
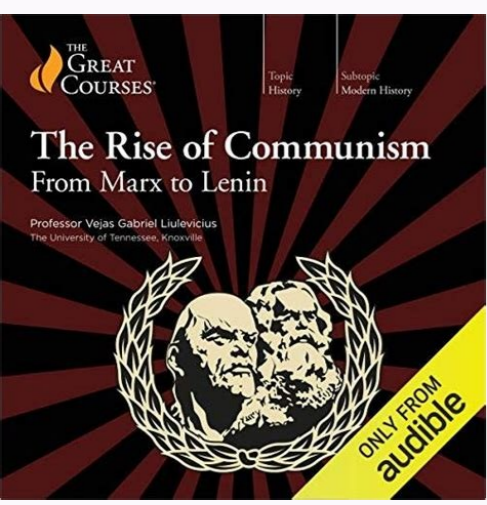
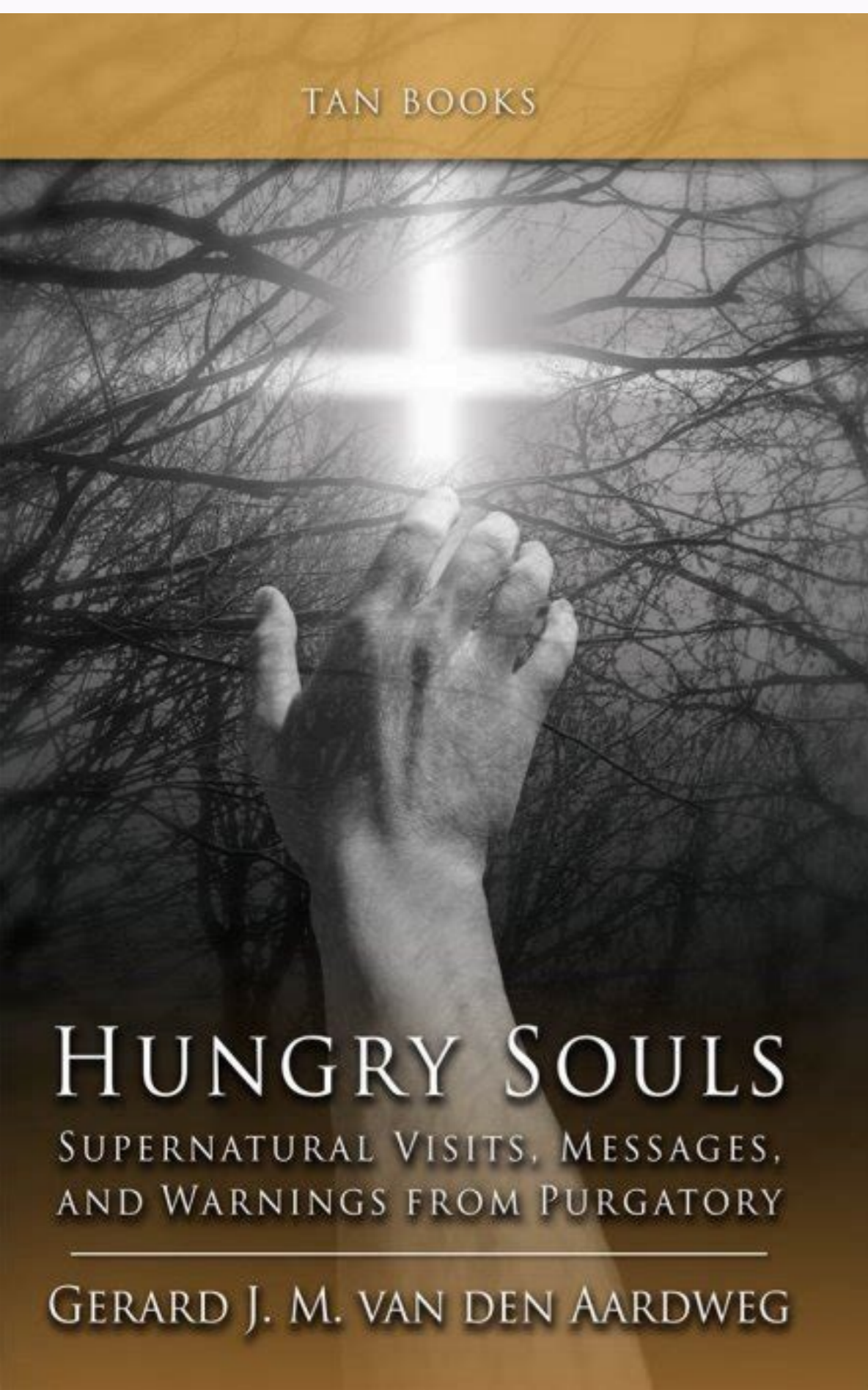


