rather than a fox with many, then this essay should rank as the most succinct and intense presentation of it, running as it does in a few short pages (21 excluding notes, in English translation) through questions of the origins of writing, Saussure's semiotics, Plato, Koyré, Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Deleuze, Levinas, Heraclitus, Anaximander and Heidegger. This "idea" has the status of something like Dawkins' meme (Dawkins 1989: 189-201) which – to use his terms – are "replicators" of the "cultural world" which itself – like life – evolves. This device has the status within "human culture" that genes have for life. Both are replicators, that is, entities which have "the extraordinary property of being able to create copies of" themselves (15), copies which are more or less exact (16) and which are propagated by means of "vehicles" – that is, "large communal survival mechanisms" – such as individual bodies or, in the case of memes, the larger cultural milieu in which they flourish or the material means (writing, speech, song, image) by which they are communicated.

Derrida's "idea", or "meme", as well as being engaged *in* a milieu of "differential survival" (192), concerns itself *with* these differential milieu. To take the essay at its most straightforward point, here is Derrida as he joins with Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*:

Let us cite Saussure only at the point which interests us: "the conceptual side of value is made up solely of relations and differences with respect to the other terms of language, and the same can be said of its material side... Everything that has been said up to this point boils down to this: *in language there are only differences*

[my italics]. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it.”

The first consequence to be drawn from this is that the signified concept is never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself. Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences. Such a play, *différance*, is thus no longer simply a concept, but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general (Derrida 1982: 10-11)

What is to be emphasised here is not so much the definition of Derrida’s neologism *différance* – which means something like the possibility of differences, that which allows differences to happen – but rather two characteristics in Saussure’s linguistic theory which Derrida draws attention to and which are also characteristic of Darwinism:

1. an anti-essentialism, or a distrust of what we might crudely term the notion of “the thing itself” as a singular “object”, secure in its identity. This has been remarked upon by Philip Kitchen in *Giving Darwin his Due*, where he noted Darwin’s “anti-essentialist message” (401-402). As Darwin puts it when announcing his revolution: “Systematists will be able to pursue their labours as at present; but they will not be incessantly haunted by the shadowy doubt whether this or that form be in essence a species” (Darwin 2003: 394)

and, as the other side of this coin:

2. a differential strategy; in place of “the thing itself” as that which determines how we are to think, or with what we are to think, comes a play of differences, the effect of which may be something like a given work, a given thing more or less secure in its identity, a given species or variety of species, more or less (depending on specific “historical” or temporal circumstances) secure as a “thing”

Let us at once say that this anti-essentialism (Derrida will put it in different terms), this appeal to something other than the fixed identity of a given language or a given species (both in the case of Derrida/Saussure and Darwin) does not dispose of the concept of species and language, nor does it reduce them to untruth, illusion or matters to be avoided. To the contrary. It disposes such concepts. The inscribing of “the thing” within a differential structure is precisely what enables these two concepts to operate effectively as matters for thought, and most particularly to reveal both as coming to exist in the way they are now by means of and within a history/temporality which at each moment has been affected (acted upon). As Darwin has it, “we regard every production of nature as one which has had a history”. Now that which acts, that which effects (the history of) species/language may be generally inaccessible, but this inaccessibility does not prevent us from positing and acknowledging the necessity of the existence of this effective agent. Again in principle, the idea of this differential history does not, of itself, deliver any bias as to the exact type of reason for this or that change; nor does it, in principle, posit that any given change will be of large or small magnitude. In Darwin, what is posited is the constant possibility of infinitesimally small variations and differences as well as not-so-small differences, either of which *may* come to affect history; or either of which may have no discernable result, depending on circumstances.

