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The Naturalist/Reductionist Fallacy

In the second half of the 20th century, literary studies witnessed a dynamic expansion of theories of literature that focused on linguistic, formal, or structural aspects. The doctrine of textual autonomism which emphasized literature's separateness from the context of its creation, and its self-referential, closed character dominated most theoretical considerations. Even though this textual paradigm has undergone a radical departure from the formalist-structuralist towards post-structuralist thought, i.e. from the view that literary texts can have clearly determined boundaries, and definite, stable structures, shifting its attention to the destabilized meaning and the indeterminate, open aspects of texts, its basic premises of linguistic and cultural autonomism have remained unchanged. However, this view has recently become the target of harsh criticism from those who advocate literature's naturalist and biological character, namely Darwinian literary critics. The "Darwinists" claim that evolutionary psychology can successfully serve as a bridge between the natural sciences and the humanities and that all the phenomena belonging to the domain of culture, including art and literature, can be explained by reduction to the natural sciences, through the sciences of the mind.

In the first part of this article I will enumerate and elaborate upon some of the typical claims about textualist literary theory presented by Literary Darwinists. Next, I discuss some arguments against textualism, put forward by the Darwinists. Finally, I argue that even though the Darwinists point out some crucial problems of textualism, their arguments for the naturalization of literary studies are flawed and repeat one of the major fallacies of textualism, that is, the reductionist claim that the concept of literature in all its scope (in the Darwinists' program this includes, on the hand its forms, themes, structures, and on the other

hand, the readers' need for consuming fiction, as well as the principles that govern interpretation and appreciation), can be explained entirely in terms of a different phenomenon. Just as formalist theories tried to define literature by reference to a special, literary use of language, or Marxists defining it as the product of certain social conditions, Darwinists see literature exclusively as a product of the *homo sapiens* brain which reflects its evolutionary history and is used as a tool for the biological organism's adapting to its environment. The Darwinists' programme for literary studies has its merits, but it cannot overcome the problems that stem from accepting reductionism in literary studies.

The work that lays at the foundations of the Darwinist paradigm for literature, Joseph Carroll's *Evolution and Literary Theory*, begins with a harsh attack on what Carroll sees as the major fallacies of post-structuralism. It is crucial to notice that Literary Darwinists define themselves and to a large extent base their paradigm on the supposed radical opposition to post-structuralism. The positions which Carroll opposes and which he deems the basic premises of post-structuralism include textualism and indeterminacy.

Textualism is the idea that language or culture constitute or construct the world according to their own internal principles, and indeterminacy identifies all meaning as ultimately self-contradictory. Textualism treats human beings and the world in which they live as the effects of a linguistic or cultural system, and indeterminacy reduces knowledge to the spontaneous generation of internal contradictions within this system.¹

Carroll develops his criticism by adding that textualism entails radical constructionism which rejects either the existence of external, non-linguistic reality, or the possibility of accessing it. This brings his understanding of post-structuralism close to some form of linguistic idealism. Post-structuralism's major flaw is, according to Carroll, its supposed insistence on the primacy of language and interpretation over its objects, and consequently, the denial of existence of any objects prior to its linguistic/interpretive construction. The Darwinists claim that by rejecting the basic criterion of truth, i.e. its correspondence to some external reality, post-structuralism deprives itself of the only tribunal that is able to demarcate the valid, verifiable claims, from the non-verifiable babble. If the study of literature is to deliver any valuable information, it has to be congruent with the total body of scientific knowledge, and since, according to the Darwinists, in the hierarchy of sciences, the hard natural sciences provide the most fundamental, and the most reliable

¹ Joseph Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory* (Columbia: UMP, 1995), p. 2.

insights about the world, all the other disciplines must be eventually reducible to the language of physics. If literature is a creation of the human imagination, of the human mind, its systematic study must be consilient and up-to-date with contemporary psychology.² Specifically, as the Darwinists claim, it has to be consilient with evolutionary psychology, because the latter supposedly provides the only coherent and reliable view of the development and evolution of the human mind, and consequently, of its products.

