

Book Review**Review of Donald C. Austin's Book: Creative Evolution Revisited:
A New Theological Theory of Evolution**

Stephen P. Smith *

ABSTRACT

Suzan Mazur describes the evolution industry in crisis, given an apparent emptiness in the neo-Darwinian account. Mazur interviewed many world-wide scholars, and not just those that attended the 2008 meeting in Altenberg, Austria. Stewart Newman, Antonio Lima-de-Faria and Lynn Margulis provide among of the most interesting and credible accounts of an evolution that is not stuck in a dogmatic and hopeless neo-Darwinism. This is not to say that most scientists don't still over prescribe Darwin's simplistic theory, and some of these folks are interviewed in Mazur's book. You can find this book at [Amazon](#).

Key Words: evolution, Darwinism, expose, neo-Darwinism, Stewart Newman, Antonio Lima-de-Faria, Lynn Margulis, Altenberg 16.

Donald Austin (page 404) writes: "I know that I will receive criticism for including long excerpts from numerous writers and authors. But what can be more expressive of the various issues than the actual words of those who addressed them? My purpose was to present a compendium of controversies in the field of evolutionism and its history. It is now up to the interested to go to the various works of those authors and relish the depth and entirety of their thinking."

Austin will receive criticism from me, because his style of using lengthy quotations makes it difficult to separate Austin's views from those of many other writers. Some of these writers, such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, would most likely be hostile to Austin's endorsement of Henri Bergson's "creative evolution." The long discussion of Dawkins's meme theory is the farthest thing from the creative evolution that is vitalistic to its core, yet Austin runs the risk that he too endorses Dawkins's odd theory and looks to be trying to cobble it into a more inclusive interpretation. Materialism is a poor fit to Bergson's vitalism, and nothing in Austin's book will change this. Austin's treatment of Ken Miller's theistic evolution is no less incompatible with Bergson's vitalism and the overall theme of Austin's book.

While I wish Austin would have distinguished his views more from the cheaper alternatives, rather than appear to cobble incompatible ideas together, there are some saving graces in Austin's style. Austin did provide the broadest treatment of evolution and its interpretations, and he did this while concealing any prejudice. It is possible for readers to discover the alternative understandings that are in conflict with Bergson's vitalism, and it is possible for readers to gain an appreciation of Bergson's views. Ultimately, it will be the reader that must choose sides, and that's the way it should be. So this book has something of value in it for serious students of evolution and its interpretations; four stars worth of value.

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Austin (page 272) writes: "Bergson seems to hint that his Elan Vital is in reality God, Although he doesn't come right out and say so. In later editions of his books, he is much more strongly supportive of that designation. It is my opinion that the Elan Vital is God, or is of God! By this hypothesis, I bring back God into the evolutionary process from which he has been abandoned by science. Thus, whether it is God himself or of God, he is the creative force that undergirds all of evolution."

Writing about God from the point of view of his creative evolution, Austin (page 42) writes: "Our belief is that God is immortal, but not omnipotent, and cannot be held responsible for the evil in the stream of life. That is the work of Satan, who is also immortal but not omnipotent, and these two forces playing one against the other are the basis for both good and evil in the evolution of life."

While I agree myself with Bergson's vitalism, I don't understand why Austin is returning to a strange dualism where good and evil are given their own immortality. If we grant that God is not omnipotent, then it is enough to note that some evil is unavoidable. Evil becomes another bad judgment that puts a distorted view of self above God, or it is a childishness that never matured and found itself stuck in painful pathology. Death awaits evil, but on the other side is purification and a return to God once the karmic debt is paid off. Moreover, if life sources the immortal, then salvation necessarily awaits all life, even that life so corrupted and only waits for authentic liberation. I think Bergson's vitalism fits a non-dual understanding that is closer to traditional Vedic beliefs than Austin's theology, and I see no reason to create a heaven for Satan called hell.

Unless Austin (page 315) intended to cite someone else, he writes: "I must admit That I do not believe in the Trinity or that Jesus was God incarnate. Yes, the bible is the greatest book ever written, and yes, Jesus is the greatest man who ever lived. Jesus was in reality an apostle of God just as Mohammad was an apostle of Allah. ... I must also admit that I side with Nietzsche in his belief that Paul prostituted Jesus for the purpose of making him immortal and advancing the Christian religions to one of the three major religions in the modern world."

There is a lot of suspicion in Austin's words. While this suspicion is not completely unwarranted, I can only guess that it also reflects Austin's strange dualism that is unnecessary, in my view. For example, it is clear that Austin does not know that the Christian Trinity can be resolved with the non-dual, and with the Hindu Trinity, see:

[The Unity of Reality: God, God-Experience and Meditation in the Hindu-Christian Dialogue](#)

Austin is yet to learn about the connection of vitalism with Trinitarian philosophy, see my book:

[Trinity: The Scientific Basis of Vitalism and Transcendentalism](#)

References

Donald C. Austin, 2010, *Creative Evolution Revisited: A New Theological Theory of Evolution*. iUniverse.