

The 1959 Darwin Centennial Celebration in America

By *Vassiliki Betty Smocovitis**

Immortal Darwin,
Beloved scholar,
Modest and patient and wise;
This ancient school has chosen you
To honor and to eulogize.

—Lyrics to “Immortal Darwin”
from the musical play *Time Will Tell*

The party was an elbow-bending evolution of international intellectuals.

—Lois Baur, *Chicago's American*, 23 November 1959

The precedent for the successful celebration in honor of Charles Darwin was established in 1909. That year marked two critical anniversary dates in Darwin's “life story,” or the narrative of his life and work: the centennial of his birth in 1809, and the fiftieth anniversary of publication of his *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Both were celebrated across the world, but especially in England, Darwin's homeland, where scientists, dignitaries, and Darwin's living friends and family gathered under the auspices of Cambridge University to commemorate these events and to assess progress in evolutionary science. A well-known photograph from the Cambridge celebration of the centennial captures the historical moment: the aging Sir Joseph Hooker and Lady Hooker are shown expectantly looking over the shoulder of

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Mrs. Thomas H. Huxley, who is holding and gazing at the infant Ursula Darwin, the most recent offspring of Francis Darwin's son, Bernard.¹

As the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of Darwin's *Origin* approached in 1959, plans for similar commemorative functions sprang up all over the world. An international committee called the Darwin Anniversary Committee, Inc., which included descendants Gwendolen May Raverat, Josiah Wedgwood, Lady Nora Barlow, Frances Darwin Cornford, Sir Charles Darwin, and Julian Huxley as honorary officers, was formed in the mid-1950s to oversee anniversary activities for 1959.² Since 1959 was also the 125th anniversary of the voyage of the HMS *Beagle*, the committee planned a spectacular, much-publicized reenactment of Darwin's voyage of scientific discovery around the world.³ A "corps of leading scientists" hoped to retrace the voyage of the *Beagle* while engaging in "planned research" either "related to or stimulated by the original research of Darwin." Their goals were to "add greatly in a relatively short time to our knowledge of natural history and evolution."⁴ Along with discussion of establishing Darwin fellowships and a Darwin memorial park on the Galapagos (pending the cooperation of the Ecuadorian government), the committee planned special lectures, seminars, conferences, brochures, and commemorative volumes.⁵

Even the most unlikely groups planned to commemorate the publication of Darwin's *Origin*. F. Alton Everest, one of the early leaders of the American Scientific

¹ As reproduced on p. 82 in Julian Huxley and H. B. D. Kettlewell, *Charles Darwin and His World* (New York: Viking Press, 1965). A volume published for the occasion included papers by leading scientists like J. Arthur Thomson, August Weismann, Hugo de Vries, William Bateson, and Ernst Haeckel, among others, and included contributions by Darwin's living academic sons, Francis and George. His "intimate" friend Joseph Dalton Hooker wrote an introductory letter to the editor of the volume. See *Darwin and Modern Science: Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of the Birth of Charles Darwin and of The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Publication of the Origin of Species*, ed. A. C. Seward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909). See also the special compendium of the centenary, *Memorials of Charles Darwin: A Collection of Manuscripts, Portraits, Medals, Books, and Natural History Specimens to Commemorate the Centenary of His Birth and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Publication of "The Origin of Species,"* ed. W. G. Ridewood (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1909). Other notable international commemorative activities included the special celebratory addresses given in honor of Charles Darwin at the American Association for the Advancement of Science meetings in Baltimore, Maryland, on Friday, 1 January 1909. A commemorative volume with the original papers was published as *Fifty Years of Darwinism: Modern Aspects of Evolution* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1909).

² The committee was legally incorporated in New York as a nonprofit organization on 23 December 1955. Document titled "Certificate of Incorporation," Bert James Loewenberg Papers, Darwin Anniversary Committee, folder 4, Library of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Penn. (hereafter cited as Loewenberg Papers). It drew on an international scientific advisory council that included explorers like Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Roy Chapman Andrews. Membership shifted as many of the officers and scientists dropped out of plans.

³ A formal news conference and reception, with Julian Huxley and his wife present, was organized by the Darwin Anniversary Committee, Inc., and held at the Overseas Press Club in New York City on 13 November 1956. A prominent article appeared in the *New York Times* describing the plans. "Charles Darwin Commemoration Planned Next Year," *New York Times*, 14 November 1956; and "Darwin's Voyage to be Retraced," *New York Times*, 14 November 1956; also see Alvin Steinkoff, "Key to the Beginning: Scientists to Visit Darwin's Origin Area," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 August 1958, Carl Hubbs Papers, 1927-1979, MC-S, box 17, folder 25, "Darwin Anniversary, 1956," Scripps Institution Library, La Jolla, Calif., (hereafter cited as Hubbs Papers). Estimates for overall cost for the voyage ran at \$350,000. Document titled, "How the Voyage of the Beagle will be financed, Nov. 13, 1956," Loewenberg Papers, Darwin Anniversary Committee, folder 1.

⁴ Prospectus, Darwin Anniversary Committee, Inc., 1 March 1956, Hubbs Papers, MC-S, box 17, folder 25, "Darwin Anniversary, 1956."

⁵ *Ibid.* The prospectus was circulated widely to all interested parties.

Affiliation, an organization founded in the United States in 1941 to explore the relationship between science and religion, focused his energy on the anniversary. Beginning as early as 1948, he planned an enormous commemorative volume assessing Darwin's impact on Western religion.⁶

In Canada, Australia, and Brazil, as well as in the United States and the Soviet Union—wherever Darwin and Darwinism were held in good favor—other plans were drawn up. Local agencies, institutions, and important scientific societies such as the Society for the Study of Evolution (SSE)—the international society founded in 1946 in the United States—were actively involved in both planning and coordinating activities across the world.⁷ Journals of natural history, biology, general science, and even the occasional historical journal took special notice of the anniversary with lead articles, cover stories, and editorials assessing the current state of evolutionary knowledge.⁸ Planned activities took many forms, from special lectures to conferences and books to the issuance of commemorative postage stamps and medallions with the Darwin figure prominently displayed.⁹

The activities planned on an international scale were so numerous and broad in scope that, as the centennial date approached, evolutionary biologists reeled from the work the occasion generated and suffered from stress precipitated by inevitable conflicts and rivalries. The minutes of the council meetings of the SSE in the mid-to late 1950s reveal the extent to which negotiations and coordination began to occupy the business of the society.¹⁰ Individual scientists, especially more prominent evolutionary biologists, were additionally burdened with the demands of organizers who required their expertise. In an uncharacteristic letter of complaint, for example, Ernst Mayr expressed frustration with the demands placed on him as early as 1956. He wrote:

⁶ Everest's plans for the anniversary, and the history of the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA), are discussed in James Gilbert, *Redeeming Culture: American Religion in an Age of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), see especially pp. 158–61. Although he and coeditor and president of the ASA, Russell L. Mixer, sought a secular press to increase the readership, they eventually published the volume with a religious press. The completed volume was edited by Mixer. See *Evolution and Christian Thought Today*, ed. Russell L. Mixer (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1959).

⁷ The minutes of the SSE council meetings in the mid-1950s reveal the extent of coordination required. Society for the Study of Evolution Papers, Series II and Series III-C, Library of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Penn. (hereafter cited as SSE Papers).

⁸ See the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 1959, 23. The issue included an emblematic profile of Charles Darwin on the cover and was titled "Commemoration of the Centennial of the Publication of *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin: Annual General Meeting, April, 1959." Contributors included Wilfrid E. Le Gros Clark, I. Michael Lerner, Curt Stern, Arne Müntzing, Ernst Mayr, G. Ledyard Stebbins, Theodosius Dobzhansky, Norman D. Newell, George Gaylord Simpson, and Philip J. Darlington, Jr. Lerner's paper titled "The Concept of Natural Selection: A Centennial View" was especially topical. For the historical response to the centennial, see the September 1959 issue of *Victorian Studies* (vol. 3; n. 1). Contributors included Morse Peckham, Edward Lurie, and Sidney Smith. And see edited volumes like *A Century of Darwin*, ed. S. A. Barnett (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958). For a review of the literature generated by the centennial see Bert James Loewenberg, "Darwin and Darwin Studies, 1959–63," *History of Science*, 1965, 4:15–54; and *idem.*, "Darwin Scholarship in the Darwin Year," *American Quarterly*, 1959, 11:526–33.

⁹ Soviet organizers seemed especially keen to generate innovative memorabilia. See, for example, the medals struck in Moscow in commemoration of the centennial. Reproduced on p. 81 of Huxley and Kettlewell, *Charles Darwin and His World* (cit. n. 1). According to Sol Tax, they also issued special postage stamps.

¹⁰ See especially the minutes of meetings held in 1956 and 1957. SSE Papers, Series II and Series III-C.

I am afraid there will be so many Darwin celebrations that it will be difficult to decide where to say yes and where to say no. I have already committed myself to participate in the volume prepared by the American Philosophical Society where I am to discuss the role of isolation in evolution . . . I am trying very hard to work on my own new book but find that all these other plans interfere with what is really, my A-1 project. This may sound unfriendly, but is merely the anguished cry of a harassed soul.¹¹

Nor did the stress abate with the arrival of the critical year; in fact it seemed to accelerate to a fevered pitch and to push some people off the edge. No less a figure than the president of the SSE became the most visible victim of the celebrations. Edgar Anderson, the eminent botanist and evolutionary biologist at the Missouri Botanical Garden, found himself so emotionally stirred and excited by the University of Chicago's Darwin Centennial Celebration that he was unable to deliver his presidential address to the SSE at the Thanksgiving banquet ceremony. According to one eyewitness account, Anderson stood to speak, became agitated, faltered, and then abruptly terminated his lecture without apparent reason.¹² His wife's diary entry following his return from Chicago vividly describes her concern for Edgar, and hints at his report of a "religious experience" at the Darwin Centennial Celebration in Chicago.¹³ He later described the convocation ceremony preceding the Thanksgiving banquet as "the most moving ceremony I have ever participated in."¹⁴ According to disclosures Anderson made later to Anne Roe, he reported that the "large numbers of people" at the Darwin Centennial Celebration got him so excited that they eventually "did him in." He was subsequently hospitalized for three weeks.¹⁵

By the end of the anniversary year of 1959, the human and financial resources spent, and the level of emotion generated by the occasion, had gone far beyond the simple commemoration of the publication of a great book, even an epoch-making one at that. Why and how could a mere scientific anniversary place such extraordinary demands on its participants? Why were the celebrations so important that they received so much attention from vastly different, international audiences? What did the Darwin figure represent? And what exactly was being celebrated? While some of the festivities planned for the one hundredth anniversary were rather unassuming

¹¹ Ernst Mayr to Karl P. Schmidt, 25 September 1956, Darwin Centennial Celebration Papers, box 4, folder 15, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill. (hereafter cited as Darwin Centennial Papers). Mayr's publication output increased dramatically as a result of the demand generated by the centennial celebrations. For a quantitative analysis of Mayr's publication record see Thomas Junker, "Factors Shaping Ernst Mayr's Concepts in the History of Biology," *Journal of the History of Biology*, 1996, 29:29-77. The graphs on pp. 32-3 demonstrate sharp spikes in publication output for the years around 1959. Mayr's publication of historical articles was especially dramatic around the Darwin centennial year.

¹² Ernst Mayr, personal communication. This is confirmed by Anderson in a disclosure to Ann Roe. Undated document identified as "Notes, p. 1-19," Ann Roe Papers, folder on Edgar Anderson, Library of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Penn. (hereafter cited as Roe Papers).

¹³ As cited in John J. Finan's biographical essay commemorating Anderson, "Edgar Anderson, 1897-1969," *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden*, 1972, 59:325-45, quotation on p. 343. Finan also discusses Anderson's religious views. Anderson was a Quaker. See also cit. n. 14.

¹⁴ Edgar Anderson to Sol Tax, 3 December 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, folder 2.

¹⁵ Document identified as "Notes, p. 1-19," Roe Papers, folder on Edgar Anderson. Anderson had a similar experience giving a public lecture at the 1937 meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, when he became overcome with "something like stage-fright." For an eyewitness account of this "curious" behavior see the description on p. 153 in Una F. Weatherby, *Charles Alfred Weatherby: A Man of Many Interests* (no publisher given, 1951). Like Julian Huxley, Anderson suffered intermittent bouts of depression. Most probably, he suffered from bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder.

attempts to honor Darwin's life and to recognize his momentous book, others were more consciously designed to capitalize on the occasion and were carefully orchestrated to serve a range of functions. The most effective of the celebrations was planned to do both, and more: honor the great man of science—and his work—while at the same time serve a variety of personal, disciplinary, institutional, regional, and even national functions. Organized by anthropologist Sol Tax at the University of Chicago, The Darwin Centennial Celebration—as it came to be known—was filled with five days of scientific discussions, pageantry, ritual, and theatrical spectacle. Drawing at least 2,500 registrants with nearly 250 delegates representing 189 colleges, universities, and learned societies from fourteen countries, and at a hefty final cost of \$59,022.08, it was the largest celebration of all.¹⁶ Staged to begin exactly one hundred years to the day of the publication of Darwin's *Origin* on 24 November, and taking advantage of the Thanksgiving holiday to end on 28 November, the event was so well timed, and so carefully orchestrated to tap into lateral and adjunct concerns that spoke to many wide audiences, that it outshone—and arguably may still outshine—all other scientific celebrations in the recent history of science.

This paper explores the historical context of the University of Chicago's Darwin Centennial Celebration, with a view towards understanding the broad range of functions served by such commemorative and celebratory acts in the history of science.¹⁷ In particular, it explores the varied interests served by this celebration, ranging from the national and regional to the institutional, disciplinary, and the personal concerns of organizers and participants.

I. DISCIPLINARY MEMORY, UNITY, AND IDENTITY: THE CELEBRATION AND THE EVOLUTIONARY SYNTHESIS

One critically important reason for the intensity and the number of 1959 Darwin celebrations has to do with the timing of the anniversary within the larger history of evolutionary biology. In the wake of the evolutionary synthesis of the 1930s and 1940s, the anniversary of 1959, coming twelve years after the 1947 Princeton meetings (during which evolutionists celebrated the reconfiguration of biological disciplines around the new science of evolutionary biology), was perfectly timed to reassess the state of the art by the community of individuals that had worked to create a synthetic, unified science of evolution.¹⁸

Along with the belief that a modern synthesis of evolution was underway, there had come a restoration of Darwinian selection theory within a genetical and popula-

¹⁶ For final registration numbers and Tax's personal account, see Sol Tax, "The Celebration: A Personal View," in *Evolution after Darwin*, 3 vols., eds. Sol Tax and Charles Callender (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), vol. III, *Issues in Evolution*; see also Memorandum dated 23 November 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 2; and Final Accounting Documents, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 18.

¹⁷ For an excellent theoretical discussion and explanation using historical examples from national studies of commemorative events (festivals, exhibits, and monuments) and cultural memories, see *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); also see *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) for rituals, pageants, and other celebrations as invented traditions.

¹⁸ The historical background to the evolutionary synthesis and the emergence of the scientific discipline of evolutionary biology is discussed in Vassiliki Betty Smocovitis, *Unifying Biology: The Evolutionary Synthesis and Evolutionary Biology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

tional framework that gave plausible accounts for the origins of biological diversity. It was from just this perspective in 1942 that Julian Huxley had looked back on the presynthesis era and coined the phrase "The Eclipse of Darwin" to denote the period's demise in popularity for Darwinian natural selection and for evolutionary studies generally. The "modern" synthesis of evolution, a term Huxley coined and popularized, saw a convergence of biological disciplines bearing on evolutionary studies and the end of a period of dissonance among biologists concerning the mechanism of evolution.¹⁹ From that point on, evolution by means of natural selection, for evolutionary biologists, had become a fact.

Concomitant with the intellectual synthesis between disparate disciplines of biological knowledge came an organizational synthesis leading to the first society in support of evolution, the Society for the Study of Evolution (SSE).²⁰ The end result of the synthesis in the late 1940s was a new discipline with a self-aware community of individuals who identified themselves as "evolutionary biologists." By the mid-1950s, a well-defined, structured, and organized community of evolutionists had emerged who could not only serve as participants and organizers, but also as overseers and promoters of their field. The anniversary of the publication of the landmark work ushering in their field of interest was a well-timed opportunity to retell the life story of Charles Darwin, who was now reinvented as the "founding father" of their discipline.²¹ It also served as the perfect opportunity to establish once and for all—for wide audiences—the facticity of evolution by means of natural selection.

Had this been merely an occasion for celebration within the new discipline, it would have been sufficient for the local audience of evolutionists, and possibly garnered the attention of other biologists and societies like the SSE. But so much of what it meant to be a twentieth-century evolutionary biologist hinged on identification with the narrative of Darwin's life and work. This might help to explain some of the emotion generated by the celebration, and the degree of conflict and rivalry over what was to emerge from it. Additional factors were clearly at play, and they contributed greatly to the particular success of the University of Chicago Darwin Centennial Celebration. Among these was the chosen site—the American Midwest—for the leading celebration, and the university's eagerness to promote itself as an intellectual center of the world. It was also because of the celebratory vision of the head organizer, Sol Tax, whose own discipline of anthropology—the area of inquiry that delved into human and cultural evolution—needed its own "evolutionary synthesis."

II. RIVALRIES, CONFLICT, AND COORDINATION

The importance of the Darwin centennial to its community is underscored by the controversies sparked by the planning for the celebrations. Rivalries emerged be-

¹⁹ For the historical account, see Julian S. Huxley, *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1942).

²⁰ Smocovitis, *Unifying Biology* (cit. n. 18); also see Vassiliki Betty Smocovitis, "Organizing Evolution: Founding the Society for the Study of Evolution, (1939–1950)," *J. Hist. Biol.*, 1994, 27:241–309; and Joseph Allen Cain, "Common Problems and Cooperative Solutions: Organizational Activity in Evolutionary Studies, 1936–1947," *Isis*, 1993, 84:1–25.