One can easily note that this insistence on establishing a definite criterion of demarcation of the empirically testable from the non-testable is akin to the logical positivists' paradigm in philosophy, and it is perhaps true that Darwinists represent a new variety of neopositivist thinking which, yet again tries to subordinate the humanities to the natural sciences. This becomes especially clear when looking at Carroll's remarks on what he calls the second key feature of post-structuralism, that is, indeterminacy. In the neopositivist outlook, indeterminacy is a logical consequence of textualism. If one rejects the idea of the unity of knowledge where all of its branches are eventually reducible to empirical sciences, then one loses the only tool with which one can separate true knowledge from the unverifiable gibberish. Thus, without demarcation all the produced "knowledge" must predictably fall into the category of the indeterminate. According to the Darwinists, every study of culture and its creation (including art and literature) must be entirely congruent with physicalist theories, through gradual reduction of the total body of knowledge that it produces to the empirical claims, or else it cannot produce reliable knowledge. It is now easily observable that Carroll's target is textualism itself, as indeterminacy is simply its necessary, predictable conclusion. Of course, textualism, in the sense in which Carroll uses this term, is something much broader than any deliberations concerning the status of literary knowledge. As was indicated above, he seems to be suggesting that textualism is a form of idealism, in the sense of rejecting the possibility of accessing any empirical, non-linguistic reality, which again reminds one of the neopositivist attacks on traditional metaphysics. If Carroll defines textualism as the claim that the study of human creativity is fundamentally separate, and autonomous from the hard, natural sciences, then it is hardly surprising to note that what he really attacks is the Diltheyan distinction into *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*. Textualism is merely a contemporary restatement of the 19th-century claim about the humanities being methodologically separate from the natural sciences.

² Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory*, pp. 2–3.

The reductionist attack on the methodological autonomy of the humanities is also present in the works of Jonathan Gottschall, one of Carroll's Darwinian associates. Gottschall suggests that the birth of post-structuralist theory was motivated by purely political factors. The major figures of the so-called French Theory who lay the foundations for post-structuralism in the late 1960s saw themselves as being in "the vanguard of noble movements of social liberation and transformation."³ According to Gottschall, the overwhelming atmosphere of revolutionary change, the zeitgeist perhaps, shaped the whole paradigm for the humanities. Its aim was not to study the creations of the human mind in order to produce reliable knowledge, but to use them instrumentally to bring about social change. This required questioning of the allegedly widespread perception of social status was viewed as something natural. In Gottschall's words "literary scholars embarked upon a great project of *denaturalization*. They set out to show that almost everything that people considered to be 'natural' – gender roles, sexual orientations, suites of attitudes, ideologies, and norms – were actually the local, contingent, and endlessly malleable outgrowths of specific historical and social forces. In Roland Barthes' sense, they were all 'myths,' designed to 'transform history into nature,' to give 'a historical intention a natural justification,' and therefore to make 'contingency appear eternal.'"⁴

As a digression, it is extremely interesting that Gottschall presents a radically historicist determinist interpretation of post-structuralism, where the movement is seen as but a reflection of the general political radicalism and the turmoil of the epoch. Rather than focusing on rebutting their arguments head-on, as an equal opponent, he places himself in an elevated position from which he deems the whole discourse inadequate. This favouring of historicist reductionism is in stark contrast to Gottschall's vision of evolutionary psychology as the hegemonic discourse of the humanities, but it is less paradoxical when one notices that the drive towards reductionism, albeit reductionism of a different sort, tends to be the key point of the Darwinian paradigm. Consequently, the reductionist view which the Darwinists attack bears many affinities with their own stance. This point will be elaborated upon later in the article.

Gottschall enumerates what he sees as the key points of post-structuralism. For him, they include:

³ Jonathan Gottschall, *Literature, Science, and a New Humanities* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 4.

⁴ Gottschall, *Literature, Science, and a New Humanities*, p. 4.

