What makes the machine particularly clever is that the display drum periodically rotates, so that the output letter corresponding to a given input letter periodically changes. This rotation is accomplished via the other drum, the activation drum, which connects to the display drum by way of an adjustable stepped-drum mechanism. With each key-stroke the activation drum rotates sixty degrees. The stepped drum then determines the pattern according to which rotations of the activation drum translate into rotations of the display drum. For example, the stepped drum can be set so that the display drum rotates with each key-stroke, every third key-stroke, every other pair of key-strokes, and so forth. This is significant because it allows the user quickly and easily to work with a complex code that anyone without such a machine would find very difficult to crack.

Though there is little of direct philosophical interest in this work, its account of Leibniz’s forays into the field of encryption and in particular its reconstruction of his remarkable machine are fascinating and should hold considerable appeal for those interested in Leibniz’s pursuits more broadly and in the histories of cryptography and machine design. Rescher is to be applauded for undertaking this project—Stephen Puryear, North Carolina State University

Review of Metaphysics 67 (June 2014), pp. 884-86

RICHARDS, Robert J. Was Hitler a Darwinian? Disputed Questions in the History of Evolutionary Theory. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. 264pp.—This remarkably erudite book by the distinguished University of Chicago historian, Robert J. Richards, could have been more suitably entitled, “Disputed Questions Concerning Darwin and the Genesis of His Theory.” The chapter that gives the book its title is added to eight other chapters that explore recent interpretations of Darwin’s On the Origin of Species and the reception of Darwin by his contemporaries, notably Alfred Russell Wallace, Thomas H. Huxley, and Herbert Spencer. It was Wallace who suggested that Darwin replace the phrase “natural selection” with Spencer’s “survival of the fittest,” but Darwin demurred. “Variability,” “struggle for existence,” and “adaptation” form core features of Darwin’s conception of natural selection. Roberts finds that the principle of natural selection is not as simple as it might first seem, but complex, only gradually taking shape in Darwin’s mind, thus providing an illustration of the historian’s claim that “theories are historical entities that develop over time.”

Richards makes clear that Darwin’s original principle of natural selection, as he formulated it, and the auxiliary ideas associated with it, ill-conform to our present knowledge of evolution. Richards maintains that Darwin’s original principle had features that an older and less sanguine Darwin would likely have rejected. It is often assumed that Darwin constructed an indifferent, materially neutral nature, one no
longer passing as a surrogate for God, thus leaving nature teleologically vacuous. The result is that in subsequent academic discourse nature gradually became drained of intelligence and moral value. Given that Darwin did not regard the natural process of evolution as morally neutral, “Darwin’s theory,” writes Richards, “is not responsible for the malign social theory often associated with his work, namely, the social eugenics that played through America, Britain, and especially Germany in the late nineteenth century.”

In passing, Richards engages scholars such as Richard Dawkins, Michael Ghiselin, and Michael Ruse who represent “Darwinian man” as self-aggrandizing, always selfish in behavior. “I will attempt to show,” writes Richards, “that Darwin did not regard the natural process of evolution as morally neutral; [rather] he wielded his device of natural selection in On The Origin of Species... to fix nature with an animal that can make moral choices.” Richards insists that “Darwin, although a harbinger of the modern age, was yet a nineteenth-century thinker—a biologist who had not abandoned teleological ideas but conceived nature as having the goal of producing human beings.”

Two chapters of this volume are devoted to Ernst Haeckel, Darwin’s foremost champion, not only in Germany but throughout the world. Haeckel’s Natural History of Creation (twelve editions: 1868–1920) became the chief source of the world’s knowledge of Darwinism. Haeckel is credited with introducing into biology many concepts that remain viable today, including the idea that the nucleus of the cell contains hereditary material, as well as the concepts of phylogeny, ontogeny, ecology, and the stem cell. It was he who introduced the idea of the missing link between man and lower animals. Another work, his, Die Welträtsel, (in English translation, The Riddle of the Universe) published in 1899 sold over 400,000 copies prior to the First World War.

Another chapter of Richard’s book is devoted to the linguist, August Schleicher, whose theory of linguistic development complemented Darwin’s own explanation of the refinement of human intelligence. Darwin studied Schleicher’s Darwinsche Theorie, which he then used in his own account of human evolution in The Descent of Man.

To the question, “Was Hitler a Darwinian?”, Richards’s answer is decidedly, “no.” Hitler positively rejected any notion of the descent of human beings from lower animals. Man from the very beginning, he believed, was what he is today. Although Hitler’s racial ideology is often associated with social Darwinism, “most scholars of Hitler’s reign” Richards finds, “don’t argue for a strong link between Darwin’s biology and Hitler’s racism, but they often deploy the vague concept of social Darwinism when characterizing Hitler’s racial ideology.” Some maintain that Haeckel was largely responsible for the bond between the academic sector and the emergence of racism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Quite apart from the final essay that gives this book its title, the eight essays which constitute the bulk of the volume are worthy of serious
study in themselves, both for the information they provide and the
guiding judgment of Professor Richards.—Jude P. Dougherty, The
Catholic University of America

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. viii + 268pp. Cloth, $75.00—This
work is now the foremost exposition and defense of the narrative
approach to selves, character, and practical identity available in English.
It is also written in a clear and engaging style; challenging conceptual
issues are carefully unpacked with apt examples. Much of the book will
be accessible to advanced undergraduates. Anthony Rudd has long
defended a narratival and teleological reading of Kierkegaard’s account
of ethical and religious identity, which he broadens here through
engagement with a wide range of recent work in moral psychology well
beyond scholarship on Kierkegaard. For example, he critiques Harry
Frankfurt’s subjectivist conception of the values to which caring
responds, Galen Strawson’s defense of an “episodic” life against ideals of
narrative unity, Jonathan Lear’s more Freudian conception of
unconscious motives as a source of authentic identity, and skeptics
about character-traits such as Peter Goldie and John Doris. Hence this
work will appeal to readers with a wide variety of interests, although it
also constitutes a vital contribution to current scholarship on the moral
psychology of Søren Kierkegaard. It builds on a trend in the last two
decades that has argued systematically against irrationalist and fideist
interpretations of Kierkegaard’s transitions between existential “stages”
or fundamental attitudes towards life.

As Rudd helpfully explains, the book as a whole defends four closely
connected claims about persons: namely, that selves are not pregiven
entities, rather they are partly “self-constructed” by the human beings
who form them in response to received aspects of personality and social
relations; that a human being forms a self partly through cultivating a
narrative understanding of his life-story (in negotiation with others’
interpretation of who he is); that this narrative form of identity and self-
formation requires evaluative judgments and attitudes that depend on
real values; and that their objective status for us is rooted partly in a
(super)natural human *telos.* Rudd uses the acronym “NEST” for these
four features—the narrative, evaluative, self-constitutive, and
teleological aspects of human selves—that he defends throughout the
book. In particular, he argues that Kierkegaard offers us an especially
promising version of the NEST view that explains the “creative tension”
between “the sense that we are responsible for shaping or authoring our
own lives” and the “sense that there is something distinct and definite
about ourselves that has to be accepted as simply given.”