²¹ This phrase was explicitly used to describe Charles Darwin. See "Tax Statement for University of Chicago Reports," Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 1.

tween those who wanted to serve as the key organizers and their organizations, and, most importantly, over the national context for major activities.²² Tensions emerged between English and American planners, who realized that their major celebrations would not only create inevitable conflicts for evolutionists in terms of resources, but might upstage more modest, local celebrations, if not lead to general confusion.²³

One exchange, in particular, exposes the complex tensions between the various celebration committees and the American-based SSE.²⁴ Although much of this exchange was over which committee would serve as the central committee for all celebrations, it also brought up one especially volatile subject—Julian Huxley. The secretary of the SSE complained sharply that “Some of us [referring to the council members] were also disturbed because Julian Huxley—who has not been exactly cooperative in regard to his one-man show in London next summer—recently indicated to one member of the council that he, Julian, was going to run the celebration in Chicago (presumably as honorary chairman of the Darwin Anniversary Committee?)”²⁵

The fear was legitimate: as the self-appointed leader of evolution in England, Huxley had, in fact, demonstrated a tendency to commandeer social activities pertaining to evolution. Any major effort at celebration had to at least make a nod to Huxley’s eminence, but this also ran into the difficulties of working with an overbearing personality. Furthermore, a celebration officially sponsored by the SSE, the international organization devoted to the study of evolution, had the potential to upstage, if not undermine, Huxley’s own efforts on behalf of his favored British societies and committees. The fact that Huxley had lost the bid to found an international society for the study of evolution in England, Darwin’s homeland, did not sit well with the man who identified himself as the grandson and therefore living representative of Thomas Henry Huxley, known as “Darwin’s Bulldog.”²⁶ It also did not help that Huxley seemed to have an almost neurotic need to be the center of attention.²⁷

Potential conflicts between the SSE and the Darwin Anniversary Committee, Inc.,

²² See the letter from the program director for systematic biology, Rogers McVaugh, to Sol Tax informing him that the International Botanical Congress meetings to be held in Montreal in August, 1959 had as a central theme the origin of species and its effect on the biological sciences in the last one hundred years. He wrote, “It would be unfortunate from your standpoint to have events at the Congress make your November celebration anticlimactic, but presumably this can be arranged before hand in order to avoid duplication and confusion.” Rogers McVaugh to Sol Tax, 6 June 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 19.

²³ At one point Ilza Veith suggested to Sol Tax that there were so many Darwin events planned in England and elsewhere that they should rethink their own celebration at the University of Chicago. Ilza Veith to Sol Tax, 9 August (undated, most likely 1957), Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 2. Also see the letter to the secretary of the SSE, Harlan Lewis, from Colin Pittendrigh, 22 August 1957, SSE Papers, Series III-C.

²⁴ Colin Pittendrigh to Harlan Lewis, 22 August 1957, and the response from Lewis, undated (most likely 1957), SSE Papers, Series III-C.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ For historical explication of the tension between English and American workers in organizing evolutionary studies in the 1940s, and for Huxley’s behavior, see Smocovitis, “Organizing Evolution” (cit. n. 20).

²⁷ At one point, Huxley demanded to be included in the musical production staged for the celebration, *Time Will Tell*, in some significant manner. Needless to say, this did not sit well with the writers. They wrote, “I am somewhat embarrassed by a conversation I had with Sir Julian Huxley. As I told you, instead of being bashful about appearing in the show, he seems as anxious as anything . . . The situation is further complicated by the fact that he implied that he wasn’t particularly anxious to have Sir Charles Darwin appear on stage at all, which handed me quite a jolt. On the other hand I understand by the grapevine that Sir Charles is quite a comedian and will probably want to get into the act

which featured Huxley prominently, became increasingly attenuated as the committee began to develop internal conflicts. Not only had plans for the retracing of the *Beagle* gone awry, but the scientific status and authority of the directors, the head of whom was Bert James Loewenberg, a professor of history at Sarah Lawrence College, had been called into question by scientists like Henry Fairfield Osborn.²⁸ Osborn summarized his objections in a heated letter of resignation from the committee:

I think the Board of Directors which will be responsible for the development and plans for this anniversary should consist of individuals of standing in the scientific world (more specifically in the natural sciences); in other words, individuals who through their own work and reputation are recognized as leaders in the natural sciences. It is my opinion that only through such a group can there devolve a series of plans in celebration of Charles Darwin's anniversary which will adequately reflect the meaning of his work as a scientist.²⁹

As the anniversary date approached, a flurry of resignations were handed in as scientists like George Gaylord Simpson and Edward Weyer became increasingly uncomfortable with organizers' efforts.³⁰ Although the board of directors was reconstituted with prominent biologists including Theodosius Dobzhansky, John Moore, Edwin Colbert, and Colin Pittendrigh, The Darwin Anniversary Committee, Inc., became more and more of a clearing house for activities, rather than the focus for organizational efforts, as the anniversary date approached.³¹

Coordinating activities between competing groups required the concerted effort of organizers at the University of Chicago, who were eventually successful in convincing their administration, prominent societies like the SSE, and key scientists that the site of the major celebratory activity should be the University of Chicago.³² Sol Tax, who would lead the American planners' efforts, won over competition by arranging to secure the presence of Huxley, the organizational pivot for English efforts, in Chicago.³³ With the offer of an endowed position and a sabbatical leave, Tax lured Huxley to the University of Chicago to be the Alexander White Visiting Lecturer in Biology and Anthropology for the fall semester during which the cele-

someplace too." Robert Pollack to Robert Ashenurst, 26 October 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 1. Other indicators of Huxley's egocentrism include the demands he placed on Tax concerning his visiting appointment, and his much publicized "secular sermon."

²⁸ On the *Beagle* plans, see Carl Hubbs to Fairfield Osborn, 15 January 1957, Hubbs Papers, MC-S, Box 17, folder 26, "Darwin Anniversary, 1957-1960."

²⁹ Henry Fairfield Osborn to Bert James Loewenberg, 10 January 1957, *ibid.*

³⁰ George Gaylord Simpson to Bert James Loewenberg, 22 January 1957, *ibid.*, also see the explanatory letter to Julian Huxley from Fairfield Osborn, 28 January 1957, *ibid.* This file chronicles the internal problems with the Darwin Anniversary Committee, Inc.

³¹ A report of the committee activities dated 15 May 1958 reveals that the committee was serving as an "informal clearing house for various groups and organizations interested in commemorating Charles Darwin and the theory of evolution." Kenneth Cooper to Carl Hubbs, 15 May 1958, *ibid.*

³² Karl P. Schmidt wrote to inform the SSE of Chicago's plans and to suggest that Chicago's activities be under the "wing" of the SSE. Karl P. Schmidt to Harlan Lewis, 17 September 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 17. The SSE accepted the invitation in 1956. Minutes of Council Meeting, 26 December 1956, SSE Papers, Series II. See also Tax's handling of the "mild form of competition" with the Anthropological Society of Washington's plans: Betty J. Meggers to Sol Tax, 25 May 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 6.

³³ The invitation to Huxley went out on 20 January 1956. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 7. A similar invitation went out to Sir Charles Darwin on the same day. Lawrence A. Kimpton to Mr. Charles G. Darwin, 20 January 1956, *ibid.*

brations would be held.³⁴ Nothing short of an organizational coup, this was the smoothest way of avoiding conflict with English organizers while winning their support through the person of Huxley. Huxley himself was able to have it both ways: in 1958 he held his "one-man show" in London under the auspices of the International Zoological Congress, which celebrated the anniversary of the joint reading of the Darwin-Wallace paper to the Linnaean Society, and he accepted the generous offer from the University of Chicago for the 1959 anniversary.

The competition with British efforts was thus smoothed away. Tax, who was a professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago, was completely candid about this competitive aspect of the celebrations. He later wrote in his public recollections that he was mystified by the British failure to secure the major celebratory site. He wrote, "The real mystery is why others did not pre-empt the opportunity of celebrating the publication event of the century. In England celebrations were planned, appropriately, for the 1958 Centenary of the reading of the Darwin-Wallace papers before the Linnaean Society. The centennial of Darwinism was, in fact, celebrated in many quarters, but November 24 1959—the one-hundredth anniversary of publication of *Origin of Species*—was left to the University of Chicago."³⁵

With arrangements made for Huxley *in situ*, Tax began to lay the plans for the celebration, obtaining the official support of the SSE and widening potential audiences to garner support.³⁶ Critical to the success of his celebration was the strongest possible support he received from the University of Chicago.

III. "WORLD SERIES" AND "INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK SHOW": THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO AS INSTITUTIONAL SITE

If the celebration was characterized by fanfare and pageantry that drew much attention, it was because it was backed by a midwestern university eager to place itself on the intellectual map of the world. With the building of the first atomic pile in the 1940s and subsequent pathbreaking work in astronomy, physics, and chemistry, the University of Chicago had been gaining an international reputation as a leader in the physical sciences. In the biological sciences, too, it had established itself in areas associated with ecology and evolution, and by the 1950s it possessed a renowned zoology department that had included evolutionists like Sewall Wright and Alfred E. Emerson.³⁷ Even in the social sciences, the University of Chicago had been leading the way with renowned departments of sociology and anthropology.³⁸

³⁴ Document to the Committee of the Darwin Centennial Celebration dated 12 October 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 5, folder 9. The document relayed a conversation between Huxley, Emerson, and Schmidt that took place in St. Louis on 27 September concerning Huxley's tentative acceptance of the appointment.

³⁵ Tax, "The Celebration" (cit. n. 16), quotation on p. 273.

³⁶ The first letter revealing Tax's plans was from Chicago-based Karl P. Schmidt to Harlan Lewis, dated 17 September 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 17. See also the minutes of the SSE meetings for additional details (cit. n. 7).

³⁷ For the early history of the biological sciences at the University of Chicago see H. H. Newman, "History of the Department of Zoology in the University of Chicago," *BIOS*, 1948, 19:215-39; William B. Provine, *Sewall Wright and Evolutionary Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Philip J. Pauly, *Controlling Life: Jacques Loeb and the Engineering Ideal in Biology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Gregg Mitman, *The State of Nature: Ecology, Community, and American Social Thought, 1900-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

³⁸ For a history of anthropology at Chicago see George W. Stocking, Jr., *Anthropology at Chicago: Tradition, Discipline, Department*. Prepared for an exhibition marking the fiftieth anniversary of the

In the 1950s, furthermore, the university had seen the pivotal—and much publicized—experiments of Harold Urey and Stanley Miller dealing with the origins of life. Given what was clearly pathbreaking recent work in a range of sciences, the university was especially eager to host a conference that would bring international attention to its intellectual activities, especially in science, the most technically demanding and prestigious realm of intellectual inquiry. Bringing leading, distinguished scientists to the university campus for an important and very public celebration would be one way of enhancing Chicago's reputation as a major center of learning. The fact that this commemorative event honored a "great book," at the very university that had seen Robert Maynard Hutchins's educational reforms in the preceding decade leading to the "great books of the Western world" focus, certainly made it a celebratory event worthy of notice by the administration.³⁹

Such activities were critically important to the university administration in the late 1950s. Not only had the university neighborhood of Hyde Park seriously deteriorated, but it was also generally felt that Chicago and the Midwest did not "constitute a lure for some people."⁴⁰ These fears were foremost in Chancellor Lawrence Alpheus Kimpton's mind during much of his administration from 1951–1960, and may help to explain his heavy involvement with and support of the celebration, which could only help further his goals of renewal through rebuilding. Furthermore, a precedent for the commemoration of Darwin had been established at the university in 1909 when The Biological Club had sponsored a series of special lectures for the fiftieth anniversary celebration.⁴¹ It had drawn a number of notable biologists for the occasion and had been a successful event.⁴² As part of the support, Tax was given an administrative assistant for the conference, Charles Callender, a recent Ph.D. in anthropology from Chicago, who had some experience in public relations.⁴³

In fulfillment of the larger goal of promoting the University of Chicago, Tax demonstrated his political acumen by soliciting the support of the office of Mayor Richard J. Daley, whose persona was heavily identified with Chicago.⁴⁴ The city council

Department of Anthropology, 1979. Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. For a history of sociology, see Martin Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology: Institutionalization, Diversity, and the Rise of Sociological Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

³⁹ Hutchins introduced the "Great Books of the Western World" courses in 1947 with Mortimer Adler. See William H. McNeill, *Hutchins' University: A Memoir of the University of Chicago, 1929–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Milton Mayer, *Robert Maynard Hutchins: A Memoir*, ed. John H. Hicks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁴⁰ Lawrence Alpheus Kimpton, "State of the University, 3 November 1959," in *The Idea of the University of Chicago: Selections from the Papers of The First Eight Chief Executives of the University of Chicago from 1891 to 1975*, eds. William Michael Murphy and D. J. R. Bruckner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 498. His "State of the University, 11 November 1958" had echoed these concerns and looked forward to the rebuilding of the university and the city. For a history of the University of Chicago immediately preceding the celebration, and for a summary of the Kimpton administration, see McNeill, *Hutchins' University* (cit. n. 39); and Daniel Meyer, *The University and the City: A Centennial View of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 1996).

⁴¹ See the "Programme of Darwin Anniversary Addressess," Darwin Centennial Papers, box 7, folder 1.

⁴² The four-page "programme" indicates that it was a major, university-wide event open to the public that included fifteen lecturers on evolutionary topics. The lectures began on 1 February and ran to 18 March 1909. The dates were designed to coincide with the birthdate of Darwin.

⁴³ In the final accounts, Callender's salary was listed as part of the overall expense of the conference; it was \$7,851.58. Final Accounting, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 18.

⁴⁴ The transactions between Tax and the Office of the Mayor comprise a six-page fascicle of documents included in Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 2. The Office of the Mayor actually

had already designated the centennial year of 1959 as a special "jubilee" year: as early as 1957 they were hoping to see the opening of the grand St. Lawrence Seaway, a World Trade Fair, the Pan-American Games, and Festivals of the Arts and Sciences.⁴⁵ For a city known in American popular culture for its "frontier spirit," granaries, gangsters, and notoriously bad weather, these major events were to help reconstruct the identity of the city, placing it centrally within the postwar American mainstream then undergoing tremendous growth and prosperity.⁴⁶ Hosting such a celebration, which would bring luminaries from all over the world, was one way to assist in the reconstruction of Chicago as an intellectual center for the American Midwest. Chicago was, after all, home to the 1893 Columbian Exposition and, more recently, to the Chicago World's Fair of 1933, one of the Century of Progress Expositions. Both had drawn positive attention to the city.⁴⁷

The prototypical model for this intellectual reidentification would be unabashedly English, as Americans could share some of the glory of the "empire," even if it appeared to be diminishing at the time. The University of Chicago, by Old-World standards a newcomer, could emulate the older and prestigious former school of Darwin, Cambridge University, the site of the 1909 celebration.⁴⁸ The very design of the buildings at Chicago, "Secular Gothic," which saw the "conjunction of gargoyles and test-tubes," had historically emulated such British ideals.⁴⁹

contacted Tax first to request information on "American Indians" (Tax was a cultural anthropologist who had worked on Native American cultures). Tax brought up his celebration in the context of the planned activities involving native people. He wrote, "Are you aware that the University is planning the important international celebration of the centennial of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*? . . . Scholars from all over the world will come; the list is terrific; including among many Sir Charles Darwin and Sir Julian Huxley and even a biologist from Russia.

"Should we make this a major intellectual-scientific-educational event of the year? There is even a connection with the Americas, since Darwin developed his theory after his famous Voyage of the Beagle, where he was impressed by what he saw in South America, especially in the Gallapagos [sic] Islands." Sol Tax to Jack Reilly, 13 January 1958, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 2.

⁴⁵ Document titled "Resolution" from the Office of the Mayor, dated 7 June 1957, *ibid.*

⁴⁶ The scholarly literature on Chicago's history is vast. For a natural history of Chicago in the nineteenth century see William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1991). See also James Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and Donald Miller, *City of the Century: The Epic History of Chicago and the Making of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁴⁷ See R. Reid Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Culture* (Chicago: Nelson and Hall, 1979); Robert Muccigrosso, *Celebrating the New World: Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993); see also Gilbert, *Perfect Cities* (cit. n. 46); Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). The "White City," which denoted the world's Columbian Exposition, and the "Gray City," which denoted the University of Chicago, were the progeny of businessmen hoping to transform Chicago into a city of refinement in the late nineteenth century. For a discussion of twentieth-century attempts at such transformation at the national level and the 1933-4 Chicago Century of Progress Exposition (the "Chicago World Fair" of 1933), see Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Rydell argues that the 1933 fair, coming in the midst of the Great Depression, helped in "rebuilding confidence in the nation's future" (p. 9). According to Rydell, the Century of Progress Expositions promoted progress through the twin themes of science and technology.

⁴⁸ In his preface to the 1909 edited volume of the Cambridge meeting, A. C. Seward indirectly claimed Darwin as a "son" of Cambridge. See cit. n. 1.

⁴⁹ Jean F. Block, *The Uses of Gothic: Planning and Building the Campus of the University of Chicago, 1892-1932* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Library, 1983), quotations from "Foreword," p. xiii, by Neil Harris. Many of the buildings at the University of Chicago were modeled after Oxonian architectural forms.

Discussions in the early planning stages kept a constant eye on British efforts both to copy and to preempt any attempt at a greater celebration.⁵⁰ One possibility to increase visibility and further legitimate the celebration was to bring well-known British luminaries to Chicago. Winston Churchill, who was scheduled to visit the White House in the critical year, was briefly entertained as a possible honorary participant, but was rejected for fear of his "overshadowing the rest of the Celebration."⁵¹ At least one document points to a brief discussion about bringing no less than Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to the celebrations.⁵² After due consideration, the lesser figure of His Royal Highness Prince Philip was thought the perfect honorary participant, as he was a celebrated patron of the sciences. He was formally invited to attend, but he declined as he and the royal family did not have plans to travel to the United States that fall.⁵³

Emulation of English sensibility was a conscious aim expressed publicly—and historically—in a documentary film of the Darwin Centennial Celebration produced by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.⁵⁴ Beginning with the opening shots, Chicago is represented as the new intellectual center of the New World, the twentieth-century analogue to Darwin's Victorian London. The narrator reads from the following script:

The year is 1859. Chicago, at the south end of Lake Michigan, is a flourishing city of 110,000. Still marked by a residue of the frontier spirit, it is already an important commercial and industrial center, but has few intellectual pretensions. The museums and universities are thirty-five years away.

Across the Atlantic, in an England ruled by Victoria, London is in 1859 the center of a revolution in human thought. On November 24th of that year Charles Darwin had published the *Origin of Species*; the first printing was entirely sold out by the end of the day.

One hundred years later, here is Chicago, the grain elevators that overshadowed the city in 1859 now replaced by skyscrapers; and the University of Chicago, which for one week has become the center of the intellectual world. Thousands of persons, some of them drawn from the far corners of the earth, have come here to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Darwin's great book. Universities from every continent have sent delegates to this event. Newspaper headlines, stories in magazines, and television interviews have drawn attention to the celebration; excitement is in the air this week in November.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ As early as 1956 Tax and the administration approached English organizers like Huxley with an eye towards sharing the planning or asking them to participate directly. Draft of letter by Tax to Lawrence Kimpton to notify Huxley, undated; Lawrence A. Kimpton to Julian Huxley, 20 January 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 7. Sol Tax to Julian Huxley, 27 April 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 4, folder 9. According to this letter, Huxley appeared to have tentatively accepted the invitation by 4 April 1956.

⁵¹ Organizers also thought that conferring a degree on Churchill would make other honorary degrees "antidemic." Document titled "Reports on Talk with Cannon," 1 May 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 2.

⁵² Memorandum, William B. Cannon to Sol Tax, 10 September 1958, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 6.