1. Active commitment to achieving radical or progressive political ends through scholarly means.
2. A ‘nurturist’ commitment to theories of strong sociocultural constructivism and a rejection of biological ‘essentialisms.’
3. An epistemology strongly influenced by – if not directly based upon – post-structuralist antifoundationalism.⁵

Since, as the Darwinists argue, post-structuralism is based on political rather than factual claims, there is a tremendous need to alter both the theory and the practice of literary studies. If literary scholars cannot produce reliable knowledge due to methodological limitations, the most important step in this alteration is to provide a stable bridge between the natural sciences and the humanities which would guarantee the necessary flow of hard, scientific data to the study of human creations. Predictably, because the Darwinists claim that research in the humanities is in fact research into the creations of the human mind, there is a need to incorporate some insights from evolutionary psychology. As they claim, it is the only discipline which successfully bridges biology and the study of the mind, and, thus, by being reducible to hard science, it can produce accurate information concerning the human mind and its creations.

Carroll enumerates four key, biological concepts of the positive aspect of the Darwinist programme, which he contrasts with post-structuralist denaturalization. The first of them is the centrality of “the relationship between the organism and its [biological] environment.”⁶ The second is that some “innate psychological structures – perceptual, rational, affective – have evolved through an adaptive process of natural selection” due to interactions with the natural environment; consequently, they “regulate the mental and emotional life of all living organisms.”⁷ The third point is that all “human motives are regulated by the principles of inclusive fitness as the ‘ultimate cause’.”⁸ The reproductive success which allowed the handing down of evolved mental traits also indicates that “reproductive success, in its twin aspects of sexual union and the production of offspring, is central to human concerns and thus to literary works.”⁹ The last point is that literature, “literary representation, is a form of ‘cognitive mapping’ [...] representation is an extension of the organism’s adaptive

⁵ Gottschall, *Literature, Science, and a New Humanities*, p. 6.

⁶ Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory*, p. 2.

⁷ Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory*, p. 2.

⁸ Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory*, p. 3.

⁹ Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory*, p. 3.

orientation to an environment [...].”¹⁰ In other words, literature serves two purposes: it contains stories which eventually concern the central problems of human survival, prosperity and reproductive success, but those stories also have an adaptive function, as they are read to enhance our ability to understand and refer ourselves to the environment, thus, potentially helping to increase our chances to survive and thrive.

The role of Darwinian literary criticism is twofold. On the one hand, it is supposed to illuminate the sometimes latent functioning of Darwinian motives in literature, and on the other hand, to demonstrate how they can serve the educational purpose, increasing our understanding of the mechanisms of survival and successful reproduction. Both the results of such analyses and the evolutionary assumptions concerning the adaptive value of literature have already been both criticised and mocked in academia,¹¹ and I am not going to investigate them at length, interesting as they may be. Instead, I will concentrate on their theoretical implications, in an attempt to identify the problems with reductionism as such.

First of all, the view that evolutionary psychology constitutes not only the successful link between the humanities and the sciences, but also the only link possible is of course highly controversial. Such a link would have to be based on some incontrovertible evidence of solving the mind-body problem. But the debate on this dilemma in contemporary philosophy is far from concluded. Needless to say, those philosophers who represent the radically naturalist and reductionist position on this issue, such as Paul Churchland,¹² are far from gaining a dominant position in the dispute.

The second quandary concerns the reduction of the contents of literary narratives to basic strategies for survival and reproduction, as if literature was a medium for the virtual testing of survival-related hypotheses about the modes of behaviour for real life situations. As some examples of the Darwinian analyses show, this entails treating works like Homer’s *Illiad* as “a drama of naked apes strutting, preening, fighting, tattooing their chests and bellowing their power in fierce competition for social dominance,

¹⁰ Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory*, p. 3.

¹¹ Norman Holland, *Literature and the Brain* (Gainesville: The PsyArt Foundation, 2009), p. 331; Norman Holland, “How the Literary Darwinists Got it Wrong,” *Psychology Today*, accessed 6 September 2010, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/is-your-brain-culture/201009/how-the-literary-darwinists-got-it-wrong>; Eugene Goodheart, “Do We Need Literary Darwinism?” *Style* vol. 42, no. 2/3 (2008), p. 182.