### ***Differential Strategy***

As with Saussure, so also with Nietzsche and Giles Deleuze's interpretation of Nietzsche which Derrida cites in his essay. Derrida writes (Derrida 1982: 17) after quoting Deleuze's book on *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, "is not all of Nietzsche's thought a critique of philosophy as an active indifference to difference, as the system of adiaphoristic reduction or repression?" Deleuze, and Derrida after him, are contrasting the Nietzschean position of celebrating difference as originating theme with philosophy's attempt to suppress difference, to make difference *per se* derive from *the same*; the attempt to make difference secondary to sameness. Deleuze, in his *Difference and Repetition*, published in the same year as Derrida's *Differance* essay, takes the overturning of this bias as the starting point for a much more extensive critique – unlike Derrida, ostensibly *within* a discourse which remains comfortable with its philosophical character – of *identity* and the submission of difference to it. For Deleuze, difference is, *per se*, the positive. Difference *is* the positive, and that from which identity is derived or forged, always in a subsequent and secondary operation. The determining of difference as negative, the wrapping up of difference in a (Hegelian) dialectic, is to submit it to identity and is for Deleuze to be deprecated, just as Derrida dismisses the "simple dialectical complication of the living present" (Derrida 1982: 18) – being "the style of transcendental phenomenology" (Derrida 1973: 152) which he has (although more tentatively) deconstructed in his first published work *The Introduction Husserl's Origin of Geometry* (1962) in the name, already, of the "differant" (spelt with an "a"). In this regard, Saussure will be found wanting by Deleuze, who cites him in frustrated tone immediately after the passage which Derrida quotes (cited above, Saussure: 118): "why does Saussure, at the very moment when he discovers that 'in language there are only differences', add that these differences are 'without positive terms' and are 'eternally negative'?....Everything points to the contrary." Derrida's "nearly total affinity" (Derrida's own words; 2001:192) with Deleuze, with his "theses of an irreducible difference in opposition to dialectical oppositions... a difference in the joyously

repeated affirmation" (193) will be evident here too, on a reading of another of his essays from 1968 *The Linguistic Circle of Geneva* (Derrida, 1982: 137-153) where (148-149) Saussure's granting of "an ethical and metaphysical privilege to the voice" and an "inferiority of writing" is shown to be one with a simple notion of *representation* (against which, too, the whole of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* rails); or a reading of *Of Grammatology* (Derrida, 1976: 52) where Saussure gets opposed to himself over this question of the supposed non-priority of writing.

Deleuze will argue that it was Darwin himself whose "great novelty, perhaps, was that of inaugurating the thought of individual difference. The leitmotiv of *The Origin of Species* is: we do not know what difference is capable of!" (Deleuze, 1994: 248) In contrast to philosophy's concern for essence or the discovery or positing of the *thing itself*, Nietzsche's strategy, according to Deleuze, is to make these derivative of something more original. That something is difference. The same goes for Darwin. In Darwinian terms, we would say that in place of the thing or essence "species" we have the phenomena of "differences between" species. Species do not disappear, but they become derived, a secondary aspect of the system, inessential; and thus, Darwin says, we are freed up from a whole realm of concerns about the exact taxonomy of species and their distinctions and given another realm of more fertile investigation to follow. Deleuze makes the same point in relation to "the great taxonomic units – genera, families, orders and classes" which "no longer provide a means of understanding difference by relating it to... identities....*On the contrary*, these taxonomic units are understood on the basis of.... difference" (248). He will here also draw an analogy between Darwin and Freud ("Darwin's problem is posed in terms rather similar to those employed by Freud"), in that they both ask how differences, *per se*, become "connected and fixed differences". Reverting to Derrida, Freud in *Differance* is cited as thematising a "diaphoristics" immediately after the quoting of Deleuze mentioned above (Derrida 1982: 18) and just prior to the deconstruction of "transcendental phenomenology".