⁵³ Lawrence A. Kimpton to H. R. H. The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, 9 May 1958, *ibid*. Prince Philip's response on learning of the request of his presence was relayed to Chancellor Kimpton via the acting consul general as being "most appreciative." W. Macon to Lawrence Kimpton, 28 August 1958, *ibid*.

⁵⁴ Film number F-134, Darwin Centennial Papers. See discussion in this article on the history of the film.

⁵⁵ Transcript of film by *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 9, folder 9.

Chicago newspapers, television and radio stations, and other local media needed little prodding to promote the event, though Tax extended himself, his staff, and the resources of the University of Chicago. Hiring an aggressive businessman named Sheldon Garber, whose official title was media services director, Tax launched a media blitz closely rivaling that for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.⁵⁶ Among Garber's duties was firing off press releases and letters to nearly every major American magazine in existence using an American-style hard-sell tactic. His letters began with a sales pitch worthy of the occasion: "It's going to be a scientific and intellectual world series. The world's greatest authorities—50-count 'em-50—will be at one place for five days of open talks to determine the score on evolution."⁵⁷ The official press release to United Press International shifted metaphors from the quintessentially American sport to the quintessentially American festival of the agricultural fair as Garber stressed the occasion's importance to Chicago: "Here is the University of Chicago's version of the International Live Stock Show. This will be a tremendous scientific gathering. I call it to your attention early because it may require some staffing. The stories in this gathering could be a great feather in the Chicago bureau's cap."⁵⁸ And Tax's media blitz served his purposes well: news of the celebration planning alone was picked up by major newspapers like the *New York Times* and minor local newspapers in the Chicago area, most of whom eagerly bought into his sales pitch that this event was to be "a milestone in the history of evolution."⁵⁹

Careful not to leave any interested parties out of the celebration festivities, Tax approached institutions in the Chicago area that might potentially benefit from co-sponsorship and would contribute to the success of the event. Tax wrote directly to the prestigious Chicago Zoological Park (also known as the Brookfield Zoo) to inform them of the meetings, and also officially invited members of the Illinois Academy of Sciences.⁶⁰ He also encouraged the Chicago Natural History Museum to coordinate its own commemorative functions with the University of Chicago celebration.⁶¹ Even major Chicago booksellers were alerted by the organizers in time to prepare for the celebration.⁶² Books and displays on evolution filled the shelves of major stores eager to sell copies. The Chicago area was thus perfectly poised—and primed—for a major intellectual event.

Although the publicity that the celebration was to receive (before, during, and after) was lavish to the extreme, Tax was exceedingly careful not to make preparations for the celebration around similarly wide-ranging sociopolitical motives.

⁵⁶ Garber's suggestions for publicity are relayed in a document titled "Publicity-Press," 11 September 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 1.

⁵⁷ Sheldon Garber to Robert Ajemian, *Life* Bureau, 15 September 1959, *ibid.* Magazines targeted included *Harper's*, *Look*, and *The Saturday Review*.

⁵⁸ Sheldon Garber to Jesse Bogue, United Press International, 15 September 1959, *ibid.*; also see an equally promotional letter to the Associated Press: Sheldon Garber to Carroll Arimond, 15 September 1997, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Memorandum, Sheldon Garber to Editors, 14 September 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 5; and folder titled "news," Darwin Centennial Papers.

⁶⁰ Sol Tax to R. Robert Bean, 11 July 1958, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 14. Bean was the director of the Chicago Zoological Park in Brookfield, Ill. For invitations to academy members, see "Addenda to work in progress," 19 August 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 4.

⁶¹ Clifford Gregg to Sol Tax, 20 February 1958, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 15; Theodor Just to Sol Tax, 15 August 1958, *ibid.*

⁶² Document titled "To all Chicago area booksellers concerning the Darwin Centennial" dated 14 November 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 1.

Reasons for the conference publicized most often, included in Tax's letters of invitation and in the successive progress reports he and other organizers issued, stressed its intellectual nature and its contributions to scientific knowledge and to understanding the future of "man."⁶³ Of especial value to scientists was the maintenance and extension of the synthesis project: the gathering of leading figures from disparate disciplines to assess the current evolutionary state of the art. The official notice of the celebration defined its purpose thus: "The Celebration will bring together leading figures in the social and biological sciences to discuss the evolution of life, of man, and of the mind. Centering on common problems that cut across disciplinary lines, the discussions will comprise a series of five three-hour public panels."⁶⁴ In one advertisement following the celebration, the following were listed as representing the disciplines that touched on or informed knowledge of evolution: physics, biology, psychiatry, medicine, botany, zoology, embryology, photometry, anthropology, ethnology, cosmogony, biochemistry, genetics, archaeology, physiology, astronomy, and entomology.⁶⁵

For Tax, the inclusion of anthropology was an especially important component of the celebration. One reason for his zeal in taking the lead in organizing efforts was his perception of the need to explore the relationship between biological evolution, human evolution, and cultural evolution.

IV. THE CELEBRATORY VISION: SOL TAX, "MAN," AND ANTHROPOLOGY

The number of individuals involved in planning and hosting the celebration was considerable. One source lists, in addition to the six members of the Darwin Centennial Celebration Committee, five additional assistants, including Charles Callender as the conference director.⁶⁶ But despite the numbers of aides, assistants, and administrators involved, it was clearly a one-man operation. From its start to the very finish, the University of Chicago Darwin Centennial Celebration was masterminded by Sol Tax.⁶⁷

Tax would probably have met with limited success had his motives for taking the organizational lead been simple. Personal glory, fame, attention, and such ends

⁶³ See, for instance, the notice of the 1959 SSE meetings. The planned celebration was "Emphasizing common problems that cut across disciplinary lines . . ." Announcement, undated, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 17; also see Tax's official summary, "Tax statement for University of Chicago Reports, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 1. See also document dated 25 September 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 1.

⁶⁴ Document dated 25 September 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 1.

⁶⁵ Advertisement from the University of Chicago Press, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, Adendum.

⁶⁶ These included Marie-Anne Honeywell as conference secretary, Jean Dames and Rose Weiner as assistants, Rochelle Dubnow as the director of volunteer work by students, and Marianna Tax as assistant. There is no indication of how many students assisted as volunteers. See the program guide and convocation guide for the official listing, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 7, folder 1.

⁶⁷ For biographical information on Sol Tax see *Currents in Anthropology: Essays in Honor of Sol Tax*, ed. Robert Hinshaw (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979). See especially David Blanchard's contribution to the volume. See also Sol Tax, "Pride and Puzzlement: A Retro-introspective Record of 60 Years of Anthropology," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1988, 17:1-21; and Robert A. Rubinstein, "A Conversation with Sol Tax," *Current Anthropology*, 1991, 32:175-83. The son of Russian Jewish immigrants, Tax was born in Chicago in 1907 but grew up in Milwaukee; he was a graduate of the University of Chicago specializing in both North American and Meso-American cultural anthropology.

might have resulted in modest success for the celebration and may, in part, have explained his unbounded energy and organizational zeal, but as sole reasons they would never have led to the spectacular result Tax sought.⁶⁸ For this to be possible, Tax had to tap into some wider need that would draw in large numbers of participants.

For Tax, an anthropologist then at the height of his career, the celebration was the perfect opportunity to draw attention to his own discipline as well as to his home university. He was strongly identified with both.⁶⁹ Tax recounted his historical recollection of his motives and of his inception of the original idea for the anniversary celebration in 1955 (which came to him while he was visiting the library of the Wenner-Gren Foundation in New York) as follows:

I remember thinking. Somebody would be organizing a celebration for the occasion. Why should not anthropology be center stage? An encyclopedia nearby revealed that the exact date was November 24, a good season in the academic world, since the school year is well underway and the holidays have not yet begun.

My main train of thought carried me home to Chicago. What institution in this country was better suited to celebrate the centenary than the University of Chicago, born ten years after Darwin's death, far away—a celebration on behalf of the whole world? No personal interest; purely intellectual and scientific.⁷⁰

And Tax's intellectual and scientific interests were genuine: as a talented organizer, editor, and effective networker, he recognized that such a public celebration would be the perfect opportunity to reengage anthropologists in evolutionary study.⁷¹ As he pointedly stated in his recollections, twentieth-century anthropology, for historical, sociopolitical, and intellectual reasons, had seen the "complete separation" of "man as an organism from man as a member of society and bearer of culture." "Culture" and "evolution," although united in the thoughts of Darwin and Huxley in the nineteenth century, had gone entirely separate ways in the twentieth century as cultural anthropologists argued against rigid, overly deterministic, "evolutionary" explanations for culture.⁷² As a result, anthropology had become a science with a "split personality." Tax wrote:

So we come to a science which proclaims itself 'the study of man,' yet views culture as though it were not part of man; which studies the evolutionary process and traces the origin of man through the fossil record, yet steadfastly separates man from all other animals; generally denies social and cultural *evolution*, yet uses the word 'primitive'—apologetically—for most of the living peoples and cultures it studies.⁷³

⁶⁸ Over the course of his long career, Tax repeatedly took the lead in organizing major conferences. See biographical material in cit. n. 67.

⁶⁹ See cit. n. 67.

⁷⁰ Tax, "The Celebration" (cit. n. 16), quotation on p. 272.

⁷¹ See cit. n. 67.

⁷² The postwar period saw a rise of anticultural evolutionary approaches that echoed earlier such approaches that had stemmed from Boazian reforms of anthropology. Reasons for this are discussed in George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1968; reprint Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); see also *idem.*, *Anthropology at Chicago* (cit. n. 38).

⁷³ Tax, "The Celebration" (cit. n. 16), quotation on p. 272.

The possibility and precedent for such an integrated study of anthropology, furthermore, had already been established at Chicago. Within the anthropology department, a course titled "Human Origins," taught by Robert Braidwood, Wilton M. Krogman, and by Sol Tax beginning in 1945, had paved the way for an integrated approach. Robert Redfield, an early member of the Darwin Committee, had been a strong advocate of "neo-evolutionary civilizational" approaches to culture, and with the addition of biological anthropologist Sherwood Washburn to the department in 1947, an integrative approach to culture and evolution was already in place as a backdrop to the Darwin Centennial Celebration planning in the mid-1950s.⁷⁴

The schism in anthropology was also recognized, albeit from another perspective entirely, by evolutionary biologists. The fact was that anthropology, the subject that dealt most immediately with human evolution, had been curiously removed from organizational and intellectual efforts to synthesize evolution in the 1930s and 1940s (as historians of biology have long noted).⁷⁵ In the 1950s, the absence of anthropology—and anthropologists—at SSE meetings and in issues of *Evolution* (the leading journal for evolutionary study) had been noted by key figures in organizing evolutionists, like Ernst Mayr.⁷⁶ The absence was especially noted as anthropology logically *had* to be brought into the larger evolutionary synthesis, if the synthesis was to be as complete as its architects had begun to envision it should be in the 1950s. The paleontological and cultural components of human evolution, the understanding of the evolution of mind, and the concerns traditionally associated with culture and the social sciences had to be incorporated within the modern synthesis of evolution, especially as Theodosius Dobzhansky, George Gaylord Simpson, and Julian Huxley had paved the way for such a synthesis by addressing the evolution of man, mind, and culture in their semipopular and popular works.⁷⁷

With the ambitious goal of opening discussion into the varied meanings of "culture" and "evolution," Tax consciously targeted and invited distinguished anthropologists to Chicago: Clyde Kluckhohn from Harvard University, A. Irving Hallowell from the University of Pennsylvania, and Alfred Kroeber from the University of California, Berkeley, all of whom would join an already impressive list of anthropologists at Chicago, including F. Clark Howell. Although most of them required little encouragement, Tax did his utmost to support their active participation by approaching each cordially as well as, of course, financing their participation generously. Funds were obtained for anthropologists primarily from a modest grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.⁷⁸ Despite Tax's gently coercive tactics, at least one of his anthropological invitees, Clyde Kluckhohn, hesitated to attend, and indicated that he would only come if he were not required to present a paper. Although sponsored participants were expected to contribute original articles, Tax agreed to these conditions as Kluckhohn was a leading ethnologist

⁷⁴ In his history of anthropology at the University of Chicago, George W. Stocking, Jr., states that these were the contributing factors leading to the Darwin Centennial Celebration. See his discussion on p. 39 (case 18) in Stocking, *Anthropology at Chicago* (cit. n. 38).

⁷⁵ See *The Evolutionary Synthesis: Perspectives of the Unification of Biology*, eds. Ernst Mayr and William B. Provine (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1980) for a complete discussion. See also Smocovitis, *Unifying Biology* (cit. n. 18).

⁷⁶ See Smocovitis, "Organizing Evolution" (cit. n. 20).

⁷⁷ For more discussion on this see Smocovitis, *Unifying Biology* (cit. n. 18).

⁷⁸ They provided \$5,000. Final Accounting Documents, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 18. Grant materials are in box 1, Addendum.

who would add to the anthropological slant of the celebration.⁷⁹ Tax's commitment to bringing in anthropology and important anthropologists was therefore central to his organization and vision of the celebration.

Nor was Tax's vision solely confined to the narrower domain of academic anthropology. To extend the anthropological sphere of influence, and to draw the attention of the wider public, Tax secured special funds from the Wenner-Gren Foundation to invite Louis B. Leakey, an anthropologist who had vast international popular audiences in the 1950s. Taking advantage of the opportunity to visit the United States for the first time and to further promote his research, Leakey brought the latest of his sensational fossil hominid discoveries, *Zinjanthropus boisei*, with him to the celebration.⁸⁰ Both Leakey and "Zinj" were to serve as major highlights of the conference, drawing attention to anthropology as a central study in evolution and fulfilling Darwin's own notoriously elusive statement in *Origin* that "Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history."⁸¹ If the conference was successful at any new synthesis, it was in bringing anthropologists and biologists together to explore the biological and cultural aspects of human evolution, yet recognize the "non-genetical" processes operating at the level of culture. Tax's closing personal thoughts on the celebration made this much explicitly clear: "So, for me, the Centennial brought Darwin and evolution back into anthropology, not by resurrecting analogies, but by distinguishing man as a still-evolving species, characterized by the possession of cultures which change and grow non-genetically."⁸² Certainly the number of anthropologists far exceeded what one would have expected at an anniversary celebration of Darwin's *Origin*.

V. MAKING IT ALL HAPPEN: SOL TAX AND THE DARWIN CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

One reason that Tax's efforts to lead the celebrations paid off so well is that he had begun to plan the event as early as 1955. At that time he solicited the support of the chancellor and other university administrators to form a crossdepartmental committee that he would chair. The committee was officially appointed by the chancellor in January 1956.⁸³ The final university crossdepartmental committee consisted of Alfred E. Emerson in zoology, Chauncy D. Harris in geography, Everett C. Olson from geology and paleontology, H. Burr Steinbach in zoology, and Ilza Veith from the departments of medicine and the history of medicine and science. Two of the

⁷⁹ Sol Tax to Clyde Kluckhohn, 20 August 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 4, folder 11; Progress report to Julian Huxley dated 3 October 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 6.

⁸⁰ For press clippings see Lois Baur, "It's easy to converse with scientists, if you know what *Zinjanthropos* means," *Chicago's American*, 23 November 1959; "Fossils Support Darwin's Theory of Man's Origin," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 25 November 1959; and "Man Fossil Backs Up Darwin Idea," *Los Angeles Mirror News*, 25 November 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers. Leakey's tour is recounted in Virginia Morrell, *Ancestral Passions: The Leakey Family and the Quest for Humankind's Beginnings* (New York: Touchstone, 1995).

⁸¹ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, Facsimile of the First Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), quotation on p. 488.

⁸² Tax, "The Celebration" (cit. n. 16), quotation on p. 282. He closed with this additional reminder: "Human evolution includes the addition of culture to man's biology; 'cultural evolution' at the human level is quite a different matter. Anthropologists accept the first without question; they are divided about the second."

⁸³ This was officially noted in the program to the celebration. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 7, folder 1.



Figure 1. Darwin Centennial Committee. The text on the table is a copy of Darwin's Origin of Species. Standing, left to right: Sol Tax, Everett C. Olson, Chauncy Harris, Alfred E. Emerson. Seated, left to right: Ilza Veith and H. Burr Steinbach. Darwin Centennial Papers, Dept. of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Reproduced with permission.

original members of the committee were Karl P. Schmidt and Robert Redfield, but both died before the celebration took place in 1959 (see Figure 1).⁸⁴

By mid-September 1956, the committee sent out the first of the letters inviting key evolutionists like E. B. Ford, Ernst Mayr, G. G. Simpson, G. Ledyard Stebbins, and Charles Elton to the festivities.⁸⁵ Nearly all declined to participate in Tax's proposed precelebration planning conference, though all were supportive of the event, if not completely enthusiastic, as they already had heavy commitments demanded by the anniversary. The critical development in catalyzing Tax's efforts to lead the centennial celebrations appears to have been Huxley's agreement to visit the Univer-

⁸⁴ Schmidt died on 27 September 1957 from a snake bite; Redfield died 16 October 1958 from leukemia.

⁸⁵ Karl P. Schmidt to E. B. Ford, 14 September 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, folder 16; Karl P. Schmidt to Ernst Mayr, 17 September 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 4, folder 15. Charles Elton declined because he disliked conferences and because he had "nothing to say on the subject of evolution," as he had not written anything on the subject for years and "not closely enough concerned with the subject now." Charles Elton to Karl P. Schmidt, 3 October 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 15; Sol Tax to G. G. Simpson, 18 September 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 5, folder 12.

sity of Chicago for the fall semester of 1959.⁸⁶ With Huxley in *situ* and on the payroll of the University of Chicago, plans to hold the biggest celebration became a possibility. Not only were the English efforts led by Huxley shifted to the United States, but American efforts could now reconfigure around Huxley and the midwestern location of Chicago.

Tax's efforts to bring Huxley to Chicago paid off generously.⁸⁷ In return for the visiting professorship, which provided a generous stipend, accommodations, and first-class airfare for he and his wife, Huxley would be required to teach a special seminar in the fall semester on evolutionary biology.⁸⁸ Tax put even this small requirement to good use in his organizational efforts. In 1958 Tax organized a special seminar for both faculty and graduate students.⁸⁹ The goal of this seminar was specifically to aid in the celebration organization. Participants in the seminar were required to read the conference papers circulated early, sort the topics into relevant categories, and then organize the conference program around presentation of the papers. In return, students received standard academic credit for the course and had the advantage of reading the conference papers in advance and contributing significantly to the celebration in their own way. Tax had been careful to select the participants in his seminar, going so far as to solicit applications in 1958 from students and interested faculty.⁹⁰ In addition to solving the major intellectual organizational problem of the conference, the seminar also served to expose new graduate students to the field of evolutionary biology and to involve them first-hand in the celebratory functions of the discipline. (One graduate student at the University of Chicago who participated in the seminar, Matthew Nitecki, went on not only to lead in his chosen area of paleontology, but to also become a master of such gatherings, organizing the Annual Spring Systematics Symposium sponsored by the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History and by the University of Chicago in the 1980s.)⁹¹

Once Huxley agreed to the visiting appointment, plans fell quickly into place. Although Huxley was clearly the most visible public figure in evolutionary biology—as well as the direct descendant of Thomas Henry Huxley—others were also needed to complete the slate of celebrants to represent the full Darwinian heritage. For this reason, Tax simultaneously sought to secure a living representative of the Darwinian legacy for the celebration: Sir Charles Darwin, the grandson of Charles

⁸⁶ See cit. n. 50 for the sequence of events leading to Huxley's appointment.

