



Beyond Mechanism: Putting Life Back Into Biology

Brian G. Henning, Adam Scarfe

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It has been said that new discoveries and developments in the human, social, and natural sciences hang “in the air” (Bowler, 1983; 2008) prior to their consummation. While neo-Darwinist biology has been powerfully served by its mechanistic metaphysic and a reductionist methodology in which living organisms are considered machines, many of the chapters in this volume place this paradigm into question. Pairing scientists and philosophers together, this volume explores what might be termed “the New Frontiers” of biology, namely contemporary areas of research that appear to call an updating, a supplementation, or a relaxation of some of the main tenets of the Modern Synthesis. Such areas of investigation include: Emergence Theory, Systems Biology, Biosemiotics, Homeostasis, Symbiogenesis, Niche Construction, the Theory of Organic Selection (also known as “the Baldwin Effect”), Self-Organization and Teleodynamics, as well as Epigenetics. Most of the chapters in this book offer critical reflections on the neo-Darwinist outlook and work to promote a novel synthesis that is open to a greater degree of inclusivity as well as to a more holistic orientation in the biological sciences.

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