Derrida and Deleuze deploy a similar strategy in relation to the written word of *différance* when addressing these problems. For Derrida, the term *différance*, spelt with an “a”, is a neologism which can say two things at once, “at the same time” (itself a constant theme in his work): differing and deferring, spatial difference and temporal difference/delay, the vertical and horizontal axes of structuralism at the same time, the genetic and the structural simultaneously. As such, *différance* is the possibility for differences to occur. And the term cannot be heard: the word in French sounds the same as its near-relative *différence*, a slight variation which can only be distinguished through writing (not the spoken word). Derrida emphasises this throughout the *Différance* essay, and as is well known this issue becomes thematised in *Of Grammatology*. Derrida is careful, it seems throughout his whole work, to avoid any analogy or comparison between it and the concerns of the natural sciences or mathematics, but in drawing the structural similarity between it and Darwin’s “heuristic device” (to use Gayon’s term: 245) we might venture that, in setting up a conceptual play of differences in the field of evolution, Darwin has been attentive to *différance*; that is, he has experienced its possibility; further, he has given the possibility its chance, he has “actualised” it, to use Deleuze’s term.

Deleuze also plays with an unheard difference, a difference that can only be written: that between *differentiation* and *differenciation*. “The greatest importance must be attached to the ‘distinctive feature’ t/c as the symbol of Difference: differentiate and differenciate” (Deleuze 1994: 279). The complex notion of “(indi)-different/ciation”(279) says at once 1) the “perplication” of the Deleuzian Ideas, their co-extensive (ie their simultaneous, at-the-same-time) differentiations and 2) the “complication” of the Ideas’ actualisation within differenciations. In contrast to Derrida, Deleuze has no hesitation in engaging his philosophy with the natural sciences and mathematics, and as has already been noted, he identifies Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* as a singular event – together with Freud –

within the history of difference. Species, genera, families, orders and classes “are understood on the basis of ....the differentiation of difference”, that is, Darwinism actualises an Idea by a differentiation into these “taxonomic units”; and this “Idea” is differential relations, “difference of intensity” (251). But further, the “differential of the Idea” (201), the Idea as “complex theme” (183) reconciles, Deleuze says, “genesis and structure”, as for Derrida *differance* says genesis and structure at the same time. It is true that Derrida will specifically warn us against eliding the term “differentiation” with the “neographics” of “differance” (Derrida 1973: 143). However, such elision, he says, would omit the temporal “deferring” of the latter, and would derive differences from an initial unity (ie from identity), and since the whole of Deleuze’s text is directed against such a derivation of difference we should perhaps therefore in this case read beyond Derrida’s mistrust of the term, and accept a commonality of purpose between the two terms.

We may say, then, that in so far as the differentiation of species proceeds from a differentiation or from the possibility granted by differance, Darwin’s move is one of an “essential” affirmation of difference.

### ***Excessive Milieu***

Now the milieu, the *mise en scène*, in which this event can occur (that which in encompassing it gives it its possibility) is a milieu of the *excessive*. In Derrida’s terms, this can be expressed by means of Bataille’s notion of a “general economy” to which he makes brief reference in *Differance* and which is contrasted with that of the “restricted economy” of a utilitarian system:

In a reading of Bataille, I have attempted to indicate what might come of a rigorous and, in a new sense, “scientific” *relating* of the “restricted economy” that takes no part in expenditure without reserve, death, opening itself to nonmeaning, etc, to a general economy that *takes into account* the nonreserve (Derrida 1982: 19; he is

making reference to his essay *From Restricted to General Economy A Hegelianism Without Reserve* 1978: 251-277)

The characteristics of the Darwinian, Derridian and Deleuzian memes which we have explicated so far (non-essentiality; differential strategy), and those which we will address below (non-origin; recursion to a self become non-self) can only occur within a “system” which is not limited by the restricted economic logic which Bataille outlines. It can only occur within what Bataille calls a “general economy”. A restricted economy is one where the movement of differences is held fast by some principle – in Deleuzian terms, where the philosophy of difference is sacrificed to identity (something he cannot stand). It is an economy where phenomena are related back to a principle (the location of god – we will come to this below) which provides both an *origin* and the possibility of an *essence* for them. By contrast, a general economy stays faithful to and allows the possibility of the various characteristics of the D-memes (as we might call them), and in doing so repeats Deleuze’s philosophy of difference by staying within the “state of excess” with which he concludes *Difference and Repetition* (304). This is also, structurally, the theme of “play” without ground so important to a reading of Derrida’s work, announced perhaps most succinctly in the penultimate piece in *Writing and Difference* (published in 1967) entitled *Structure Sign and Play in the Human Sciences* (278-293), where he famously states that “the absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely” (280); and later “this affirmation [the Nietzschean one]... plays without security” (292).

