

# The "Evolutionary Synthesis" of George Udny Yule

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## Abstract

This article discusses the work of George Udny Yule in relation to the evolutionary synthesis and the biometric-Mendelian debate. It has generally been claimed that (i.) in 1902, Yule put forth the first account showing that the competing biometric and Mendelian programs could be synthesized. Furthermore, (ii.) the scientific figures who should have been most interested in this thesis (the biometricians W. F. Raphael Weldon and Karl Pearson, and the Mendelian William Bateson) were too blinded by personal animosity towards each other to appreciate Yule's proposal. This essay provides a detailed account of (i.), maintaining that Yule's 1902 proposal is better understood as a reduction, not a synthesis of the two programs. The results of this analysis are then used to evaluate (ii.), where I will instead argue that Bateson and the biometricians had good reasons to avoid endorsing Yule's account.

**Keywords:** biometric-Mendelian debate, evolutionary synthesis, George Udny Yule, Karl Pearson, law of ancestral heredity, Ronald A. Fisher, reduction, William Bateson

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