⁸⁷ It should have—Huxley came at considerable cost. The initial offer stood at \$5,000 with an extra \$1,000 to pay for his wife's travel expenses. Julian Huxley to Sol Tax, 12 May 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, Addendum. The final accounting for salaries listed Huxley's as \$1,335. The two remaining visiting professors received \$784 and \$250 (François Bordes and Alfred Kroeber, respectively). Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 18.

⁸⁸ For the exact arrangements between Huxley and Tax see Julian Huxley to Sol Tax, 12 May 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, Addendum.

⁸⁹ See the announcement for the seminar, "To colleagues on the faculty" from Sol Tax dated 16 April 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 3. One account states that "thirty members of the faculty and fifty selected graduate students from twenty departments" were part of this seminar. Abraham Raskin, "Special Report on the Darwin Centennial Celebration: One Hundred Years Later," *The Science Teacher*, March 1960, quotation on p. 3 of the fascicle. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 9.

⁹⁰ Application Form for Seminar on Evolution (Anthropology 425-Zoology 425), Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 3.

⁹¹ Another graduate student who went on to a successful career as a geneticist and a publicist of science, David Suzuki, was included in the original list of students, but did not complete the seminar. Graduate student applications, *ibid.*

Darwin.⁹² Although trained in mathematics and not fully cognizant of the latest developments in evolutionary biology, Darwin was invited to speak. His public lecture, titled "Darwin the Traveller," would share his grandfather's experiences aboard the HMS *Beagle*, complete with maps, diagrams, and family reminiscences of the Darwin adventure.⁹³ His mathematical expertise would be put to use in a forward-looking paper of some interest to evolutionists on the human population problem at the "present-day."

VI. GARNERING SUPPORT: FUNDS, ALLIES, AND NEUTRALIZING CONTROVERSY

With two of the key individuals in place, Tax devoted his energies to securing funds and support for the conference. Although the University of Chicago made a considerable initial commitment of \$25,000 (contingent on financing of the whole) toward the proposed final budget of \$57,000, it could not finance the entire operation.⁹⁴ Tax therefore aggressively campaigned for external support from federal agencies and private foundations.

The emphasis of Tax's 1956 pitch to the National Science Foundation (NSF) was exclusively scientific in its scope and stressed the conference's potential for the furtherance of evolutionary study. Tax explicitly noted that the occasion was to emphasize "(1) the scientific outlook that has characterized these hundred years; (2) the progress made in the study of evolution and genetics; and (3) the effect on human sciences of concepts of evolution and the treatment of man as a part of nature."⁹⁵ Tax successfully secured NSF funds to host the Darwin celebration, in addition to funds from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and from the Markle Foundation.⁹⁶ An argument for synthesis was also used to incorporate other components of interest from medicine and psychology, the evolution of culture, the evolution of disease, and finally, the evolution of mind. Tax successfully obtained a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) so that participants could be invited from these disciplines that he thought should rightfully be included in modern evolutionary study.⁹⁷

Since the conference was the first major public demonstration of support for evolution following the "Scopes Monkey Trial," Tax was careful to address contemporary concerns dealing with the teaching of evolution and forged additional alliances.⁹⁸ One

⁹² Lawrence A. Kimpton to Charles Darwin, 20 January 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 7; also see the draft to Kimpton from Tax, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, folder 10.

⁹³ Program, The University of Chicago Darwin Centennial Celebration, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 7, folder 1.

⁹⁴ Proposal to the National Science Foundation, 27 December 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, Addenda. The final accounting shows that the University of Chicago's Division of Biological Sciences provided \$7,500 and the University of Chicago's Division of Social Sciences provided \$2,166. Final Accounting, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 18. The bulk of the final financing came from external sources.

⁹⁵ Sol Tax to Alan T. Waterman, 27 April 1956. Waterman was director of the National Science Foundation. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 20.

⁹⁶ The National Science Foundation provided \$13,000. Financial Accounting, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 18. The Wenner-Gren Foundation provided \$5,000. See the grant material in Box 1, Addenda, Darwin Centennial Papers. The Markle Foundation provided \$1,869. Final Accounting, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 18.

⁹⁷ NIH provided \$8,709. Final Accounting Documents, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 8.

⁹⁸ For a recent scholarly assessment of this trial, see Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

such alliance connected more theoretical scientific concerns with the promotion of evolution in the public schools. In 1958 a grant from NSF was obtained for the Institute and National Conference for High School Biology Teachers.⁹⁹ (This had been a second application, the first having been declined for unknown reasons.) The grant provided sufficient funds to have one high-school teachers' delegate from each state of the union attend the conference and special workshops. Thus, the celebration would quickly communicate the new understanding and status of evolution to teachers in the American secondary-school system. The very conference participants could directly address concerns raised by high-school teachers in such a forum. At the request of Tax, the most able spokespersons, Edgar Anderson, Theodosius Dobzhansky, Hermann J. Muller, George Gaylord Simpson, and Julian Huxley were chosen to act as direct intermediaries between all conference participants and high-school teachers at a special institute that he organized. The grant also provided financial support for the dissemination of newsworthy knowledge gleaned from the conference to high-school teachers across the country. One tangible result of the Darwin Centennial Celebration was a substantive thirty-six page booklet that was published and distributed widely to American high schools and educators.¹⁰⁰

American high-school teachers were not the only adjunct group invited to participate in the celebration. As a way to smooth relations between evolutionists and theologians (or more accurately, to explore the relations between science and religion raised by Darwin's evolutionary theory), Tax and the University of Chicago also organized an Institute on Science and Theology in cooperation with the Federated Theological Faculty. This institute included formal lectures by the Reverend J. Franklin Ewing on "Creation and Evolution in Present-Day Roman Catholic Thought," and by Jaroslav Pelikan on "Creation and Causality in the History of Christian Thought."¹⁰¹ A panel discussion titled "Warfare of Science with Theology" opened discussion on the subject between panelists including Harlow Shapley, Conrad H. Waddington, Sir Charles Darwin, Leo Strauss, and others. If these workshops reached consensus, it was, for the most part—with the exception of Huxley—that science and religion were not incompatible domains of knowledge.¹⁰² The planned workshops were one way of facing head on and neutralizing potentially volatile subjects associated with study of evolution in the United States.

Although the institutes for high school teachers and science and theology were substantive components of the Darwin Centennial Celebration, both functioned as sideshows to the critical component of the celebrations: the panel discussions that included original papers from the invited participants.

⁹⁹ Document titled "A Proposal for the Support of a Special Program of Participation by Selected High School Teachers of Science," from Francis S. Chase and Sol Tax to Dr. James Phelps (at NSF), Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 14; also see the bid sent to C. Russell Phelps, Special Projects in Science Education, NSF: Sol Tax to C. Russell Phelps, 31 October 1958, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 20.

¹⁰⁰ The booklet is included in the papers of the Darwin Centennial Celebration. Published under the auspices of the Graduate School of Education in 1960, the full title is "Using Modern Knowledge to Teach Evolution in High School: As Seen by Participants in the High-School Conference of the Darwin Centennial Celebration at the University of Chicago." The booklet featured a section summarizing relevant ideas from the conference, Julian Huxley's lecture titled "Evolution in the High-School Curriculum," and a list of books on evolution useful to teachers.

¹⁰¹ These were published in vol. III of Tax and Callender, *Evolution after Darwin* (cit. n. 16).

¹⁰² See the discussion here on Huxley's convocation address and the controversy it generated.

VII. CENTER STAGE OF THE CELEBRATION: THE OFFICIAL PROGRAM, THE PANELS, AND THE SCIENTIFIC DISCUSSION

There was no doubt about it: for most of the parties involved, the most important part of the celebration was the panel discussions, which featured visiting scholars recognized for their work in a stunning assortment of disciplines bearing on evolution. Simply by attending and by contributing knowledge from their respective fields, the panelists served to make the celebration a success. Tax explicitly stated this himself:

The Celebration *was* the Panel Discussions; the panels were participants; the participants were great scientists who did what no great scientist should be expected to do. The Celebration was good because, from beginning to end, the Committee and those they had chosen did so well.¹⁰³

Although documents do not reveal exactly how panelists and representative topics were chosen, it is likely that Tax relied heavily on the committee and other Chicago faculty for specific recommendations. In his published recollection he admitted to relying on their expertise, especially because the broad crossdisciplinary nature of the celebration made it difficult for any one person to have thorough knowledge of all areas.¹⁰⁴ Their choices and representative topics were not finalized without some controversy, however, as was demonstrated by a minor conflict over the inclusion or exclusion of some topics. This conflict concerned two aspects of the celebration that were particularly objectionable to evolutionary biologists.

Working from H. J. Muller's suggestions, Tax had sought to invite biochemists, astronomers, and others who could explore the cosmic aspects of evolution, the origins of life, and probe into the plausibility of extraterrestrial life.¹⁰⁵ The inclusion of these topics for the panel discussions would allow exploration of the borderlands between the physical and the biological sciences. But instead of engendering approval from evolutionary biologists, the choice of these topics brought pointed disapproval. Writing from the 1959 Cold Spring Harbor Symposium, and having conferred with Sewall Wright, Th. Dobzhansky, Bernhard Rensch, Ernst Mayr, and G. Ledyard Stebbins, Alfred E. Emerson wrote to the Darwin Centennial Committee to object to the inclusion of the subject of extraterrestrial life. "The question of the existence of life outside the world is very speculative," he wrote. "It sounds sensational in your outline. I would feel along with the others [see above evolutionary biologists] that it would be a mistake to put too much emphasis on this question."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Tax, "The Celebration" (cit. n. 16), quotation on p. 275.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Muller recommended the addition of the special topic of the origin of life; he also recommended as possible contributors Joshua Lederberg, James Watson, Harold Urey, and Gerard Kuiper, among others, as well as Kuiper's "bright young graduate student," Carl Sagan. This was clearly very late in the planning stages, possibly because the topics were so new as to be less obvious for inclusion in the Darwin centennial to organizers not familiar with the subject. H. J. Muller to Sol Tax, 5 March 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 4, folder 16.

¹⁰⁶ Alfred E. Emerson to Darwin Centennial Committee, 7 June 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, folder 12. Emerson indicated that G. G. Simpson, who was known to object to biochemistry and the existence of extraterrestrial life, had not yet arrived. Evolutionary biologists increasingly had "tense relations" with biochemists and astronomers who opened discussions into the existence of extraterrestrial life. Reasons for this are discussed in Smocovitis, *Unifying Biology* (cit. n. 18).

There is some indication that this did not greatly deter Tax and the remaining committee, however, as they still attempted to secure Harold C. Urey as a panelist.¹⁰⁷

Emerson's other objections pertained to the balance of topics; organic evolution appeared not to be given enough space on the panels, with Emerson suggesting that it "should be the focus of about half the panels." Another comment was that some "phases of biology" that were "not associated with modern evolutionary thought (e.g. development of the living organism)" should also not be "emphasized in a Darwin Centennial." Instead, Emerson suggested that "we should build upon Darwin, discuss contemporary evolutionary investigations and point toward the future, toward the solution of problems of evolution not now solved but solvable by scientific study."¹⁰⁸ Emerson's suggestion to exclude those topics bearing on development (i.e., embryology), to reduce the emphasis on biochemistry and questions into the origin of life, and to focus instead on evolutionary biology was in fact consistent with the larger rift that was widening in the late 1950s between the newer reductionistic sciences of molecular biology and biochemistry and the new category of "organismic biology."¹⁰⁹

By far the most difficult part of the planning involved organization of the panels, however. Coordinating fifty participants' timetables, sorting their papers, and assembling the panels required extensive, focused energy on the part of the organizers. Because of the number of participants, the range of disciplines represented, and the intellectual scope of the presentations, Tax and the committee requested that each participant submit completed papers one year in advance of the celebration. Miraculously, nearly all of the panelists' papers were completed far enough in advance for Tax's special seminar course to work through them with enough time to plan the panels.

Despite all these difficulties, the final program was organized—thanks to the efforts of groups of students and faculty—around five topics:

Panel 1: The Origin of Life. This panel included biochemists and astronomers who discussed cosmic evolutionary processes and the biochemical conditions for the origin of life on earth and on other suitable planets. It included Sir Charles Galton Darwin, Th. Dobzhansky, Earl A. Evans Jr., G. F. Gause, Ralph W. Gerard, H. J. Muller, and C. Ladd Prosser. The chairs were Harlow Shapley and Hans Gaffron.

Panel 2: The Evolution of Life. The primary discussions addressed current understanding of evolutionary processes with natural selection as the dominant process. This panel included many of the "architects" of the evolutionary synthesis and other leading evolutionary biologists: Daniel I. Axelrod, Th. Dobzhansky, E. B. Ford, Ernst Mayr, A. J. Nicholson, Everett C. Olson, C. Ladd Prosser, G. Ledyard

¹⁰⁷ See the late invitation extended to Harold Urey, who declined because of heavy travel commitments. Sol Tax to Harold C. Urey, 16 October 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 1; Harold Urey to Sol Tax, 20 October 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 15; and see Tax's response: Sol Tax to H. J. Muller, 22 October 1959, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Alfred E. Emerson to Darwin Centennial Committee, 7 June 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, folder 12.

¹⁰⁹ "Organismic biology" began to be used as a category of the biological sciences in the early 1960s. See Smocovitis, *Unifying Biology* (cit. n. 18) for discussion of the growing split between molecular and organismic biology in the late 1950s. Embryology had held a problematic relationship to the evolutionary synthesis. See Mayr and Provine, *The Evolutionary Synthesis* (cit. n. 75) for more discussion on this.



Figure 2. Panel 2, "The Evolution of Life." Left to right: Daniel Axelrod, Theodosius Dobzhansky, E. B. Ford, Ernst Mayr, A. E. Emerson (chair), Sir Julian Huxley (chair), A. J. Nicholson, Everett C. Olson, C. Ladd Prosser, G. Ledyard Stebbins, and Sewall Wright. *Darwin Centennial Papers*, Dept. of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Reproduced with permission.

Stebbins, and Sewall Wright. The chairs were Sir Julian Huxley and Alfred E. Emerson (see Figure 2).

Panel 3: Man as an Organism. This served as the transitional panel, bringing anthropological concerns to evolutionary biology. It included evolutionary biologists with an interest in human evolution, and biologically trained anthropologists and paleontologists: Marston Bates, Cesare Emiliani, A. Irving Hallowell and Louis B. Leakey, Bernhard Rensch, and C. H. Waddington. The chairs were George Gaylord Simpson and F. Clark Howell.

Panel 4: The Evolution of the Mind. This panel brought together psychologists and physiologists to discuss currents of thought on the evolution of the mind. It included Henry W. Brosin, MacDonald Critchley, W. Horsley Gantt, A. Irving Hallowell, Ernest Hilgard, Sir Julian Huxley, H. W. Magoun, Alexander von Muralt, and N. Tinbergen. The chairs were Ralph W. Gerard and Ilza Veith.

Panel 5: Social and Cultural Evolution. This panel represented Tax's bridge between biological and cultural evolution and brought together anthropologists and behavioral ecologists. It included Robert M. Adams, Edgar A. Anderson, Sir Julian Huxley, H. J. Muller, Fred Polak, Julian H. Steward, Leslie A. White, and Gordon R. Willey. The chairs were Clyde Kluckhohn and Alfred L. Kroeber.

Interestingly, the design of the panels followed both a logical sequence of the history of life on earth, and the logical ordering of knowledge: the physical sciences were followed by the biological sciences and the social sciences. The two central panels contained those individuals most closely associated with evolutionary biology, some of whom became historically designated as the "architects" of the evolutionary synthesis.¹¹⁰ The centrality of evolutionary biology, located between the

¹¹⁰ Mayr and Provine, *The Evolutionary Synthesis* (cit. n. 75).

physical sciences and the social sciences, was thus implied by the very organization of the panels. Emerson and other evolutionary biologists appeared happy with these final arrangements, or at least they did not appear to express any criticism of their roles on the panels.

Although Tax had envisioned the scientific discussions as leading towards a new understanding of evolution—at the very least bringing new insights into the evolutionary picture—the discussions and even some of the contributed papers were surprisingly flat. From the transcripts recorded of the discussions, it appears few genuinely original insights emerged.¹¹¹ The sole panel, with its suite of contributed papers, that made original insights into evolutionary history was possibly the first one, which brought in the latest research from biochemists, cosmologists, and origins-of-life researchers who were making tremendous advances in the 1950s—this, despite the objections of some of the biologists, like A. E. Emerson, about their inclusion.¹¹²

Much of what was said in the core panel discussions dealing immediately with biological evolution had been reported previously, however. Notably, the supremacy of natural selection was a dominant theme in all panel discussions bearing directly on the subject of biological evolution, with panelists agreeing that genetical understanding of evolutionary mechanisms was leading to major advances. The very spirit of consensus that had prevailed in evolutionary biology in the wake of the evolutionary synthesis may possibly have dampened animated discussions or disagreements. By the late 1950s, the group including Wright, Dobzhansky, Mayr, Stebbins, Simpson, and, of course, Huxley had worked out many of their differences and had carved out well-defined locations for themselves in evolutionary studies; little was left to spontaneous disagreement. With the exception of Conrad H. Waddington, who raised a voice of dissent at the failure of the synthesis to incorporate embryology, and Everett C. Olson, who pointed out fundamental weaknesses in the synthetic theory's response to the evidence from paleontology, there was little dissent in the panel discussions on biological evolution.¹¹³

Some of the more contentious evolutionists, furthermore, had been left out of the celebration entirely.¹¹⁴ As noted by Huxley early on in the planning stages in a preliminary letter, R. A. Fisher and J. B. S. Haldane, who ranked alongside Chicago's Sewall Wright, had not been invited.¹¹⁵ Reasons for this are not clear, but there is some indication that Fisher was not included because of his celebrated "quarrel"

¹¹¹ Tax and Callender, *Evolution after Darwin* (cit. n. 16).

¹¹² See cit. n. 106.

¹¹³ Conrad H. Waddington, "Evolutionary Adaptation," in Tax and Callender, *Evolution after Darwin* (cit. n. 16), vol. I, *The Evolution of Life*, pp. 381–402; Everett C. Olson, "Morphology, Paleontology and Evolution," *ibid.*, pp. 523–45. For a historical commentary on Olson's paper see Stephen J. Gould, "Irrelevance, Submission and Partnership: the Changing Role of Paleontology in Darwin's Three Centennials and a Modest Proposal for Macroevolution," in *Evolution from Molecules to Men*, ed. D. S. Bendall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 347–66.