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Literature Review

## Arthur Schopenhauer and the Current Conception of the Origin of Species: What Did the Philosopher Anticipate?

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### Abstract

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was deeply influenced by Plato and conceived each species as an idea, whose shape is essentially and permanently predetermined. He rejected Lamarck's proposal of organ's use/disuse as a source of evolution, but he was close to the orthogenetic movement that developed after his death. The philosopher did not conceive biological individual variability as a source for evolution, mathematical population analysis, and gradual evolution; he even imagined an ultra-rapid saltatory model in "higher forms." Moreover, he conceived a metaphysically based coupling among all phenomena which resembles the contemporary model of natural drift of evolution. Hence, Schopenhauer did not strictly anticipate Darwin's model of natural selection. However, he expressed in his own words competition and struggle for life. The philosopher thus anticipated more the orthogenesis and natural drift and less the Darwinian's mechanisms of evolution than what is generally alleged. His work is a valuable philosophical source in the contemporary search for a new synthesis in evolutionary thought.

### Keywords

Darwin, evolutionary synthesis, Lamarck, natural drift, orthogenesis, Schopenhauer

### Introduction

This essay discusses the thought of Arthur Schopenhauer about the origin of life and the evolution of species. These are key topics in current scientific life with relevant implications for almost every field of theoretical and practical knowledge. As an illustration, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* by Charles Darwin, published in 1859 (Darwin, 1998), is considered to be the most influential book ever written in the West (Ferraiuolo, 2017). However, the field of evolution is undergoing a revision that could be considered a new synthesis, such as that carried out in the first half of the 20th century (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 2016).

As for Schopenhauer, there is a renewed interest in his work, as exemplified by the recent launching of two academic journals devoted to his work: one in Brazil (*Revista Filantropia: estudos sobre Schopenhauer*, ISSN: 2179-3786) and another one in Spain (*Schopenhaueriana: Revista de estudios sobre Schopenhauer en español*, ISSN, 2530-1306). Schopenhauer addressed the origin of species in his main work *The World as Will and Representation (Idea)* that was published in 1818 (Schopenhauer, 2010). We strongly believe that his reflections on the issue are relevant for the new synthesis in gestation. Lovejoy (1911) exhaustively

described the development of evolutionary analysis throughout Schopenhauer's intellectual work. Recent articles posit that the philosopher anticipated Darwin's scientific contributions (Giaculli, 2017; Klaus, 2009; Schiano, 2012; Young, 2005).

In this article, we first provide an overview of Schopenhauer's general philosophical thought. Second, we extensively describe current controversies in the evolutionary field which may be useful to both general and specialized readers. Third, we discuss *verbatim* selected excerpts of Schopenhauer that deal with the main current theories and controversies about the origin of life and of species. This third section is followed by a final discussion and a conclusion. A relevant feature of this essay is that we discuss evolutionary issues that had not been developed in Schopenhauer's time and when some of the above-mentioned reviews were carried out, particularly by Lovejoy

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