¹² Paul Churchland, “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes,” *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 78 (1981), pp. 67–90.

desirable mates and material resources,”¹³ or treating Jane Austen’s novels as a simulation of mating and spouse selection strategies.¹⁴

There is no need to mention any inadequacies of such interpretations, eccentric as they may be, on the condition that such research is akin to what has been sometimes called “cookie cutter theory,” that is, analysing a literary text strictly through the lens of some external theory, rather than looking at literature *as* literature. In this respect, Darwinian literary studies would be no different than Marxist, psychoanalytic, deconstructionist, feminist, or other varieties of literary theory which tend to treat literary material as something essentially non-literary, that is, as a reflection of the relations of power, as a reservoir of hidden desires, as a repository of patriarchal ideology, and so on. In that sense, evolutionary psychology becomes just another theory on the list.

The Darwinists, however, oppose this view, indicating that their programme is different because of the special status of evolutionary psychology. Unfortunately, the idea that Darwinian interpretations are the only true explanations of the nature of human mind’s creation would be tenable only if we assume that the mind-body problem has been solved, and all the contents of the human psyche are reducible to biological phenomena. As was already mentioned, this is extremely problematic.

Furthermore, the debate about the status of the contents of literary narratives does not exhaust the list of methodological problems that Darwinists face. One can hardly believe that Carroll and others embrace the naïve perception that literature is a set of relatively separate stories which are simply waiting, one by one, to be explained by the naturalist. The way we construe, understand and evaluate literary narratives hardly ever depends on identifying their merits defined as communication of important survival-related features, but rather, among other things, it is based on the narratives’ mutual interrelatedness, their place in the literary tradition and history, their relation to the canon and to artistic conventions. Literary texts do not exist in a vacuum, but can only exist in terms of certain institutions, in terms of sets of certain practices. That is to say, it is highly problematic to treat literature as a natural object that of itself manifests certain properties, for they can only be understood and appreciated by a reader who is familiar with the rules that govern the practice. As one of the advocates of this view

¹³ Interview with Jonathan Gottschall, “Shakespeare Meets the Selfish Gene,” *SEED* February/March 2006, http://seedmagazine.com/content/article/shakespeare_meets_the_selfish_gene/.

¹⁴ Brian Boyd, “Jane, Meet Charles: Literature, Evolution, and Human Nature,” *Philosophy and Literature*, no. 22 (1998), pp. 1–30; Joseph Carroll, *Reading Human Nature: Literary Darwinism in Theory and Practice* (New York: SUNY Press, 2011), pp. 160–161.

claims: “the existence of literary works depends on a set of conventions concerning how they are created, appreciated and evaluated; in other words, on attitudes, expectations, and responses found in authors and readers.”¹⁵ Clearly, these cannot be reduced to purely mental creations, or evolutionarily established behaviours. Moreover, if there is a special role for literature in our lives, as the Darwinists suggest, this role must be due to the differences between the literary, artistic merits of narratives, and the stories we normally include in everyday conversations, in newspapers, commercials, computer games, etc.

Consequently, what should really be significant for the long-term human survival, according to the Darwinist logic, is the artistic, rather than purely thematic aspect of literature. To show this, one would have to demonstrate how the features that make up the artistic nature of literary institutions can be reduced to evolutionary psychology’s total body of knowledge. This, however, seems to be impossible. One can, no doubt, attempt to correlate the hypothetical increase in the chances of survival and reproduction with some posited rates of artistic value inherent to specific literary works, but then one would have to formulate a separate theory of the aesthetic values for literature. Darwinists not only fail to specify what they mean by the idea of artistic literariness, but even if they did, that kind of definition would be insufficient, due to literature’s embeddedness in social institutions, and quite definitely non-evolutionary sets of material practices which constitute how readers interpret and appreciate art. Any explanation of the evolutionary value of literature would have to go beyond the notion of artistic “literariness” (whatever it may be) and also encompass many purely institutional, rather than formal or thematic, facts and procedures concerning literature.

