

Preface

The year of 2009 is a Darwin year, for the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or, the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. Darwin has become an icon, for good or ill, in human culture, and his illuminating or dangerous ideas have made us think differently. As the year ends, it is a suitable occasion for JCS to hold a special topic on Darwin and evolution.

Let us first follow Dr. John van Wyhe from the National University of Singapore back to Cambridge in the late 1820s and early 1830s, to learn more about Darwin's undergraduate life at Christ's College, and find out those intellectual and social connections between Cambridge and Darwin. Then, through his examination of the theistic evolutionism of four important American Christian leaders, Professor Bernard Lightman from York University of Canada effectively shows that the relation between evolution and religion is much more complicated than we thought. It offers us a different channel to understand and address the current heated disputes between evolutionists and fundamentalists. From a philosophical perspective, Professor Jianhui LI from Beijing Normal University presents his investigation on what evolutionary science provides for contemporary philosophy.

Cambridge scholar, Professor Jim Secord, takes us behind the scenes dominated by the giant image of Darwin, treading a path through Victorian society and culture to see how the problem of evolution was really tackled in the nineteenth century, especially through the reading experiences of the anonymous best seller *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* which appeared in 1844. He also kindly shares with us his experiences, as a non-Darwinian, during this Darwin year. His reflection on the Darwin 200 celebrations, and his review of the development of Darwin research and its possible further potential, will be of great value for everyone interested in Darwin and evolution.

As the executive chief editor of this issue, I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all the contributors to our special topic. Special thanks go to Professor Jim Secord, my sponsor during my visiting year at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at Cambridge, for his generosity, humour and inspiration.

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December 2009