

one another as two really good species." This assertion, which Darwin's opponents usually place at the head of their arguments, is utterly untenable and unfounded. This will become quite clear as soon as we critically compare the various attempts to define the idea of species. No naturalist can answer the question as to what is in reality a "genuine or good species" ("bona species"); yet every systematic naturalist uses this expression every day, and whole libraries have been written on the question as to whether this or that observed form is a species or a variety, whether it is a really good or a bad species. The most general answer to this question used to be the following: "To one species belong all those individuals which agree in all essential characteristics. Essential characteristics of species are those which remain permanent or constant, and never become modified or vary." But as soon as a case occurred in which the characteristic—which had hitherto been considered essential—did become modified, then it was said, "This characteristic is not essential to the species, for essential characteristics never vary." Those who argued thus evidently moved in a circle, and the naïveté with which this circular method of defining species is laid down in thousands of books as an unassailable truth, and is still constantly repeated, is truly astonishing.

All other attempts which have been made to arrive at a definite and logical determination of the idea of organic "species" have, like the last, been utterly futile, and led to no results. Considering the nature of the case, it cannot be otherwise. The idea of species is just as truly a relative one, and not absolute, as is the idea of variety, genus, family, order, class, etc. As Lamarck maintained, already in 1809,