As Patrick Colm Hogan has observed, even the most basic concepts germane to literary studies, such as a writer’s reputation, can in no way be accounted for on evolutionary grounds:

Consider, for example, something as central to literary study as reputation. It seems clear that, say, Shakespeare’s reputation is the result of many factors. Some involve the possibility of making use of his work ideologically, as in the wartime cooptation of *Henry V*. Some involve the political economy of publication (e.g., the ownership of copyright – see Taylor). Some involve Shakespeare’s incorporation into the English education system and the spread of that system via colonialism. Some involve network factors, such that Shakespeare connections reached a tipping point, while

¹⁵ Peter Lamarque, *The Philosophy of Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), p. 62.

those for other writers did not. The list could be extended almost indefinitely. None of these explanatory systems is evolutionary.¹⁶

Hogan's argument is lucid and compelling, and the question he asks might easily be transposed to other issues. Would the Darwinists claim that Shakespeare's position is entirely due to his touching upon some questions important for our survival? Would Joyce's artistic merit lie solely in his skillful treatment of the issues concerning human reproduction? And how could that be measured, or artistically vindicated when compared to treatment of such questions in popular fiction, romance, or pornography? Art, just like literature, is clearly not reducible to evolutionary psychology.

Literary Darwinists have not been the first to posit a reductionist programme for literature. The idea that in order to produce a comprehensive account of literature, the concept needs to be reduced to a completely different class of phenomena seems widespread in many theories. One might mention the formalists or the structuralists who attempted to define literature in linguistic terms, through its supposed density of specific linguistic devices, or in the case of post-structuralists, the uncontrollable character of the language itself. The Marxist literary theory attempted to define literature by identifying the social conditions that produced it, while psychoanalysis sees literature as a repository of unconscious wishes and desires. Gottschall's example was paradoxical. Not only is he a follower of one type of reductionism, but he accuses his post-structuralist adversaries of supporting a flawed version of it, which he denigrates with the help of another form of reductionist thinking.

The perpetual inability to account for literature's artistic nature by the aforementioned theories leads to one conclusion: literature can only be successfully defined in a non-reductionist way. Ironically, most contemporary literary theories either question or marginalize literature's artistic nature, which somehow deters them from formulating adequate aesthetic definitions. They can be found, however, outside literary theory, in the works of the analytic philosophy of literature.

One of the earliest works devoted to the problems of literature written in the analytic tradition, S. Olsen's *Structure of Literary Understanding*, explores the roots of reductive definitions of literature. He suggests that they stem from the fact that literature is composed of language, which means that whatever meaning we construe, or significance we attribute to it, or whatever artistic merits we ascribe to it, is all mediated through

¹⁶ Patrick Colm Hogan, "For Evolutionary Criticism, Against Genetic Absolutism," *Style* 2008, 42, no. 2/3, p. 202.

language; therefore, it is tempting to try to define literature in purely linguistic terms. For instance, when Olsen mentions the semantic theories of literature, or suggests that literature is reducible to a certain use of language, he is also proposing that the thickness of artistic means, increases the texts' suggestiveness and richness of meaning.¹⁷ However, as he observes, it is not possible to explain readers' or critics' interpretive choices when based exclusively on textual material. The range of possible, or acceptable meanings that one attributes to a passage in a literary text when making an interpretation is always founded upon the understanding of literary conventions which free the range of interpretations. What is acceptable, is supported by an extratextual knowledge concerning the procedures of interpretation. Structural theories, which Olsen deems as comparable, tend to treat the literary work like a sentence, that is, as an entity constituted of smaller, distinguishable morphological units with a specific syntax and grammar. This is, however, a poor analogy, as obviously, sentences can acquire radically different meanings, depending on a context (this is congruent with J.L. Austin's work on speech acts, to which Olsen is indebted). Moreover, the structuralist analogy fails to account for the meaning of longer passages of texts: "There are no recognizable larger articulations in a literary work which are parallel to the phrases in a sentence."¹⁸ Consequently, Olsen claims it is absurd to define literature by reducing it to structural units:

