

Wallace and the World of Final Causes

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It is well recognized that Alfred Russel Wallace adopted an increasingly teleological point of view as he aged, but it is less well known that most of the elements of this later perspective are also to be found in his earliest intellectual efforts. These were the product of influences that included Robert Owen, Robert Dale Owen, Charles Lyell, and, especially, Alexander von Humboldt. The latter, in fact (especially through his book *Cosmos*), appears to be Wallace's main model for the way environment interconnected with living things (in a way parallel to Wallace's appreciation of geological processes, inherited from Hutton through Lyell). Wallace became imbued with a sense that a succession of "more recondite forces" operationalized nature, and it was only with difficulty that he retreated from this position enough to come up with the idea of natural selection. Wallace's approach suggests a nod to the notion of final causes more than it does teleology *per se*, especially as Wallace never adopted a Creationist kind of view as to first causes. The discussion ends with a discussion of how a "final causes" kind of model might yet prove useful to scientific endeavor.