¹¹⁴ One reviewer singled out Huxley's lively performance, however: "From time to time he [Huxley] asked incisive questions, fixed with mordant critique, and then disposed of loose ideas or loose thinking." William B. Bean, "Review of *Issues in Evolution* by Sol Tax," *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 1965, 115:358–9.

¹¹⁵ Julian Huxley noticed the absence of Fisher's name on the list provided to him by Tax. Huxley wrote, "I was sorry that the name of R. A. Fisher did not appear in your list. I know that he and Sewall Wright quarrelled, but after all he *did* write *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection* which definitely linked genetics with Darwinian Evolutionary theory." Julian Huxley to Sol Tax, 24 August 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 4, folder 9.

with Wright.¹¹⁶ Fisher's collaborator, E. B. Ford, was, however, featured prominently. Consensus within the core group of biologist panelists was necessary, furthermore, in order to integrate those panelists at the periphery: those whose areas touched on the physical sciences on one side and on the social sciences on the other. At least one reviewer of the panels, however, noted the apparent consensus with unease and pointed to the rise of an "orthodox doctrine" with respect to the "synthetic theory" and its adherents. He asked explicitly "if it might not have been salutary to admit a real biological 'maverick,' to the proceedings and allow him to utter heresies?"¹¹⁷ Certainly, it would probably have made for more lively discussions.

One such maverick did make an appearance in panel five, "Social and Cultural Evolution." Facing existing divisions in anthropology, Leslie A. White publicly reviled his nonevolutionary colleagues and the tradition in anthropology that was "definitely and vigorously antievolutionist." He expressed astonishment at finding himself in a public forum like the Darwin Centennial Celebration, which indicated that "cultural evolution is becoming respectable and therefore popular," but he also added the rather cynical remark, "I don't think cultural evolutionists are going to be made overnight by the popularity of television and other public ceremonies and exhibitions."¹¹⁸ Despite White's outburst, most of the formal discussions and the contributed papers appeared to stay well within the existing divisions in anthropology, undermining Tax's organizational ambitions and occasional papers by anthropologists, like Alfred Kroeber, who called for a more synthetic long-term view.¹¹⁹

Another explanation for the rather tepid panel discussions is that they—and, to some extent, the contributed papers—were aimed for popular audiences. Original scientific research into evolution by the late 1950s would have been much too technical for a mostly general audience, even though the audience for the panels consisted of delegates and representatives of disciplines bearing on evolutionary study. The papers were also designed from the start to reflect the state of the art in each contributor's field, rather than to introduce novel insights. The panel discussions were also limited to five minutes and took place in front of no less than one thousand delegates (who held pre-arranged tickets) under the uncomfortable glare of klieg lights.¹²⁰ With eight or nine participants per panel, moreover, and with two chairs to guide discussion, spontaneous exchanges would have been difficult to generate. Discussion, for the most part, thus tended to be on such popular themes as the future of man, with special reference to general problems of population control, nuclear war, and other concerns stemming from the cold war.¹²¹

The panel discussions were not the only vehicle for scientific conversation. The Darwin Centennial Celebration included exhibits of an impressive collection of scientific literature, as well as of historical reissues of books that honored the publication of Darwin's *Origin*. Newer books on evolution, like Theodosius Dobzhansky's

¹¹⁶ The scientific dispute between Fisher and Wright is discussed in detail in Provine, *Sewall Wright and Evolutionary Biology* (cit. n. 37).

¹¹⁷ Thomas Goudge, "Darwin's Heirs," *The University of Toronto Quarterly*, 1961, 30:246–50, quotation on p. 248.

¹¹⁸ Leslie White, Transcripts to panel five, "Social and Cultural Evolution," p. 234, in Tax and Callender, *Evolution after Darwin* (cit. n. 16), vol. III.

¹¹⁹ Alfred L. Kroeber, "Evolution, History, and Culture," in Tax and Callender, *Evolution after Darwin*, vol. II, *The Evolution of Man*.

¹²⁰ See Tax, "The Celebration" (cit. n. 16).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Genetics and the Origin of Species (in its third edition), were part of the displays.¹²² Several halls were set up with long tables, posters outlining the state of evolution, and displays including memorabilia representing the Darwinian heritage.¹²³ Of special significance was a hallway exhibit some 126 feet in length that consisted of aluminum beams supporting double rows of posters. Titled "The Darwin Exhibit," it traced out the story of evolution through successive representational images. It had been borrowed and transported at great cost from the University of California at Los Angeles Biomedical Library, which had erected it for its own celebrations.¹²⁴

The University of Chicago Library held yet another exhibit on Darwin titled "The Influence of Darwin as Seen Through the Publication and Reaction to His Works." Books of historical interest included first editions of seventeen of Darwin's works from the University of Chicago Library and, of course, a first-edition *On the Origin of Species*.¹²⁵ The university bookstore held an additional display and made available books of historical importance and books by celebration participants for purchase; this was based on a list provided by Tax.¹²⁶ Other exhibits and displays in honor of the celebration were held far and wide in the Chicago area and included displays at Chicago booksellers. Nearby, the Chicago Natural History Museum created its own six-panel display on Darwin and evolution for participants and the public, and published a commemorative issue of its natural history journal assessing the current state of evolution by means of natural selection (see Figure 3).¹²⁷

Perhaps not as customary as literature exhibits at conferences until the 1950s were special screenings of films. Two films were shown for participants on the official program: an advance screening, or sneak preview, of a very recent film billed as "evolution in action" and titled *The Ladder of Life*, and a film and lecture by ethologist Niko Tinbergen titled *Evolutionary Aspects of Social Communication in Animals*.¹²⁸ The latter film was officially part of the Institute for High School Biology Teachers.¹²⁹

¹²² Participants' books were displayed at the University of Chicago Bookstore for purchase, along with a list of additional titles for even "greater scope." Sol Tax to a Mr. Passmore, 5 November 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 3.

¹²³ For the listing of memorabilia included in seventeen display cases see "Darwin Exhibit," Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 13.

¹²⁴ The documentation for this exhibit is in Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 13. The exhibit required a considerable coordination of efforts to assemble, especially from West Coast evolutionists. Some of this correspondence is included in the Hubbs Papers, 1927-1979, MC-S box 17, folder 25, "Darwin Anniversary, 1956."

¹²⁵ Presented to the university by Col. William M. Spencer of Chicago. Program, The University of Chicago Centennial Celebration, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 7, folder 1.

¹²⁶ Sol Tax to Mr. Passmore, 5 November 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 3; and see the Program, The University of Chicago Centennial Celebration, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 7, folder 1.

¹²⁷ The special issue of the *Chicago Natural History Museum Bulletin* included a lead historical article titled "Centennial of Darwin's 'Origin of Species' Hailed," by the curator of vertebrate anatomy, D. Dwight Davis. *Chicago Natural History Museum Bulletin*, 1959, 30:3-4. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 13. It also included a description of the special exhibit on p. 4: "Six panels tell the story of *Origin* by explaining the meaning of, and the evidence for, natural selection—the book's theory that in the 'struggle for existence' those characteristics will be retained that best enable an organism to cope with life and to survive."

¹²⁸ *The Ladder of Life* had been prepared by the Columbia Broadcasting System and was set to air on *Conquest* on 29 November. Joseph Krumgold to Sir Julian Huxley, 14 October 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 3; Michael Sklar to Sol Tax, 20 October 1959, *ibid.*; Barbara Emerson to Sol Tax, 19 November 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 8.

¹²⁹ Program, University of Chicago Darwin Centennial Celebration, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 7, folder 1.

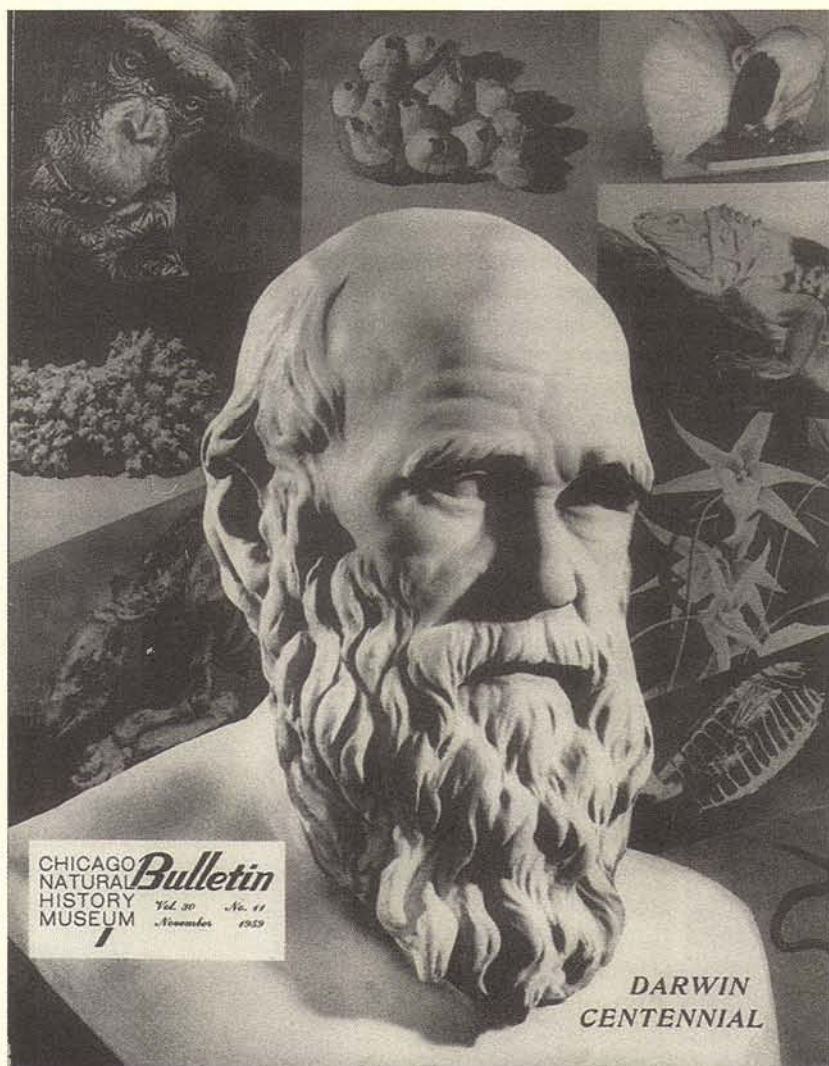


Figure 3. Cover of the Chicago Natural History Museum Bulletin, November 1959. Darwin Centennial Papers, Dept. of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Reproduced with permission.

Tax sought to “generously” invite “the whole world” to attend the celebration including nuns, ministers, and even a cardinal.¹³⁰ By the time the last invitation had gone out, some fifty panelists/contributors had finally agreed to attend the meetings, along with delegates from 189 institutions from around the world.¹³¹ The delegates had been invited to attend through an aggressive postcard campaign launched by

¹³⁰ Tax, “The Celebration” (cit. n. 16), quotation on p. 275. See also Cardinal Tisserant to Sir, 18 April 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 15.

¹³¹ Tax, “The Celebration” (cit. n. 16), quotation on p. 275.

Tax that reached over one thousand institutions of higher learning worldwide.¹³² The final tally of nearly 250 delegates and 2,500 registrants was remarkably large, considering that the conference was taking place at the height of the cold war. Bringing delegates and participants from iron-curtain countries was especially onerous for organizers and sometimes involved negotiations and interventions with the State Department.¹³³

VIII. SACRAMENT AND SACRILEGE: THANKSGIVING AND THE CONVOCATION CEREMONY

Conveniently, the five-day celebration at the University of Chicago coincided with the most American of holidays, and a secular one at that: Thanksgiving.¹³⁴ Participants could therefore observe dual celebratory functions: giving thanks for their American heritage, and giving thanks for their Darwinian heritage. The two had been brought beautifully in line on that day. In keeping with American tradition, the celebrants attended a banquet with the traditional Thanksgiving menu of turkey, mashed potatoes, and the like. The official banquet/dinner of the SSE, it also included the ill-fated presidential address by Edgar Anderson, which was to be the official toast to the anniversary celebration.

But the secular tone of this component of the celebration—and of the Darwinian heritage—was undermined by the grand culmination of the five-day celebration, also on Thanksgiving Thursday: the Convocation ceremony, which emulated the most sacred of ritual practices in evolutionary guise. An organizational problem of its own, the ceremony was staged with artful precision and was an exercise in the grandest of academic pomp and circumstance.¹³⁵ Dressed in full academic regalia (organizers had made prior arrangements with delegates for the renting of gowns; delegates provided their own hoods), delegates queued in orderly fashion as part of a grand procession from Mandel Hall, the site of the conference, to Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, whose bells and carillons were played for all in a “carillon concert and swinging peal.”¹³⁶ Even though it was overcast and chilly, with light snow on the ground, the celebrants cheerfully marched in procession (see Figure 4).

¹³² The letters of response are included in Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 8. Also see Sol Tax to Robert P. Houston, Jr., 5 November 1959, at the Department of State, in which Tax states that over one thousand delegates and learned societies had been invited. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 4, folder 3.

¹³³ The Soviet ecologist-mathematician G. F. Gause required special intervention with the Department of State. See the exchanges back and forth between interested parties in Darwin Centennial Papers, box 4, folder 3, especially Sol Tax to Robert B. Houston, Jr., 5 November 1959. So too did François Bordes, a French archaeologist from Bordeaux and a former Communist Party member. Sol Tax to François Bordes, 8 September 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, folder 6. Tax secured a visiting professorship for Bordes for the fall, 1959.

¹³⁴ Tax held the conference during the Thanksgiving holiday in order to include high-school and college science teachers. Sol Tax to Detlev Bronk, 11 February 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 5. See also the “Memorandum to Participants,” which explained reasons for the choice of dates, dated 24 October 1958, Darwin Centennial Papers box 6, folder 16.

¹³⁵ The program instructions are included in Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 10.

¹³⁶ A letter from Charles Callender to Sister Cecelia B. V. M. from the Department of Biology at Mundelein College, Chicago, reveals the extent to which the organizational details had been worked out in advance. Callender writes, “In answer to your earlier letter about academic dress at the convocation during the Darwin Centennial Celebration, the religious habit will be completely satisfactory. It will not be necessary to carry the hood, although you may do so if you wish.” Letter dated 10 September 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 8.



Figure 4. Convocation procession to Rockefeller Chapel. *Darwin Centennial Papers*, Dept. of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Reproduced with permission.

They filed into the imposing midwestern Gothic edifice and took their seats (pre-arranged according to a seating plan) to the moving sounds of the chapel organ playing Bach's Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor. Chancellor Lawrence Kimpton presided over the ceremony and led the singing of "America." In what may have appeared a contradiction in terms, the congregation of evolutionists also shared a prayer led by the Reverend W. Barnett Blakemore, Jr.¹³⁷

The mood of reverence abruptly ended, however, as Julian Huxley began to deliver his Convocation address.¹³⁸ From the pulpit of the chapel, Huxley delivered his lecture "The Evolutionary Vision" to an audience stunned by his revelations. Huxley's lecture boldly decreed that religion was an "organ of evolving man," and that the time had come for a "new organization of thought" based on the new evolutionary vision (see Figure 5).¹³⁹ In one especially inflammatory passage he proclaimed:

Evolutionary man can no longer take refuge from his loneliness in the arms of a divinized father-figure whom he has himself created, nor escape from the responsibility of making decisions by sheltering under the umbrella of Divine Authority, nor absolve

The quote is from a memorandum to Charles Callender from Marilyn Lickfield, who was with the chapel administration. The university organist, Mr. Heinrich Fleischner, played for the convocation ceremony. *Darwin Centennial Papers*, box 2, folder 10.

¹³⁷ Convocation Program, *Darwin Centennial Papers*, box 7, folder 1.

¹³⁸ The committee had tried to secure Jacques Barzun for the convocation address, but he declined because of previous commitments. Lawrence Kimpton to Jacques Barzun, 19 May 1959, *Darwin Centennial Papers*, box 2, folder 10; Jacques Barzun to Lawrence Kimpton, 25 May 1959, *ibid.*

¹³⁹ See Julian Huxley, "The Evolutionary Vision: The Convocation Address," in Tax and Callender, *Evolution after Darwin* (cit. n. 16), vol. III, quotations p. 257 and p. 256, respectively.

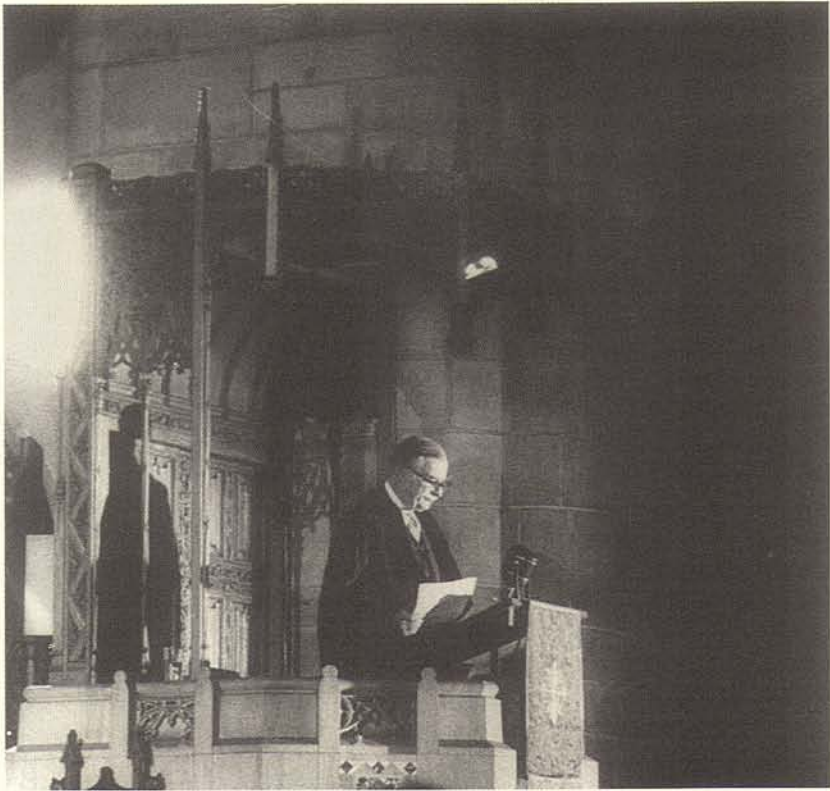


Figure 5. Sir Julian Huxley on the pulpit of Rockefeller Chapel delivering his address, "The Evolutionary Vision." Darwin Centennial Papers, Dept. of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Reproduced with permission.

himself from the hard task of meeting his present problems and planning his future by relying on the will of an omniscient, but unfortunately inscrutable, Providence.¹⁴⁰

The "evolutionary vision," as "opened up to us" by Charles Darwin, he closed, his speech soaring to crescendo, "exemplifies the truth that truth is great and will prevail, and the greater truth that truth will set us free." "Evolutionary truth," he added, freed humans from "subservient" fears, and showed the way to "our destiny and our duty."¹⁴¹

Needless to say, Huxley's "secular sermon" was not well received. Many of the audience members later reported that they had been stunned by the lack of discretion that Huxley displayed, though none had expressed themselves so publicly or vociferously as had the popular press, which feasted on the newsworthiness of Huxley's fire-and-brimstone secular sermon.¹⁴² One local press described the reaction thus:

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

¹⁴² Historian John Greene still vividly recalls the aftermath of Huxley's "secular sermon." He writes, "My friends told me that the Chancellor of the University felt embarrassed by Huxley's performance ('right up there in that pulpit!)" John Greene to Vassiliki Betty Smocovitis, 13 March 1996.