The structuralist theory fails at the same crucial point as the semantic theory. The underlying assumption is that institutional practices like literature are objectively given phenomena which can be studied from the outside. If you look long enough and hard enough at a sufficient number of literary works, certain structural units will start to appear, and you can go ahead and construct a second-order language. But this is nonsense. Literary works will only reveal their features to those who know literary practice.¹⁹

A similar version of a naturalist fallacy, that is, the idea that literary works can exist as objects independent of an institutional context is also present in the Darwinist literary theory, as Hogan has suggested. These theories seem to be also connected with the reductionist programme, as they all posit that a comprehensive definition of literature entails its reduction

¹⁷ Stein H. Olsen, *The Structure of Literary Understanding* (Oxford: OUP, 1976), p. 12.

¹⁸ Olsen, *The Structure of Literary Understanding*, p. 19.

¹⁹ Olsen, *The Structure of Literary Understanding*, p. 21.

to other phenomena. Peter Lamarque adds that a successful philosophy of literature should avoid the following forms of reductionism:

- to any one literary form (such as poetry),
- to purely linguistic properties (semantic, syntactic, or rhetorical),
- to formal properties (such as style or structure),
- to purely hedonistic conceptions of pleasure,
- to intuitive, ‘natural’ or untutored ‘responses’, and
- to any form of ‘art for art’s sake’ aestheticism.²⁰

What is possibly left, is the idea of literature as an act, rather than an object. As Olsen claims, literature consists both of linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Act-theories “conceive of the literary work as a piece of intentional behaviour. As intentional behaviour, the work is directed at some response in the receiver, and it is the intention which the receiver attributes to the producer as a result of his consideration of the text which decides whether the reader is willing to see the utterance as a literary work or not.”²¹

It is clear, then, that Darwinist reductionism fails precisely in the same respect as many other literary theories which have ignored the necessity of incorporating the institutional aspect of literature into the very core of their philosophical considerations. This does not mean, however, that the Darwinian literary programme is entirely wrong. It can definitely introduce valuable insights concerning the psychological or cognitive aspects of literary studies, but it is not able to explain the total body of knowledge related to the institution of literature using evolutionary psychology. The binary opposition between nature and culture, which the literary Darwinists want to overcome by means of reductionism, is itself a myth. As knowledge taken from the empirical and psychological sciences penetrates the humanities, we can clearly see that the relation between the two is more complex and subtle than it might have appeared in Dilthey’s times. Consequently, it is not the case that the reductionism of literature to the hard sciences is unnecessary, but rather that reductionist theories face insurmountable problems on the basic level of literature’s definition and, as such, become a philosophical *cul-de-sac*.

²⁰ Peter Lamarque, “Literature and Aesthetics: A Problematic Relation?” *Philosophical Studies*, no. 135 (1), 2008, p. 8.

²¹ Olsen, *The Structure of Literary Understanding*, p. 5.

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Błąd naturalizmu/redukcjonizmu

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest przyjrzenie się neodarwinistycznej teorii literatury, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem roli sztuki w ujęciu psychologii ewolucyjnej. Według literaturoznawców darwinistów, funkcjonowanie literatury na poziomie zarówno form i konkretnych treści w niej zawartych, jak i jej znaczenie dla człowieka można wyjaśnić jedynie dzięki umiejscowieniu jej w teoretycznych ramach psychologii ewolucyjnej. Zabieg ten, zgodnie z poglądami darwinistów, ma wykazać, że z jednej strony sztuka od zawsze komunikuje człowiekowi treści związane z biologicznie rozumianym przetrwaniem i reprodukcją, a z drugiej strony sama służy jako narzędzie adaptacyjne, dzięki któremu *homo sapiens* jest w stanie z większą, ewolucyjnie rozumianą, korzyścią odnieść się do swojego środowiska.