Bataille’s general economy has been evoked by Bagemihl in the closing chapter to *Biological Exuberance*, his study of extravagance (particularly homosexual) in the animal world. As Bagemihl says of Bataille, “according to his views, excess and exuberance are primary driving forces of biological systems, as much if not more so than scarcity” (Bagemihl: 253). That is, a general economics of life must be recognised, within which any restricted economy can operate: “conventional thinking regards the diversity and

extravagance of life as the *result* or *by-product* of other, greater forces [such as] evolution... for Bataille, this relation is reversed: exuberance is the *source* and *essence* of life, from which all other patterns flow" (254-255).

Did Darwin ever claim otherwise? Natural selection doubtless operates according to a restricted, utilitarian economy. As "the preservation of favourable variations and the rejection of injurious variations" (Darwin 2003: 144) – whether or not one regards this as merely an analytic (and therefore *a priori*) statement in Kantian terms – natural selection releases variations to the future by judging them against their utility in ensuring survival. But as Darwin himself recognised, and as is essential for the workings of his principle of natural selection, it can only occur within a general economy of exuberance, since "there is no exception to the rule that every organic being naturally increases at so high a rate, that if not destroyed, the earth would soon be covered" (134) and "every single organic being around us may be said to be striving to the utmost to increase in numbers" (136). Without this original exuberance, the "struggle for existence" could not exist, and nor could the restricted economy of the survival of variations "useful to each being's own welfare" (175). That this economy is restricted is specifically allowed for within Darwin's text, where it is stated that "variations neither useful nor injurious would not be affected by natural selection" – in other words, the economy of natural selection is restricted to operating only on those variations which confirm to its utilitarian principle, and the milieu of *all* variations (useful or not) is the general economy within which this can occur.

### ***No Origin***

Derrida's essay *Differance* is a deconstruction of origins, a thought consonant with the death of god and the removal of a prime location, and we will find that implicit in the structure Darwin set up is the removal of any notion of the origin of species – consonant too with Deleuze's destruction of the philosophy of identity. In the conclusion to *Origin of Species*, Darwin equivocates around the issue of what might be found at the head of the

tree of life; in other words, what lies at the origin of the diversity of species and at the beginning of this system of differences. The equivocation is between “four or five progenitors” (Darwin 2003: 394) of animals – this would be, for Darwin, the largest possible number of original species – or, taking the matter a step further by means of analogy, just one prototype. And whilst analogy “may be a deceitful guide”, nevertheless “therefore I should infer from [it] that probably all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth have descended from some one primordial form, in which life was first breathed” (ibid). As he concludes “there is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that...from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.” (Darwin 2003: 398)

In positing one or several “origins of species” Darwin remains faithful to that view of the task of the scientist as one who searches for *secondary laws*, not primary ones, a view, according to David Hull, that “Darwin had known from Herschel”. To quote Hull quoting Herschel: “Herschel had warned that to ascend to the ‘origin of things, and speculate on the creation, is not the business of the natural philosopher’.” (Hull 2003: 182). Hull claims that Darwin, at the end of *Origin of Species*, “had made no such ascent” (ibid). I would differ with the baldness of this statement: Darwin *did* make the ascent, in positing either one or a few origins of species which, by implication at least, were to be viewed as creations of a creator God, but this convinced no-one. Nor should one be convinced.