"Hush Shrouds Huxley's Talk: Evolution Talk Here Stirs Hushed Echoes"; another Catholic press from Cincinnati reported the news as "Science Doesn't Defeat Religion (Cheers did not Greet Atheist)."¹⁴³

But the mood shifted to solemnity again as the names and achievements of the honorary degree recipients were announced.¹⁴⁴ The anthropological cast to the celebration was apparent from the choice of awardees, who shared not so much an expertise in evolutionary biology as an interest in the evolution of man.¹⁴⁵ The awardees were Sir Charles Darwin, Theodosius Dobzhansky, Alfred Kroeber, Hermann Joseph Muller, George Gaylord Simpson, Sewall Wright, and Sir Julian Huxley. Both living descendants of Darwin and Huxley were so honored; curiously excluded from notice, however, were two of the leading architects of the evolutionary synthesis: G. Ledyard Stebbins and Ernst Mayr, both of whom were panelists-contributors to the celebration. From documents deposited as part of the celebration proceedings, the two men appear to have never even been entertained as possible recipients, although both by then had been prominent and visible leaders of evolutionary biology.¹⁴⁶ Possibly, both Mayr and Stebbins had not distinguished themselves in anthropological areas dealing with the evolution and future of man in the way that the recipients had already done, and had therefore not been that central to Tax or the committee's vision of the event. Nor did they have especially close ties to the University of Chicago.

From the program, it appears that the Convocation ceremony was considerably long (it began at three o'clock and preceded the banquet at six).¹⁴⁷ Closing highlights recognized the host institution, the University of Chicago, by playing the "Alma Mater." The sacral function of the ceremony was once again restored as celebrants received a final benediction before they exited to the music of Max Reger's Toccata in D Minor.¹⁴⁸

With all the sanctification of Darwin and evolution through ritual acts and soaring music in a sacred setting, it was small wonder that Edgar Anderson returned from the convocation feeling that he had a "religious experience."¹⁴⁹ The strong emotions that it generated in him may, in part, explain his inability to give his presidential address at the Thanksgiving dinner, which followed immediately after the Convocation.¹⁵⁰

IX. DARWIN'S LIFE STORY STAGED AS MIDWESTERN MUSICAL: *TIME WILL TELL*

As if the Convocation ceremony did not have enough pomp, pageantry, and spectacle, the five-day celebration included additional light entertainment for the cele-

¹⁴³ *Chicago's American*, 30 November 1959; *Catholic Telegraph Register*, 11 December 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers.

¹⁴⁴ The convocation ceremony was filmed by *Encyclopedia Britannica*. A copy of the original film is housed in the media room of the special collections. See film F-134, Darwin Centennial Papers.

¹⁴⁵ Sewall Wright is the possible exception, but he was a professor emeritus, having been on the faculty of the University of Chicago. He was the sole nomination by H. Burr Steinbach, the chairman of zoology who stated Wright was "the outstanding candidate." H. Burr Steinbach to Dean Wendell R. Harrison, 3 February 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 11.

¹⁴⁶ Document titled "Report on Honorary Degrees," undated, *ibid.* Other names considered included Bernhard Rensch, G. F. Gause, and A. Irving Hallowell.

¹⁴⁷ Draft of Convocation Program, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 10. Also see the final program, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 7, folder 1.

¹⁴⁸ Convocation Program, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 7, folder 1.

¹⁴⁹ See cit. n. 14.

¹⁵⁰ See cit. n. 15.

brants. In the best spirit of American popular culture in the 1950s, Sol Tax had actively supported the production of a theatrical play as a special evening entertainment for celebrants. His initial desire was to stage a production of Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee's well-known Broadway play dramatizing the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial titled *Inherit the Wind*.¹⁵¹ Studs Terkel was to be the director and Melvyn Douglas was to be an actor, but plans for this fell through.¹⁵² Preliminary notes made by Tax indicate that his early plans for the entertainment portion of the celebration included a midwestern musical production—a “Darwin Musical Extravaganza”—with the tentative titles *Centennial Centenary* or *The Time is Back in Joint*. He wrote of his plans, “It is designed as a light musical but strongly integrated unitary piece rather than a ‘review.’ (Thus like Oklahoma, etc.)” In keeping with the academic gravity of the occasion, it would, however, “have an intellectual impact.”¹⁵³

His original concept of the play drew on a visionary, futuristic theme moralizing evolution and human society as reflected in the 1959 celebrations through the perspective of international celebrants in the year 2059. The theme of progress was strongly embedded in this scenario, and was indicated clearly in the transcript: “PROGRESS is assumed, and apparently with reason.” If there was a message in the story relayed by Tax's futuristic scenario, it was to further endorse the success of the 1959 celebrations. Tax's vision of his celebration and its role in history was nothing short of grandiose and offers considerable insight into his motivations. Describing his futuristic play, he wrote:

It becomes clear now that this is a world-wide celebration of the ‘Centennial Centennial’ (indeed it will come out later that we catch a salute from some not too distant planet). Why? because the 1959 Darwin Centennial turned out to be an event that changed the course of history by helping to resolve the crisis of the era.

Closing with the following, Tax thought to humanize his plot, leaving enough room for the indomitable human spirit:

An argument for a ‘personal plot’—a love triangle or other problem—is that it ought to become clear that no problems of the world at this level have been solved. A major lesson is that mankind lives with his imperfections, but he is free to live with them in a variety of ways—some more destructive than others. ‘Human nature’ does not change; whatever it is, it is irrelevant.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, *Inherit the Wind* (New York: Dramatist's Play Service, 1958); also see Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, *Inherit the Wind* (New York: Bantam, 1960). The play opened on Broadway in 1955. The first film was made in 1960. Edward J. Larson briefly discusses the significance of this play in the context of cold-war politics in *Summer for the Gods* (cit. n. 98).

¹⁵² Sol Tax to Studs Terkel, 6 October 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 3; Melvyn Douglas to Sol Tax, 15 March 1958, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 1. The precise reason for cancelling *Inherit the Wind* is unclear. A letter from John Reich, head of the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, to Tax dated 10 April 1958 indicates that there was a conflict in scheduling, with Reich having already committed his theatre to other productions for the month of November in 1959. *Ibid.* Tax did not easily give up his wish of staging *Inherit the Wind*. Documents indicate that he was trying to stage *Inherit the Wind* in addition to his *Time Will Tell* until late into the planning stages of the celebration.

¹⁵³ Notes by Sol Tax for a musical play to be written for the Darwin Centennial Celebration, November 1959. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 7.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

For reasons not entirely clear, however, and perhaps fortunately for the celebrations, Tax's strange play did not materialize.¹⁵⁵ Instead, the Darwin Centennial Committee (including Tax) sought to produce a more traditional, yet festive reenactment of Darwin's life story with the title *Time Will Tell* (picking up the theme of time from Tax's original scenario). (Earlier titles considered included "Where's Charlie," "The Monkey Century," and "A Century Note".)¹⁵⁶ What could be more fitting entertainment for celebrants than a play on Darwin's life in musical form? And the life of Darwin did lend itself readily to such a production. Rodgers and Hammerstein being beyond the committee's budget, a local duo of musician and lyricist—billed in one advertisement as "those gifted upper primates"—were hired instead.¹⁵⁷ Ashenhurst and Pollack were an unlikely combination who were to have only the briefest of musical careers beyond their staging of *Time Will Tell*: Robert Ashenhurst was an assistant professor in the Graduate School of Business Administration, and Robert Pollack was a local investment broker and former drama critic for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. With a cast of forty-five "talented homo sapiens," the lead of Charles Darwin fell to a Chicago restaurateur by the name of Rick Riccardo.¹⁵⁸ Tax had designated his play as "a serious, though light-hearted entertainment for the celebration participants," and that is certainly what he got.

The play was an elaborate production complete with original costumes and staging (see Figure 6).¹⁵⁹ It was widely publicized with posters, flyers, and even mobiles of replicas of the *Beagle* hanging in prominent locations.¹⁶⁰ The play was a tremendous success, playing every night for celebrants (see Figure 7). The musical scores and librettos preserved in the archival documents of the celebration indicate an imaginative and lively reenactment of Darwin's life story (see Figure 8).¹⁶¹ Songs included titles from key events in Darwin's life, like "Homeward Plows the Beagle," "Trilobite," "Marry, Marry, Marry," and "The Meeting of the BAAS." The title song, "Time Will Tell," played on an historical inversion as the Darwin celebration was validated by the actors' reference to the future (twentieth-century) assessment of Darwin. Members of the audience thus heard what they already knew: that the century had made a difference:¹⁶²

A hundred years hence
Will Darwin make sense
To the likes of us
Who are on the fence.

¹⁵⁵ The change in plays appears to have taken place after Ashenhurst and Pollack took over the musical production.

¹⁵⁶ Memo, Carl W. Larsen to "Belowlisted," 23 July 1959. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 1.

¹⁵⁷ Illustrated advertisement for *Time Will Tell*. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 2.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* (quotation).

Rick Riccardo was a well-known Chicago resident (he was sometimes called "Ricky"; I could find no connection to the character of the same name in the popular television comedy *I Love Lucy*); his restaurant, Riccardo's, was very popular at the time. The part of Emma Wedgwood Darwin was played by Jo Anne Schlag, and Win Stracke, a TV and radio folk singer, was cast as the bosun on the *Beagle*.

¹⁵⁹ *Time Will Tell*, Program from the Play, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 16.

¹⁶⁰ Memo, Carroll G. Bowen to Marion Carnovsky, 31 August 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 2.

¹⁶¹ Darwin Centennial Papers, box 1, folder 15.

¹⁶² *Time Will Tell*, a musical play by Robert Pollack and Robert Ashenhurst, *ibid.*

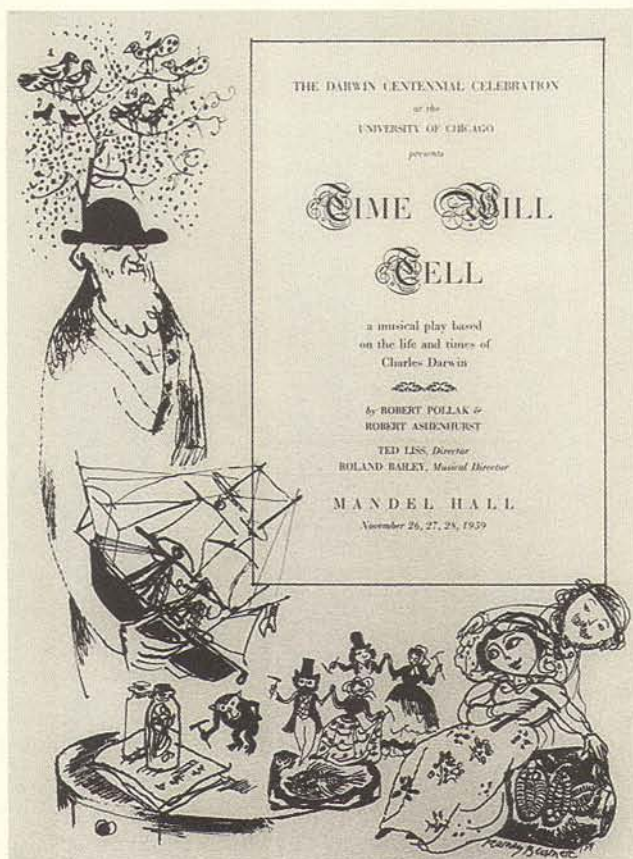


Figure 6. Program from the musical play *Time Will Tell*. *Darwin Centennial Papers*, Dept. of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Reproduced with permission.

Will a century make a difference?
 Only time will tell
 Only time will tell!¹⁶³

As a souvenir of the celebration, a long-playing vinyl record of the musical was made available for purchase.¹⁶⁴

On the surface, celebrants were treated to a lively, imaginative, and clever form of entertainment. But the theatrical production also saw, briefly and metaphorically, the resurrection of the Darwin figure and his life story playing itself out—if in a somewhat modernized, sensationalized, and Americanized form.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ At the time of writing, I have been unable to locate a copy of the record. Registrants could purchase the album of two records for \$8. Registrants Order Form, *Darwin Centennial Papers*, box 2, folder 4. Another advertisement is for a twelve-inch, long-playing record that sold for \$5. Advertisement, *Darwin Centennial Papers*, box 2, folder 2.

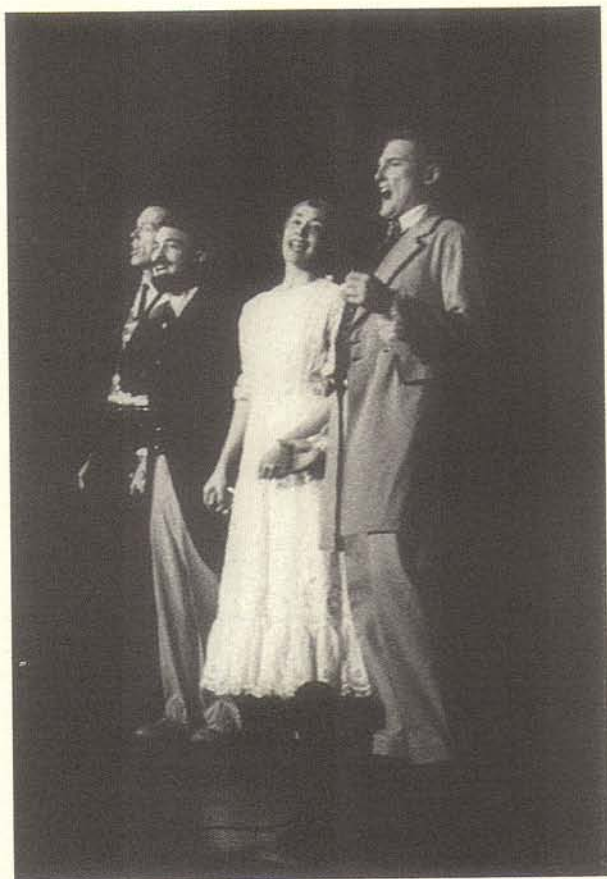


Figure 7. Scene from the musical. Darwin Centennial Papers, Dept. of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Reproduced with permission.

X. MAXIMIZING PROFIT: IMMORTALIZING THE CELEBRATION AND SPREADING THE NEWS FAR AND WIDE

Despite a final total accounting cost of \$59,022.06 and a hefty \$7,032.46 total net deficit, Tax—and apparently most of the university administration—felt that “nobody doubts that the Centennial was worth whatever it cost.”¹⁶⁵ The celebration’s “value” to the university, he wrote, “must heavily outweigh the University funds invested in it.”¹⁶⁶

The investment in material, personnel, and financial resources made by the University of Chicago thus required the maximization of profit, through extensive press coverage and some sort of permanent reminder of the celebration. In the spirit of maximizing profit, ensuring permanence, and transmitting news of the conference

¹⁶⁵ Final costs given in Final Accounting, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 18.

¹⁶⁶ Memorandum, Sol Tax to R. Wendell Harrison, 5 May 1960, titled “Darwin Centennial Celebration accounting and business affairs,” *Ibid.*

I-1-WS ONLY TIME WILL TELL

DEIGHTLY (ALC) (11)

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Figure 8. Musical score and lyrics to the title song, “Only Time Will Tell.” Darwin Centennial Papers, Dept. of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Reproduced with permission.

far and wide, Tax and his committee planned to continue to cash in on the celebration after it ended.¹⁶⁷

They approached the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (EB) to produce a twenty-five minute documentary film of the occasion. Its purpose, as restated by the president of EB, was “to further education and interest in the subject of evolution.”¹⁶⁸ As a result, in Pathe news fashion, cameras were turned on the celebration, covering especially the panels and the Convocation ceremony. The completed 16-mm sound film ran for 28.5 minutes and, according to advertisements, attempted to “capture the spirit of the Celebration.”¹⁶⁹ Later, when the deficit from the celebration had become apparent, organizers recalled that the film was a “magnificent continuing public relations asset,

¹⁶⁷ Whether the play operated at a profit or sustained a loss became a point of disagreement between Robert Pollack and Sol Tax. See the exchanges between them, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, Addendum.

¹⁶⁸ Maurice Mitchell to Sol Tax, 20 June 1960, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 9, folder 5; this echoed Tax’s earlier letter: Sol Tax to David Ridgeway, 5 May 1950, *ibid*.

¹⁶⁹ Notice, Sol Tax to “Dear Registrant,” *ibid*. The film could be purchased or rented for use.

that could in addition supply cash income to the University."¹⁷⁰ The University of Chicago did not hesitate to cash in on the occasion yet again (though it charged no admission) when, at the premiere of the film in 1960, it invited former geology student John Thomas Scopes as a special speaker to further legitimate the screening and the celebration.¹⁷¹ Scopes probably helped to draw a larger audience to the screening than would otherwise have attended.

But perhaps the most effective way of transmitting and, at the same time, recording news of the celebration was through the media campaign, the structure of which Tax carefully used to his advantage. In addition to promotional news alerting local and national audiences of the event (prepared by Sheldon Garber), the day-to-day celebration happenings were reported widely in newspapers and on radio news.¹⁷² The actual press corps at the celebration numbered some twenty-seven reporters, most of whom stayed for the full five days.¹⁷³ No less than three full archival folders hold newspaper clippings covering the occasion. Items featured photographs of participants, news of discoveries of importance to evolution, and pronouncements on the status and future of modern man. Suitably sensationalistic titles like "Society to Toast Darwin's Ghost" and "It's easy to converse with scientists, if you know what Zinjanthropos means" drew special attention to celebratory events.¹⁷⁴ Some also transmitted the sober message that evolution by means of natural selection was a fact. The *New York Times* column reporting the event ran the title "Evolution a Fact, Darwin Fete Told."¹⁷⁵

By far the most noteworthy item of the celebration was Huxley's pronouncement of the end of conventional religion and its substitution with evolutionary humanism, the coverage of which was unfavorable to Huxley (and frequently to Tax).¹⁷⁶ These news items generated further interest and response from the public, which was especially vocal about its displeasure with Huxley's negative attitude towards conventional religious belief. But perhaps the most interesting—and revelatory—of the clippings, from the pages of the *Milwaukee Journal*, demonstrated the themes of generational continuity in the celebration. The nineteenth-century Darwin and Huxley were shown alongside their living representatives, bringing renewed life to the Darwinian heritage for American popular audiences. The caption read, "Gentle Darwins and Fierce Huxleys: Old Tom, the Tiger, and His Intense Grandson Are a

¹⁷⁰ Memorandum, Sol Tax to R. Wendell Harrison, 5 May 1960, titled "Darwin Centennial Celebration accounting and business affairs." Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, Addendum.

