

BOOK REVIEWS

THE SPIRIT OF SYSTEM: LAMARCK AND EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY.

RICHARD W. BURKHARDT, 1995
Review by Aimee Rosario

The Spirit of System: Lamarck and Evolutionary Biology covers Lamarck and his thoughts on evolutionary biology. Written by Richard W. Burkhardt, Jr., his goal is to put Lamarck into the setting and time frame that Lamarck worked and wrote in. To truly understand Lamarck one must understand the time period he lived in and the beliefs of the time. Burkhardt does this extremely well.

Lamarck was developing his ideas in a time of change. The scientists of the time were leaving the concepts of broad knowledge that is seen in the natural philosophers to go to a narrower field of interest that would become biology, botany, geology, and history. Lamarck is of this older philosophy, and while he was a very good and respected botanist, he wanted to learn about many things and also studied chemistry, astronomy, geology, and what was becoming biology. Lamarck was considered a top scholar in botany and many of his earlier works on the classification of plants became the method used for classification and naming new species. It is only later when he tries to branch out and start looking at these other scientific fields, that his work in not looked at. His peers did not think that Lamarck was qualified to make observations and contribute to the standing of theories outside of botany. His attempts and paper dealing with other topics such as chemistry was ignored. None of his peers would come out and argue with Lamarck, but instead just ignored his work and achieved the results they wanted by not offering the scientific debate that Lamarck was looking for. This is how Lamarck's views on evolution were dealt with too. Lamarck knew that he did not have all answers when he presented his ideas of acquired inheritance but he wanted to promote discussions among his peers. Instead his paper was ignored. Few agreed with his ideas but neither side would publicly talk about it. Lamarck's ideas on inheritance were discussed by Cuvier, but only to be ridiculed and only in his lectures we was giving, not in public papers that would address the issues Lamarck had presented.

Lamarck is someone who believed in knowledge. The more a person had the better in all fields of science. To understand Darwin and later evolutionary theory, it is important to understand Lamarck and what he faced. Darwin waited a long time to publish his ideas and had many people read his ideas before he published Origin of the Species. He did not want the same gate to happen to his ideas that happened to Lamarck's ideas. Lamarck was ahead of his time and it only now that we can appreciate what Lamarck was trying to achieve, even if his mechanism was wrong for evolutionary change. Burkhardt provides an insight into the time and person of Lamarck that is not found in many other places. He shows how the thinking of his time, his religious beliefs, and his studies of many different fields of science influenced Lamarck. Without this insight we cannot truly understand Lamarck or the evolutionary theory that was to follow. For anyone who is trying to understand Lamarck or the time period this book provides many insights into Lamarck, who he was, and the scientific community that he was a part of.

PRIMITIVE MAN AS PHILOSOPHER

Paul Radin, 1957
Review by Mark A. Shirley

This book was first published seventy-three years ago. Dr. Radin addressed a subject vital and timely in that day, as it still is today. The author's purpose as stated in the Preface was, to dispute the contention that members of those peoples referred to as primitive are inherently inferior mentally to members of groups perceived as more civilized. He asserted that individuality was not overwhelmed by a group mentality among them that in these cultures, as in all a portion will be thinkers, even philosophers in their own right. His aim was to examine primitive cultures from the perspective of their intellectuals.

In the Preface, he contended that only two points of commonality connect those societies popularly called primitive, these are the lack of a written language, and rightful claims of the territories they occupied when first contacted by those who would overwhelm them. Differences in cultures, and perceived simplicity of the conquered contributed to the mistakes in interpretation. He gave his view of the history of the topic, concluding that opportunity finally existed to reexamine the nature of the mind of these peoples. His discussion of definition and application of terms and the academic and practical importance of knowledge gained from further study and evaluation of the topic was insightful. He presented strict criteria for acceptance of eth-