The happy knowledge of the death of god, announced by the madman in the marketplace in Nietzsche’s *Die Froehliche Wissenschaft*, makes way – structurally - for the possibility of a general economy and for the possibilities of excess, differentiation, difference.... The death of god - the disappearance in the system of philosophy or thought of a prime mover or location guaranteeing the system - makes possible the de-essentialising of thought and allows the play of differences to claim a primary position, a play which henceforth will, for

Nietzsche, be without ground, without reference back to a fixed position. Darwin and Darwinism is driven by the same concern or the same possibility of the displacement of God from the system it is studying. This seems true structurally of Darwinism and, arguably, biographically, taking the hints which Darwin gives in his *Autobiography* where he states that “a man who has no assured and ever present belief in the existence of a personal God... can have for his rule of life.. only to follow those impulses.. which are the strongest or which seem to him the best ones... - As for myself I believe that I have acted rightly in steadfastly following and devoting my life to science.” (extract from the *Autobiography* in Darwin 2003: 434).

If we accept that Darwinism is, at its most abstract, the application of a general principle of differentiation to the problem of the origin of species, then the mechanics of this principle already imply that, at the origin and in place of a fixed essence of position at the origin, we again find something like differentiation –*not* a thing in itself. In other words, there is no proper origin, no God (another name for the same thing), at the origin of species.

This does not mean that the scientific search for a deeper understanding of how the “origin” of life or its precursors arose is invalid; quite the contrary. By, at the limit, positing *no* origin, but rather something like Derrida’s *differance* – that is, the *possibility of differences* rather than any specific difference itself (which would inevitably collapse into its terms and thus reify an origin again), the Darwinian machine or device leaves science open to ever further investigations, unblocked by any moment of dogma. Such is the meaning of science or, rather, of *wissenschaft*, of science and knowledge broadly spoken – and in that sense it remains faithful to that other heuristic device set up by Plato in the *Timaeus* (among other places) where he asserts, before all else, that the things themselves are unknowable and that all we have to work with are opinions regarding them. Far from a limitation on human knowledge, this reveals the strength of it, for science and knowledge

are such “opinions”, forever denied the status of dogma by this Platonic device, and thus forever open to development, evolution, what Derrida – following Husserl – calls “an open horizon and the breakthrough towards the infinite of an ‘*immer wieder*’ or an ‘*und so weiter*’ [the *again and again*]” (Derrida 1989: 135), and the repetition (within which identity can occur *as an effect*) of which Deleuze speaks in the wake of Nietzsche.

### **Counter-turn**

Darwin’s professed desire for human mental powers and capacities to be opened to the strategy of the *Origin of Species* (Darwin 2003: 397) leaves the strategy *itself* open to modification and evolution, particularly as, at the outset, he is at pains to emphasise the “imperfection” of the work (Darwin 2003: 95). The immediate cause of the imperfection is the work’s status as an Abstract, without all the “references and authorities for [its] several statements” (Darwin 2003: 95). But another, more general interpretation of this admitted weakness would characterise it as an inherent or inevitable one, leaving the “theory” or “argument” or “heuristic device” (Gayon: 245) of the *Origin of Species* open to amendment, transformation, development, perfectibility without perfection or absolute rightness – in short, to evolution. Thus, it seems, the structure of the work is such that it can be turned back on itself to work on itself and its ideas. It appears to be not so much a “device” as a “machine” with a feed-back mechanism, an early example perhaps of a “system” in the terms of von Bertalanffy’s *General System Theory*. Bertalanffy, in arguing (29-52) the basis of system theory, uses embryonic development and evolution as examples, and emphasises their “equifinal processes” (43), that is, “the tendency towards a characteristic final state from different initial states... based upon... an open system” (45). As he says, “it can be shown that the *primary* regulations.... ie those which are most fundamental... in evolution, are of the nature of dynamic interaction” (43).