Nieodłącznym elementem neodarwinistycznej teorii jest jej atak na poststrukturalny paradygmat badawczy, który rozumiany jest jako próba zredukowania pojęcia literatury do bezkontekstowego i nieokreślonego tworu językowego, który nie uwzględnia tego, że sztuka tworzona jest przez i dla ewolucyjnie ukonstytuowanych organizmów żywych, a zatem zainteresowanie jej różnymi formami, jakie wykazują wszelkie kultury i epoki, nie może zostać zignorowane w ewolucyjnej refleksji nad człowiekiem.

Posiłkując się pracami współczesnych teoretyków estetyki analitycznej, autor usiłuje wykazać, że literaturoznawcy darwiniści, jak i wielu teoretyków literatury przed nimi, sami padają ofiarą uproszczonego redukcjonizmu. Literatura jako zjawisko o charakterze instytucjonalnym, tj. zależnym w swoim istnieniu od szeregu konwencjonalnych ustaleń dotyczących zasad jej tworzenia, warunków jej odbioru (interpretacji, ewaluacji), nie może zostać zredukowana do zjawisk psychologicznych czy biologicznych, ponieważ samo pojęcie literatury istnieje wyłącznie w ramach wspomnianych kategorii instytucjonalnych. Pominięcie instytucjonalnego charakteru literatury sprawia, że teoria darwinistyczna nie jest w stanie dokonać rozróżnienia między literaturą, jako formą sztuki, a innymi językowymi wytworami człowieka, którym również, w myśl logiki neodarwinistów, można przypisać charakter adaptacyjny w stopniu nie mniejszym niż sztuce.

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Naturalismusfehler/Reduktionismusfehler

Zusammenfassung

Der Zweck des Essays ist, die neodarwinistische Literaturtheorie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rolle von der Kunst nach Auffassung der evolutionären Psychologie zu erforschen. Die Literaturwissenschaftler-Darwinisten vertreten die Meinung, dass die Literatur auf der Ebene sowohl der Formen und konkreten Inhalte, als auch deren Bedeutung für den Menschen sich nur auf dem Gebiet der Evolutionspsychologie erklären lässt. Solche Maßnahme soll nachweisen, dass die Kunst einerseits dem Menschen schon immer die mit biologischem Überleben und Reproduktion verbundenen Inhalte mitteilt, andererseits aber ist sie ein Anpassungswerkzeug, dank dem der *Homo sapiens* im Stande ist, sich seiner Umwelt gegenüber zum Nutzen zu verhalten.

Ein untrennbares Element der neodarwinistischen Theorie ist deren Angriff auf das poststrukturelle Forschungsparadigma, das den Begriff „Literatur“ auf ein kontextloses und unbestimmtes Sprachgebilde zu beschränken versucht. Das Sprachgebilde berücksichtigt dabei nicht, dass die Kunst von den evolutionistisch konstituierten Lebewesen für evolutionistisch konstituierte Lebewesen geschaffen ist. Also das von allen Kulturen und Epochen gezeigte Interesse an verschiedenen Kunstformen darf bei evolutionärer Reflexion über den Menschen nicht missachtet werden.

Sich auf die Arbeiten der gegenwärtigen Theoretiker der analytischen Ästhetik stützend versucht der Verfasser nachzuweisen, dass die Literaturwissenschaftler-Darwinisten als auch viele Literaturtheoretiker vor ihnen, dem vereinfachten Reduktionismus zum Opfer fallen. Die Literatur als ein institutionelles Phänomen, das von einer ganzen Reihe von konventionellen Bestimmungen über Schaffensprinzipien und Rezeptionsbedingungen (Interpretation, Evaluierung) abhängt, darf nicht auf psychologische oder biologische Erscheinungen reduziert werden, denn der Literaturbegriff selbst existiert lediglich im Rahmen der genannten institutionellen Kategorien. Die Nichtbeachtung des institutionellen Charakters der Literatur verursacht, dass darwinistische Theorie nicht im Stande ist, zwischen der Literatur als einer Kunstform und anderen Sprachgebilden des Menschen, denen laut der neodarwinistischen Logik einige, für die Kunst typische Adaptationsfähigkeiten zugeschrieben werden können, zu unterscheiden.