¹⁷¹ The advertisement flyer includes the following: "The Darwin Centennial Committee presents Encyclopaedia Britannica's Documentary Film of the Darwin Centennial Celebration. Guest: John Thomas Scopes (Dayton, Tenn. 1925 'Monkey Trail')." Flyer, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 9, folder 5. A panel discussion on "The Scopes Trial of 1924 as Seen Today" was scheduled following the film. Letter dated 18 October 1960, *ibid.* Also see the press release titled "Immediate," dated 19 October 1960, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 7.

¹⁷² Many of the press releases are in Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 6.

¹⁷³ Document titled "Press and Public Response to the Darwin Centennial," Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 2.

¹⁷⁴ *Chicago's American*, 23 September 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers; Lois Baur, *Chicago's American*, 23 November 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers.

¹⁷⁵ *New York Times*, 26 November 1959. The *Milwaukee Journal* picked up the same theme: "Aims Stated in Evolution: 'Teach as Fact,'" *Milwaukee Journal*, 2 December 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers.

¹⁷⁶ Document titled "Press and Public Response to the Darwin Centennial," Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 2.

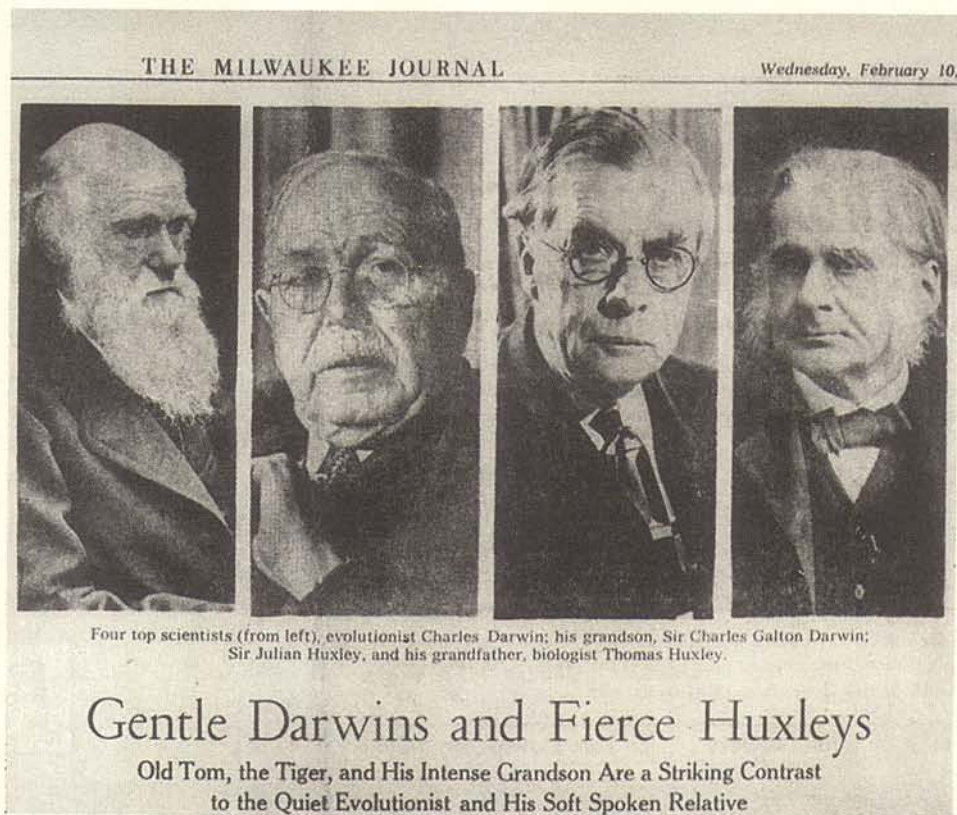


Figure 9. The Milwaukee Journal, 10 February 1960. Darwin Centennial Papers, Dept. of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Reproduced with permission.

Striking Contrast to the Quiet Evolutionist and His Soft Spoken Relative” (see Figure 9).¹⁷⁷ All told, the clippings compiled by the University of Chicago public relations department numbered some 196 items, from fifty-seven publications.¹⁷⁸ There were over 4,147 inches of standard newspaper type; as the official public relations analysis put it, “more than enough to fill a 23-page paper without ads.”¹⁷⁹

Of interest to more intellectual American audiences was the production at WBBM-TV (a CBS affiliate) of a talk show featuring the most “distinguished” (and photogenic) of the participants. At the formal invitation of the producer Jerry Levin, who viewed it as an “intellectual calamity” to “confine” the “distinguished men” only to campus meetings, Tax was encouraged to bring his celebration “to an extremely wide audience, which has proven by its unprecedented size that there are literally hundreds of thousands of people in this city who would be quite disappointed were they not to be given the chance to hear and see the men involved in this

¹⁷⁷ *Milwaukee Journal*, 10 February 1960, Darwin Centennial Papers.

¹⁷⁸ Document titled “Press and Public Response to the Darwin Centennial,” Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 2.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

event."¹⁸⁰ Noted Chicago host and *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Irving Kupcinet brought Sol Tax, Sir Charles Darwin, Sir Julian Huxley, astronomer Harlow Shapley, and no less an American luminary than Adlai Stevenson (who as former governor and presidential candidate in 1952 and 1956 also attended the festivities) to Kupcinet's late Saturday night "conversation program," *At Random*.¹⁸¹ Later aired repeatedly to American audiences, it was reviewed as being one of the most intellectually stimulating and engaging conversation programs aired that year. Recalling the occasion on the death of astronomer Harlow Shapley in his *Sun-Times* column some thirteen years later, Kupcinet wrote, "We often cite that panel as most [sic] articulate and intelligent we've ever assembled . . ." ¹⁸²

Radio programs were also kept abreast of the celebration and transmitted not only news, but also talk-show programs with the visiting scientists. The local university-based (WTTW) radio series *All Things Considered* scheduled several programs around the panel discussions. Visiting scientists like Huxley and Alfred Kroeber joined Sol Tax and Ilza Veith for a round-table discussion transmitted to Chicago audiences.¹⁸³

The most permanent of recordings, however, and possibly the one having the most intellectual influence, was the publication of the conference papers in a three-volume, comprehensive work. Titled *Evolution After Darwin*, 1,250 copies of the gray-and-blue volumes were published quickly by the University of Chicago Press and transmitted to libraries and individuals far and wide. In preparing the volumes, Tax once again put his organizational talents to work: not only were the scientific details of the conference included with all of the articles, but also transcripts of the panel discussions. Tax's historical reflections on the celebration, event memorabilia, photographs, and transcripts from radio and television talk shows were all included in the last of the three volumes with the assistance of Charles Callender. The profits generated by the volumes would help to defray celebration expenses and reduce the deficit.¹⁸⁴

XI. AFTER THE DARWIN CENTENNIAL: "REFLECTED GLORY" AND THE "WORDS OF THE DEVIL"

In addition to the daily commentary that filled the newspapers and the letters of thanks that poured in, response to the celebration was significant. Articles reporting

¹⁸⁰ Jerry Levin to Sol Tax, 2 October 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 9, folder 6; Jerry Levin to Sol Tax, 7 October 1959, *ibid.*; also see the letter of invitation to Julian Huxley: Jerry Levin to Julian Huxley, 24 September 1959, *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ The transcripts of *At Random* were published in Tax and Callender, *Evolution after Darwin* (cit. n. 16), vol. III, pp. 41-65.

¹⁸² "Kup's Column," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 7 December 1972, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, Addendum.

¹⁸³ Lee Wilcox to Sol Tax, 26 May 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 3; document from Lee Wilcox, Office of Radio-TV, undated, *ibid.* The transcripts of the talk show were published in Tax and Callender, *Evolution after Darwin* (cit. n. 16), vol. III, pp. 263-70.

¹⁸⁴ Memorandum, Sol Tax to R. Wendell Harrison, 5 May 1960, titled "Darwin Centennial Celebration accounting and business affairs," Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, Addendum. According to this document, the long-playing vinyl record of *Time Will Tell* had "broken even." As of 1968 the total royalties earned from *Evolution after Darwin* were \$11,117.41. Of the three volumes, volume I, *The Evolution of Life*, sold the greater number. This is not surprising as this volume dealt with more conventional topics in evolutionary biology. Memorandum, J. Ratuszny to Maurice English, 21 October 1968, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, Addendum. Tax signed his royalties over to the centennial celebration to decrease its deficit.

on the festivities took many forms for different audiences, from high-school teachers to alumni of the University of Chicago to scientists reading technical journals the world over.

The response was overwhelmingly positive in nature. Many local dignitaries wrote to Tax to state that the celebration had worked to establish the University of Chicago as the primary site of learning in America's Midwest. One memorandum to Tax from Marie-Anne Honeywell stated this explicitly. She wrote, reporting on other conversations (including among Citizens Board Members at the University of Chicago's Quadrangle Club), that "The concensus [sic] is that this event has reaffirmed the position of the University as the center of learning in the Middle West."¹⁸⁵ Others wrote to say how much they enjoyed not only the scientific sessions, but also the musical productions, which had packed audiences.

Negative responses were also notable, but were mostly directed to Huxley's "pulpit" speech on evolution and not to the celebration as a whole. Huxley's oration could not have found a more unsympathetic audience. A "regional evangelical stronghold," Chicago had been proclaimed "the evangelical capital of the U.S.A." by *Christian Life* magazine only in 1952.¹⁸⁶ Even the University of Chicago had a strongly defined religious history.¹⁸⁷ It is not surprising, then, that large numbers of those who learned of the occasion reacted negatively: the archival file folders bulge with responses, many from outraged individuals who had read of Huxley's controversial "vision" and what it meant for conventional religion in newspaper reports. The official public relations analysis determined that this, and the Institute on Science and Theology, were the "outstanding spot news events of the conference."¹⁸⁸ A copy of a note to the British Embassy sent to Tax urged the immediate deportation of Huxley because of his Convocation address. It stated Huxley "should be reprimanded and sent home under censure for daring enter and enjoy the hospitality of the people of the United States and at the same time endeavoring to undermine the moral foundation of our being, daring express his theory of Godlessness, all has been evolved, rather than of God." The letter closed with an official challenge to a public debate.¹⁸⁹ Another letter addressed to the president of the University of Chicago, from a self-described Cuban writer, poet, and newspaperman, referred to Huxley as a "Super Imbecile."¹⁹⁰ Yet another letter condemned the celebration generally:

God is speaking to you now thru me—because for you to deny 'The Truth' As I am telling it—you are condemning yourself & others to utter darkness for ever . . .

All the money that is being spent on this useless 5 day convention should go to an orphanage of some church. because know [sic] good will come of it as it is only the

¹⁸⁵ Memorandum, Marie-Anne Honeywell to Sol Tax, 3 December, 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 9, folder 1.

¹⁸⁶ Joel A. Carpenter, "Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929–1942," *Church History*, 1980, 49:62–75. Chicago was also home to that "Vatican of Fundamentalism," the Moody Bible Institute.

¹⁸⁷ James P. Wind, *The Bible and the University: The Messianic Vision of William Rainey Harper* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholar's Press, 1987).

¹⁸⁸ Document titled "Press and Public Response to the Darwin Centennial," Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 2, quotation on p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ William J. Taylor, Sr., to the British Embassy, 2 December 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 9, folder 2.

¹⁹⁰ J. Campillo to the President of the University of Chicago, 28 November 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 9, folder 3.

work & words of the [sic] Devil—who is behind it all to destroy the Holy Bible & cause dis belief [sic].¹⁹¹

Tax's response to the letters of outrage and complaint from theologians and the lay public is not revealed through the documents deposited with the Darwin Centennial Papers, but there is some indication that Tax was upset by Huxley's inappropriate speech. Possibly, he chose not to respond to the most outrageous of these letters; he did, however, respond thoughtfully to one request for further conversation on the issue of science and religion precipitated by the Institute on Science and Theology. Writing firmly, yet gently, Tax defended the "fact" of evolution as it had been emerging from the panels. He wrote, "The Darwin Centennial showed that by now the basic scientific issue is settled as much as scientific issues are ever settled."¹⁹²

The "fact" was far from "settled," however. Huxley's controversial lecture, the Convocation ceremony, and the excessive attention given to the Darwin centennial was noted by a growing and vociferous minority of evangelicals, who were outraged by the apparent and public triumph of the Darwinian world view. In response, a stream of antievolution literature began to appear shortly after the celebration, the most influential of which was John C. Whitcomb and Henry Morris's *The Genesis Flood*.¹⁹³ More than any other, this book ushered in the next wave of "scientific creationists," who launched a very public critique of the legitimacy of evolutionary science. The galvanizing effect of the Darwin centennial was explicitly noted by Henry Morris in later reflections, who stated that "The Great Darwinian Centennial" was only matched by the Scopes Monkey Trial in bringing to light issues on the fundamental differences between creation and evolutionary science. But while the Scopes Monkey Trial had brought embarrassment to creationists and had had a dampening effect on their organizations, he noted, the Darwin centennial had a catalyzing and unifying effect, bringing coherence to the group threatened directly by extremes of evolutionary belief. Targeting Huxley's "blatantly atheistic pronouncements" in his Convocation address, Morris described the history of scientific creationism thus:

Evolutionism had, indeed, apparently become triumphant by this time. Creationism, except for isolated pockets of fundamentalists, seemed dead—most certainly among scientists! The immense and favorable publicity accorded to the Darwin Centennial year, especially the great Darwin 'worship service' at Chicago, where speaker after speaker rhapsodized about Darwin's contributions to the life of mankind, and exhorted each other and all their disciples to go on to further glories of evolutionary achievement, seemed to be the final nail in the coffin of creationism and even of meaningful Christian theism.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ This letter was addressed "To Whom It May Concern: 1. Dr. Leakey, 2. Mr. Huxley, 3. Sol Tax, 4. Everett Olson, and many more." It was signed "From one who knows the 'Truth' that our Lord Lives & Know it all. You don't that is for sure." Dated 26 November 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 9, folder 2.

¹⁹² Sol Tax to Monsignor John M. Kelly, 14 December 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 9, folder 1.

¹⁹³ John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1961).

¹⁹⁴ Henry M. Morris, *A History of Modern Creationism* (San Diego: Master Book Publishers, 1984), quotations on pp. 74–5. Morris also felt that the Darwin centennial fed into the Biological Sciences and Curriculum Study (BSCS) that was launched in 1959. The importance of the Darwin centennial to creationist causes in the later half of the twentieth century is noted in James Moore, "The Creationist Cosmos of Protestant Fundamentalism," in *Fundamentalisms and Society*, eds. Mar-

Huxley's own response to the controversy his lecture had generated was consistent with his egocentric personality: while recognizing the bad feelings his speech had provoked he still refused to acknowledge that it had marred the celebration. Reflecting on the event years later in his *Memoirs II*, he admitted that the speech was "perhaps not appropriate in a chapel." Referring to his "evolutionary vision" for human affairs, he stated:

I had already affirmed this view in various books and essays, but here in Chicago, from a chapel pulpit, it shocked many orthodox Middle-Westerners—and much upset Professor Tax. He feared that the whole celebration would be damaged by my utterance, in spite of the fact that I insisted, here as elsewhere, that some form of religion, some self-transcending experience, was universal and apparently inevitable—and psychologically rewarding—in all human societies.

In an all too characteristically dismissive manner, he added, "Actually, I do not think that my preachment damaged the celebrations. Anyhow, a book, edited by Sol Tax and containing a record of all the discussions and speeches, including my 'sermon,' was published early in the following year and had a wide circulation."¹⁹⁵

As the 1,384-page, three-volume set of the proceedings, *Evolution after Darwin*, made its way to readers, both the news and scientific content of the celebration reached an even wider audience. Book reviews were, for the most part, favorable and praised the breadth of the articles and the range of expertise held by the contributors.¹⁹⁶ A 1960 review in *Science* by anthropologist W. W. Howells, for example, singled out the contributions concerned with the evolution of human culture as the most "interesting" because they drew attention to the diversity of anthropologists' perspectives on the parallels between biological and cultural evolution.¹⁹⁷ Yet another reviewer for the *University of Toronto Quarterly* stressed the importance of the synthetic theory of evolution and singled out biologists like Muller, Dobzhansky, Simpson, Mayr, Huxley, Stebbins, and Wright, whose "outlook dominated the proceedings."¹⁹⁸ The celebration was praised as a whole and described as an organizational "tour-de-force."¹⁹⁹ According to Tax, the sales of the book were "good," and it continued to sell into the next decade.²⁰⁰

Of considerable interest is Tax's most historical move of all, the orderly preservation of relevant documents from the celebration. Catalogued and housed in the Uni-

tin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 42–72; Willard Gatewood, Jr., "From Scopes to Creation Science," *The Proceedings and Papers of the Georgia Association of Historians*, 1983, pp. 1–18; and Gilbert, *Redeeming Culture* (cit. n. 6). For a history of creationism in the United States see Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

¹⁹⁵ Julian Sorell Huxley, *Memories II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), quotation on p. 192.

¹⁹⁶ George Basalla, "Review of *Evolution After Darwin*," *Library Journal*, 1961, 86:588; Bean, "Review of *Issues in Evolution*" (cit. n. 114); W. W. Howells, "Review of *Evolution After Darwin*, volume 2, *The Evolution of Man: Mind, Culture and Society*," *Science*, 1960, 131:1601–02; Goudge, "Darwin's Heirs" (cit. n. 117).

¹⁹⁷ Howells, "Review of *Evolution After Darwin*," cit. n. 196.

¹⁹⁸ Goudge, "Darwin's Heirs" (cit. n. 117).

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

²⁰⁰ Sol Tax to Kate Brown, 6 May 1970, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, Addendum; also see Memorandum, Sol Tax to R. Wendell Harrison, 5 May 1960, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, Addendum. For sales figures on the volume see cit. n. 184.

versity of Chicago, the documents retell a history of their own, the most interesting of which relates, once again, to the tense—and complex—relations between international organizers.