Thus, within a general de-essentialising, excessive and non-originary economy, it is at least possible to pose the question: why is the meme “Darwinian evolution” so successful? and

to use a term which Dawkins has derived from Darwin's strategy to in turn develop it, structure it, work on it, to repeat, as it were, its functioning as a *machine* or *device* or a system. (This is indeed something which Dawkins appears to allow for (195-196), although the paragraph in which he does so begs the very question we are asking here. If, as he says, "each individual has his own way of interpreting Darwin's ideas" (195); and yet there is "an essential basis" of Darwin's theory, what becomes of the anti-essentialism it has been our task to essay? What if the essence of Darwinism is *non-essence*?) This self-referentiality is, in terms of a classical or linear logic, a worrying characteristic; we are taking a realm or structure of knowledge and applying to the whole of that realm a technique which is arguably either an integral part of it, or is derived from it. Certainly Bertrand Russell's theory of types (Russell 1992: 59), which held that in order to state something about the whole of a set, one had to do so from the position of a meta-set (ie a set of a different *type*, in Russell's terminology) in order to avoid paradoxical statements, would seem to suggest that this recursive or self-referential structure is *per se* problematic or invalid.

But note:

1. what the machine or strategy cannot question, if it is to operate, is its initial defining characteristics of differentiability and the intrinsic non-existence of the "thing itself" – these two being two sides of the same coin. The heuristic device called *Origin of Species* can operate on itself or on parts of itself up to the limit of these aspects of itself, but no further, for the obvious reasons that if the differentiability were to be removed and the "thing itself" (ie species, or when being evolved, the heuristic device of *Origin of Species* itself) reified and made fixed, then the machine would at that point grind to a halt. We might think of that moment as the moment of dogma

2. the differential strategy already undoes the power of a linear logic such as Russell's *Theory of Types*, or rather makes it irrelevant, since such logic presupposes sets of phenomena which are fixed in order to generate the paradoxes. As soon as the thing which is being discussed becomes precisely *that*, a discussion, something which is intrinsically differential, then the fixity of the set falls away, together with the type of paradox associated with it. Or rather, the paradox or *aporia* can remain, but can come to be regarded as a positive characteristic of the strategy - a pointer or hint that *things are going well*

In what way would this self-referentiality be different from the constant demand of philosophy for self-elucidation and self-reflection, a demand which virtually defines philosophy in its essence? In what way does Deleuze's *philosophy of difference* differ from the *philosophy of identity*, and in what way is Derrida's difference *beyond* philosophy - as he hopes for? Is Darwin's Idea (in the Deleuzian sense) simply the re-deployment of philosophy's defining strategy? Is this possible turning back on itself of evolutionary theory simply the working of, say, Kant's transcendental moment, the moment he announces thus: "the term 'transcendental', that is to say, signifies such knowledge as concerns the *a priori* possibility of knowledge, or it's a *priori* employment" (1929: 96)? Is it not the moment of a philosophy defined by Husserl - "ratio in the constant movement of self-elucidation" (1970: 338)?

If we remain there, within a restricted economy, within the closure of philosophy, *ratio* and the Kantian transcendental, we will not see the possibilities of the Darwinian device. We will be forgetting (as Dawkins does) the anti-essentialism which it has set up and which it implies, and which Derrida invokes when he asks of Husserl's statement: "but what is the *self (selbst)* of this self-elucidation (*selbsterhellung*)?" (1989: 146) For it is not just a

question of the enlightenment of a pre-existing self or essence. The deconstruction of origins in the name of difference, the de-essentialising implications of Darwin, affect/effect too this "self", so that its pre-existence is destroyed. The return to the self becomes instead, in Nietzsche's terms, invoked by Deleuze at the beginning of *Difference and Repetition*, the "return of the same", the "of" being read in the genitive complexity so central to Derrida's whole work and announced first in his *Introduction to Husserl's Geometry* where he states that "this 'of' concerns the... relation in which subject and object are reciprocally engendered and governed" (1989: 142-143). Nietzsche's "eternal return does not bring back 'the same', but returning constitutes the only Same of that which becomes.... Returning is... the ... identity of difference, the identical which belongs to the different, or turns around the different" (Deleuze 1994:41). In general terms, this is to say that identity (essence, origin) is the effect of difference, the effect of return; or alternatively, difference affects (ie assumes, takes on the appearance of) identity. In our specific terms, this means that the identity of Darwinism, if we accept the premise of its anti-essentialism (which gets the whole movement, or return, going) and apply it to itself, is constituted within its own ability to re-cast and remake itself – its ability to *evol/ve*.

This falling back upon the non-self, the only means by which the self (or any identity) can occur, as an effect of difference, as difference affected, is echoed in the closing pages of Derrida's *Differance* essay, in his reference to the Heraclitean play of "the one differing from itself, the one in difference with itself" (22). This is Heraclitus' fragment 51:

They do not understand how, while differing from, it is in agreement with itself.

There is a back-turning connection, like that of a bow or lyre" (37)

It is this back-turning connection, this reference back to what is not permitted, by the logic of this meme itself, to simply *be* the meme; it is this "counter-turn of the beginning", to use a phrase coined by Duettmann (2002: 143-183); it is this *differance* at the origin, this non-essentialism given its possibility by a general and excessive economy, by means of a

hyper-feedback mechanism, which allows the device or machine of Darwinism to work, to do its work, to propel itself into a future. The mark, surely, of memetic effectiveness.

Tim Gough April 2006

### **Bibliography**

1. Bagemihl, Bruce (1999) *Biological Exuberance Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity*, London: Profile Books
2. Berlin, Isaiah ([1951] 1966) *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, New York: Simon and Schuster
3. von Bertalanffy, Ludwig ([1968] 1971) *General System Theory*, London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press
4. Darwin, Charles ([1859] 2003) *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press
5. Dawkins, Richard (1976) *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
6. Diehl, Ernst (1930) *Anthologia Lyrica Graeca*, Leipzig: Teubner
7. Derrida, Jacques ([1962] 1989) *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* trans John P Leavey Jr, London: University of Nebraska Press

8. Derrida, Jacques ([1967] 1976) *Of Grammatology* trans Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, London: The John Hopkins University Press
9. Derrida, Jacques ([1967] 1978) *Writing and Difference* trans Alan Bass, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
10. Derrida, Jacques ([1968] 1982) *Différance, Margins of Philosophy* trans Alan Bass 1-28, Brighton: The Harvester Press. Also (1973) in *Speech and Phenomena and other essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* trans David B Allison 129-160, Evanston: Northwestern University Press
11. Derrida, Jacques (2001) I'm Going to have to Wander all Alone, *The Work of Mourning* trans Leonard Lawler 192-195 London: University of Chicago Press
12. Deleuze, Gilles ([1963] 1983) *Nietzsche and Philosophy* trans Hugh Tomlinson, London: The Athlone Press
13. Deleuze, Gilles ([1968] 1994) *Difference and Repetition* trans Paul Patton, London: The Athlone Press
14. Duettmann, Alexander Garcia ((1991) 2002) *The Memory of Thought an Essay on Heidegger and Adorno* trans Nicholas Walker, London: Continuum
15. Gayon, Jean (2003) From Darwin to Today in Evolutionary Biology *The Cambridge Companion to Darwin* eds Jonathan Hodge and Gregory Radick 240-264, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

16. Heraclitus (1987) *Fragments* trans TM Robinson, Toronto: University of Toronto Press
17. Hull, David (2003) Darwin's science and Victorian philosophy of science *The Cambridge Companion to Darwin* eds Jonathan Hodge and Gregory Radick 168-191, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
18. Husserl, Edmund ((1954) 1970) *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* trans David Carr, Evanston: Northwestern University Press
19. Kant, Immanuel ((1787) 1929) *Critique of Pure Reason* trans Norman Kemp Smith, London: MacMillan
20. Nietzsche, Friedrich (1887) *Die Froehliche Wissenschaft*, Leipzig: EW Fritzsch
21. Plato (1953) *The Collected Dialogues*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
22. Russell, Bertrand ([1908] 1992) Mathematical Logic as based on the Theory of Types *Logic and Knowledge* 58-102, London: Routledge
23. Saussure, Ferdinand De ([1916] 1995) *Course in General Linguistics* trans R Harris, London: Duckworth