A curious thing happened: in 1961 Tax sent three cartons of celebration documents back to England to be housed permanently at the Darwin Museum in Down House.²⁰¹ According to Tax's historical recollection, this was at Huxley's request.²⁰² If this were the case, then one may view this act as a return of the new century's Darwinian heritage to its original home in England. But another source indicates that this may have happened after Tax learned that a delegation of twenty Soviet scientists had personally deposited considerable memorabilia of their own Soviet celebration, including medallions, posters, and stamps, at Down House in a "special pilgrimage."²⁰³ Tax may have responded to what he perceived as a competitive gesture that undermined the permanence of the American celebration by depositing the cartons with the American memorabilia to Down House.²⁰⁴ Possibly some combination of both may explain Tax's action, but his magnanimous efforts came to little, as the documents were returned to the University of Chicago for permanent safekeeping for unknown reasons. Tax did, however, secure the participation of Americans in the historic memory of Darwin by sending copies of *Evolution after Darwin* to be permanently housed at Down House. Even this small gesture was perceived as a newsworthy event.²⁰⁵

XII. A SURPRISINGLY "AHISTORICAL" EVENT

If the Darwin Centennial Celebration was any indication, just about everyone appeared to be involved in the one hundredth anniversary of Darwin's epoch-making book by the closing of 1959—all, that is, but the most obvious group: historians of science. Considering that the celebration was to serve an historical function, the paucity of historians of science as formal celebrants and contributors is notable. With the exception of Robert Stauffer, who served as the official delegate to the celebration from the History of Science Society, few historians of science participated formally or contributed scholarship.²⁰⁶

In the early stages of planning Tax had envisioned that the conference would have

²⁰¹ Sol Tax to the American Express Company, 20 October 1961, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, Addendum. The letter authorized and gave instructions to ship the three cartons to the curator of the Darwin Museum. The items were insured for \$500.

²⁰² Sol Tax to unknown recipient, August 1985, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, Addendum; Tax informed Huxley that he was returning the material. Sol Tax to Julian Huxley, 20 September 1961, *ibid.*

²⁰³ Newspaper clipping titled "Books Mark Darwin Centennial Fete" by Ruth Moore, undated and unidentified. *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ The competition with the Soviet Union is clearly stated in Ruth Moore's newspaper account. See cit. n. 203.

²⁰⁵ See cit. n. 203.

²⁰⁶ Robert Stauffer was listed as a delegate from HSS in the convocation program. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 7, folder 1. Veith, the historian of medicine on the Darwin Centennial Committee, wrote to Dorothy Stimson early in 1956 to informally request cooperation from the History of Science Society. Ilza Veith to Dorothy Stimson, 27 February 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 6. In a letter dated 18 July 1956, Veith reports that "The History of Science Society has, through Dr. Stimson, indicated its willingness to cooperate in our celebration." Ilza Veith to I. Bernard Cohen, 18 July 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 2.

three topics that would be published in advance of the meeting in three volumes.²⁰⁷ The third of these he planned as an historical assessment.²⁰⁸ Yet the completed conference three-volume set, *Evolution after Darwin*, had no formal historical contribution at all, let alone an entire third volume devoted to historical aspects of evolution, a fact that drew some negative criticism from Chicago humanities faculty who charged Tax and the committee with “scholarly parochialism.”²⁰⁹ Ilza Veith, one of the committee members, had an interest in the history of medicine, yet her own contribution “Creation and Evolution in the Far East” seemed only tangentially relevant to the central function of the occasion.²¹⁰

Historical documents reveal that Tax and Veith had tried valiantly to secure noted historians of science for the celebration and support from the History of Science Society for the historical portion of the conference and volume, but ultimately failed. Beginning with I. Bernard Cohen in the summer of 1956, Tax and Veith sought historians of science to play an active role.²¹¹ According to Veith’s account, Cohen seemed very interested initially, but after consideration declined, because he could not “take on another job.”²¹² According to Veith, both Cohen and Charles C. Gillispie, whom Veith next approached, were equally interested, but like Cohen, Gillispie seemed “baffled by the task of getting ten authors to write something new in this field.” She concluded, “[N]obody seems to be able to think of any other American historian of science who has worked on evolution. Therefore he [Gillispie] seems our only bet at the moment.”²¹³ Tax formally invited Gillispie to Chicago in the fall of 1956 to discuss the historical portion of the celebration. Gillispie traveled to Chicago, but ultimately expressed reservations about taking on the editorial work until funds were available to pay potential contributors and until a firm commitment to proceed was made by organizers. He also added that “the possibility must be faced that I shall prove unable to get some or all of the contributors whom we want—the number of qualified historians of science is strictly finite. In fact, it is about the same as the number of essays that we want.”²¹⁴ Tax made one more formal approach when he invited John C. Greene to serve as editor and organizer, but

²⁰⁷ The first topic was biological evolution, the second was the impact of evolution on the study of “man” and his culture, and the third was the history of evolution and its consequences. Tax hoped that Karl P. Schmidt would edit the first portion and Robert Redfield would edit the second topic as well as serve as general editor. Ilza Veith to I. B. Cohen, 18 July 1956. Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 2. No doubt, the fact that both died during the early planning stages altered these plans.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Leonard B. Meyer to Sol Tax, 6 May 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 6; Memorandum, Sol Tax to Leonard Meyer, 8 May 1959, *ibid.*, Memorandum, Sol Tax to Marvin Mikesell, 30 December 1958, *ibid.*; Memorandum, Sol Tax to Walter Johnson, 30 December 1958, *ibid.* The absence of philosophy was noted by Goudge in his review in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*.

²¹⁰ Ilza Veith, “Creation and Evolution in the Far East,” in Tax and Callender, *Evolution after Darwin* (cit. n. 16), vol. III, pp. 1–17.

²¹¹ Ilza Veith to I. B. Cohen, 18 July 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 2. In one memorandum to Tax, Veith referred to Bentley Glass as an “ideal person,” with the names of Harcourt Brown, Henry Guerlac, and Conway Zirkle as possible historians of science to contact. Memorandum, Ilza Veith to Sol Tax, 6 June 1956, *ibid.*

²¹² Ilza Veith to Sol Tax, 8 September (undated, most likely 1956), *ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Charles C. Gillispie to Sol Tax, 15 November 1956, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 5. Tax reported on Gillispie’s letter to the committee soon after. Memorandum, Sol Tax to members of the Darwin Committee, 23 November 1956, *ibid.* 5.

Greene declined because he had "too much unfinished business with respect to publication." In fact, Greene was in the throes of completing his own pathbreaking study of the history of evolutionary thought in *The Death of Adam: Evolution and Its Impact on Western Thought*.²¹⁵ All hope of obtaining an external historian of science gone, Tax finally approached Veith in the hopes that the committee might be "one happy little family," but she too declined because of other commitments.²¹⁶

By the end of 1958 Tax had abandoned all hope of producing an historical volume.²¹⁷ Possibly the deaths of his fellow committee members and potential editors Karl P. Schmidt and Robert Redfield contributed to the decision not to publish a centennial volume in advance of the conference. The decision was probably also motivated by the fact that there were simply too few historians of science available for the project, and few of these had a real specialty in Darwin or in the history of evolution. As John C. Greene noted in a letter to Tax, "Most American historians of science are not working on 19th century biology and certainly not on 20th century biology."²¹⁸ Another strong possibility is that the Darwin centennial was duplicating historical efforts elsewhere. Johns Hopkins University, for instance, was planning an historical celebration.²¹⁹ The most likely explanation for the absence of history of science (or "intellectual history," as the documents state) at the Chicago celebration was a combination of the difficulty of securing a historian along with the plans at Johns Hopkins. The absence of historical treatment may have had, however, a positive long-term consequence in that it drew attention to the paucity of scholarship on the important figure of Charles Darwin and on the history of evolution in the history of science. One outcome of the anniversary date as a whole, in fact, was to generate enthusiasm for the subject, and for the body of historical literature on Darwin and on evolution that grew throughout the 1960s.²²⁰ By 1982, the one hundredth anniversary of Darwin's death, a veritable "Darwin Industry" of historians turned out to properly commemorate him and to examine the "Darwinian heritage."²²¹

²¹⁵ John Greene's letter is reproduced by Tax in a letter to Veith. Sol Tax to Ilza Veith, 25 July 1957, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 2. Greene did, however, drive from Ames, Iowa to attend some of the sessions. John Greene to Vassiliki Betty Smocovitis, 13 March 1996. See John C. Greene, *The Death of Adam: Evolution and Its Impact on Western Thought* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1959).

²¹⁶ Sol Tax to Ilza Veith, 25 July 1957; Ilza Veith to Sol Tax, 9 August (most likely 1957). Darwin Centennial Papers, box 6, folder 2.

²¹⁷ Sol Tax to John C. Greene, 10 November 1958, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 5. An earlier letter to Gillispie following his visit to Chicago indicates that Tax was having a difficult time raising funds for the historical volume early on in the celebration planning. Sol Tax to Charles C. Gillispie, 23 November 1956, *ibid*.

²¹⁸ John C. Greene to Sol Tax, 5 November 1958, *ibid*.

²¹⁹ Memorandum, Sol Tax to Marvin Mikesell, 30 December 1958, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 2, folder 6.

²²⁰ For a historiographic exploration of evolutionary biology see Smocovitis, *Unifying Biology* (cit. n. 18). Some of the books published around the anniversary date or shortly after include Loren Eiseley, *Darwin's Century: Evolution and the Men Who Discovered It* (New York: Doubleday, 1958); C. D. Darlington, *Darwin's Place in History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1959); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1959); Gavin de Beer, *Charles Darwin: Evolution by Natural Selection* (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1963). See also the contemporary reviews of this literature by Bert James Loewenberg, included in cit. n. 8.

²²¹ *The Darwinian Heritage*, ed. David Kohn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); also see Bendall, *Evolution from Molecules to Men* (cit. n. 113); and Timothy Lenoir, "The Darwin Industry," *Hist. Biol.*, 1987, 20:115-30.

XIII. CLOSING THOUGHTS

What general conclusions can we draw from this examination of the largest of the celebrations for the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*? From the historical record, it appears that much was being celebrated, though clearly celebrants—or participants—may not have been rejoicing in the same thing. From the scientists' perspective, the celebration honored Darwin and his great work and was an opportune time to reflect on the status of their evolutionary art.²²² Central to their new synthetic evolutionary theory was Darwin's evolution by means of natural selection, in its synthetic and very modern guise. Their own identities were secured through the biological and scientific legitimacy conferred by the presence of Sir Charles Darwin and Sir Julian Huxley, who were living heirs of the original story and whose presence preserved historical continuity. Within this new synthesis of evolution, room was finally made for human evolution, which had been left out of the synthesis—and out of Darwin's account in *Origin*.²²³ Tax's disciplinary goal of bringing anthropology and evolution together was thus fulfilled, if only partially, by bringing anthropologists to the celebration and by showcasing their field. Cultural evolution—what it was, how it operated, and the extent to which it hinged on biological evolution—remained a problematic and divisive subject.

In keeping with the evolutionary synthesis as the convergence of biological disciplines, the conference also served to reinforce not only the unity between biological disciplines of knowledge, but also the continuum between the physical sciences and the social sciences, especially with the inclusion of anthropology, cultural evolution, and the evolution of mind. Evolution could claim to be the “central unifying principle of biology” at the same time that it shed light on the future of “modern man,” even though there were bumpy borderland regions between the physical, biological, and social sciences.²²⁴ A. E. Emerson's post-celebration musings to Tax were optimistic on this note, however. “Out of it all, I think there is a chance for a new emergent understanding through a synthesis from different fields, particularly between the biological and the social sciences,” he wrote.²²⁵

From the perspective of the discipline as a collective, functioning community, the Darwinian life story could play itself out at the celebration, reifying the field's founding father. Along with this narration, moreover, a canon of relevant scientific and historical literature was established to lend a feeling of coherence and unity to the community. From Darwin's *Origin* to Dobzhansky's *Genetics and the Origin of Spe-*

²²² A memorandum from the University of Chicago Press to Sol Tax concerning the planned volume explicitly began with an attempt to be clear and consistent about what was being celebrated. The memorandum was referring directly to the publication of Darwin's *Origin* and requested consistency in titles of the book. Cathy Nissen to Sol Tax, 30 October 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 9, folder 7.

²²³ But discussed, of course, in Darwin's *Descent of Man* (1871).

²²⁴ Smocovitis, *Unifying Biology* (cit. n. 18).

²²⁵ A. E. Emerson to Sol Tax, 21 December 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 3, folder 12. Emerson continued, “Ten years from now I shall tell you whether I think we achieved this ‘break-through.’” His biographical “memoir” for the National Academy of Sciences was cowritten by Edward O. Wilson (and Charles D. Michener) who argued for just such a synthesis between the biological sciences and the social sciences in 1975. See Edward O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1975); also see Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

cies, presented in the hallway exhibits and book displays, celebrants could see the historical continuity that led to the construction of their modern identities. Critical participants—in the symbolic image of Darwin—were marked as heirs by receiving honorary degrees, and new members, including graduate students, were enrolled in the community in the celebratory process. New members were also enrolled into the formal societies that supported evolution: the Society for the Study of Evolution, for instance, saw a significant increase of new subscriptions right around the anniversary date of 1959.²²⁶ News of the celebration would also help enroll a wider public community to belief in evolution by means of natural selection; they would validate the process of legitimation at the same time as they “witnessed” the event.

All of the celebratory activities were part of an historical process of constructing disciplinary identities for evolutionary biologists and building a coherent identity for the collective community of scientists. If the celebrations, as a whole, were a success of great magnitude, it was because the evolutionary synthesis, which was well underway, had been a success in unifying evolution and biology. Ultimately, at a deep level, celebrants rejoiced and at the same time reified their own new identities as sons—and, literally, as grandsons of the protagonists of the original story. Hence, Darwin and his life and work held powerful symbolic meaning for postwar evolutionary biologists, who were eager to unify, strengthen, and promote their new-found community. Although the agreement over the centrality of natural selection as *the* mechanism of evolution certainly did much to enhance this sense of unity and consensus, it also may have given rise to a constricting new orthodoxy—as the panel discussions and somewhat exclusive invitation list indicate. This “hardening” of the synthesis around a selectionist orthodoxy has been long noted by historians of evolutionary biology like Stephen J. Gould.²²⁷

Finally, the celebration was not the exclusive domain of scientists and academics assembled at the University of Chicago. The rather tepid, nontechnical scientific discussions were intended for mostly general audiences. The numerous press releases, reports, and commentaries on the occasion made evolution and evolutionary culture the stuff of public consumption. As the University of Chicago Press public relations department summarized, “One hundred years ago the meaning of evolution for the future of the human race was seen and considered by only a few intellectuals. Today it is meat for the popular press.”²²⁸ Although the same popular press capitalized on the occasion with trivial and sometimes inflated reports, it also frequently transmitted the scientific consensus that had emerged. Evolution, it reported, despite the continuing controversy over science and religion, was a recognizable fact. With proper knowledge of this evolutionary past, humans would be able to control their evolutionary future. Evolutionary progress and social progress were thus inextric-

²²⁶ See Smocovitis, “Organizing Evolution” (cit. n. 20); see the data on membership growth in the SSE in Figure 2, “Growth of Membership in the Society for the Study of Evolution, 1946–1969,” on p. 297. The sharp increase in membership around 1959–1960 probably resulted from the interest generated by all the celebrations and commemorative activities combined.

²²⁷ See Stephen J. Gould, “G. G. Simpson, Paleontology, and the Modern Synthesis,” in Mayr and Provine, *The Evolutionary Synthesis* (cit. n. 75). See also Stephen J. Gould, “Irrelevance, Submission, and Partnership: The Changing Role of Paleontology in Darwin’s Three Centennials and a Modest Proposal for Macroevolution,” in Bendall, *Evolution from Molecules to Men* (cit. n. 113), pp. 347–66. Gould explicitly notes that the synthesis had “hardened” at the time of the Darwin Centennial.

²²⁸ Document titled “Press and public response to the Darwin Centennial,” Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 2, quotation on p. 30.

cably linked for American popular audiences; their own increasingly technological culture had, after all, progressively evolved.

But not all celebrated, however, and the Darwin centennial had at least one noteworthy but unexpected consequence. While it promoted the respectability and legitimacy of Darwin's evolution by means of natural selection to a wide audience, it also drew attention to a theory of longstanding unpopularity and controversiality. The excessive attention and promotion given to evolution by natural selection at the Darwin centennial galvanized into action the very group that most opposed it on religious, philosophical, and moral grounds. One outcome of the Darwin centennial was a regrouping of Christian evangelicals, led by individuals like Henry Morris, into the movement that came to be known as scientific creationism. No longer would they accept the rhetoric of scientific legitimacy given to evolution by means of natural selection; evolution was to remain a problematic concept subject to scientific, as well as religious and philosophical, criticism. For them, the Darwin Centennial Celebration had a unifying effect, lending coherence and purpose to the group, and it would be matched *only* by the Scopes Monkey Trial in highlighting the tensions between science and religion for vast American audiences.

Much was therefore at stake in the celebrations commemorating the publication of Darwin's *Origin*, especially the one at the University of Chicago. On the surface appearing to be a mere scientific anniversary, the celebration served to highlight a range of concerns in addition to the formal science. For American organizers, it was an attempt to share some of the glory associated with Darwin and the English empire: at the very least, some of the patina of the authority and antiquity associated with established English universities like Cambridge University, the site of the 1909 centennial, rubbed off onto the midwestern school. Organizers were conscious of this end, and worked towards the appropriation of cultural artifacts—and English bodies—for their success. So, too, the University of Chicago benefited from serving as host to such an international and newsworthy event. As one memorandum to the British Broadcasting Corporation inviting them to film the occasion put it, “the BBC might well be interested in an English occasion as celebrated at the University of Chicago.”²²⁹

The Darwin Centennial Celebration—and other similar celebrations across the world—thus brought out a complex interplay of interests at varied levels, from the personal to the institutional to the disciplinary and even to the national level of hosting, so great was the figure of Darwin and his theory of evolution. The fact remained, however, that the grandest of all such celebrations did not directly address the development of Darwin's ideas or his work. What exactly, then, did the Darwin figure represent to general audiences to have drawn such attention and generated so much emotion? This is a question best left answered by one of the most memorable images produced in honor of the centennial: the cover of the *Bulletin* of the Chicago Natural History Museum (Figure 3). The enormous and somewhat grotesque alabaster bust of Darwin figures centrally against the backdrop of organismal representatives from his major works: insectivorous plants, pigeons, chimpanzees, and other “lower” forms of life. Dominating this diversity of life, the Darwin figure is grossly out of scale. “Man's place in nature,” the message tells us, is as the dominant life form.

²²⁹ Lee Wilcox to Aubrey Singer, 4 September 1959, Darwin Centennial Papers, box 8, folder 8.

And what does the Darwin Centennial Celebration tell us about commemorative events in the history of science? For one thing, they may serve a range of functions having little to do with the historical event defining the occasion. This celebration, for example, had little to do with the historical Darwin or the development of his work; instead it revealed much about postwar American culture and its embrace of a new synthetic science of evolutionary biology, a science that could potentially redirect the future of "modern man." The Darwin Centennial Celebration also demonstrates once again that science is not only a part of wider culture, but is itself a culture, worthy of focused anthropological study.