

#5 Origin of the Species

Once life got started, did creatures continually evolve in an increasingly complex manner over time as Darwin described? Or did God intervene in miraculous, creative ways? What does the fossil record show? What does the biochemical evidence tell us about Darwinism? Is Darwinian evolution compatible with the Genesis account?

Theodosius Dobzhansky (1900-1975) was a renowned evolutionary biologist and a central figure in shaping modern neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory. Fifty years ago, he declared that “nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution.” He was saying what virtually everyone was thinking at the time — that the future for Darwinism was bright and hardly in doubt. Fast forward to 2016 at a conference hosted by the Royal Society of London, one of the most distinguished scientific organizations in the world. The most prestigious biologists and scientists came to discuss the growing dissatisfaction with the Darwinian explanation for the history of life on Earth. In 2018, a similar conference of academics announced in its preview, “Now it is recognized that errors [mutations] cannot explain genetic novelty and complexity,” which is a core premise of neo-Darwinian orthodoxy. As scientific observation, testing, and research became much more sophisticated over the intervening 50 years since Dobzhansky’s proclamation, what happened to the inexorable confidence once placed in Darwinian evolution? Science failed to find the hard evidence to support its claims. Instead, the evidence pointed in another direction. That’s quite a turnaround.

This session will concentrate on the evidence and give only a brief overview of evolutionary theory. Most people already know something about evolution from their biology and science classes in school, and from the decades of TV documentaries — National Geographic, Nova, PBS, and the like. Media headlines, magazines, books, internet resources, films, sci-fi thrillers, etc., all talk about the history of mankind using the ubiquitous term “evolution.” The term has come to be the common descriptor for how all things were created and progress over time. What in the past was credited to God has become “Evolution did it.” In the late 19th century this paradigm shift became the tipping point to support the secularization of America, not only in science but also in every other cultural

institution.

In terms of Darwinian biology, evolution means something very specific — how man came about from a common ancestry of apelike creatures (hominids); which in turn came from a long line of intermediate creatures; which came from an initial line of sea creatures, all the way back to bacteria in the early oceans — and eventually back to a simple cell, the Last Universal Common Ancestor (LUCA). The Darwinian mechanism for this process is genetic, “natural selection working on random mutations” that produce offspring with survival advantages over the previous generation. The “natural selection” guiding force is so powerful that it creates all the awe and wonder of the animal and plant world that in times past was attributed to the Creator. God is no longer necessary to explain their existence. Over billions of years, natural selection gradually crafts descendants into such wonders as insects, flowers, cattle, and cats — and eventually us. Darwin based his theory on the assumption that species are *not* immutable as implied by the biblical account that uses the descriptive word “kind” to characterize a limit beyond which change is impossible. For example, evolution extrapolates minor modifications observed in dog breeding (artificial selection) over long periods of time to account for all the diversity of life we observe on planet Earth.

In his magnum opus of 1859, *The Origin of Species*, Darwin proposed that this unguided, random, small stepwise modification mechanism would accumulate monumental unplanned changes and yield a brand new creature. Evolution quickly replaced the previously held biblical view that God specially created creatures by his direct and/or guided action. Within a few decades God was pushed out of the biological creation business and replaced by Mother Nature. This was a new worldview. That’s why Dobzhansky could make such a sweeping comment (“nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution”), and why the theory is so rigorously defended. It was quickly elevated to the status of “scientific fact” (like the fact of gravity) and defended with religious zeal. But, what does the scientific evidence show?

In the *Origin*, Darwin gave a test to validate his claim: “*If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous successive slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.*” Evolution is a historical science — nobody was around to give testimony — but we can look at the historical trail it leaves. We can look at the

“records” left by the ancient creatures themselves in their death — their fossils. The fossil record has been continuously heralded as proof of evolution. There have been over an estimated 250 million fossils found and classified representing over 250 thousand species. The results are in, and it’s not good for Darwinism. The record shows sharply defined gaps, not “numerous successive slight modifications” as Darwin had hoped. There are no transitional fossils (partial this and partial that), but there is a lot of wishful thinking and speculative interpretation. The “missing links” are massive throughout the record, not only between the various categories of animals, but even within the same species. The fossil record, even though it nicely reveals the history of life on Earth, actually disproves the hoped-for Darwinian mechanism of evolution. Yet our school textbooks offer the fossil record as direct evidence. Modifications to improve Darwin’s gradualism have been proposed to help explain the findings — punctuated equilibrium, symbiotic systems, and “hopeful monster theories,” but they all run afoul of the same evidential problem. As with the Origin of Life theories, hope for Darwinism has moved to outer space, where life might have originated elsewhere in the universe under “evolutionary conditions” more favorable, and then transported to Earth (panspermia). There is no evidence for this.

The single greatest fossil problem for Darwinism is the “Cambrian Explosion” of around 600 million years ago. Nearly all the major animal groups appear in the rocks of this period without a trace of evolutionary ancestors. If evolution were true, we would expect to find millions of evolutionary specimens of Cambrian life forms in the Precambrian rocks. However, there are none. And the fossil evidence gets worse all the time. In 1995, the most prolific evidence for the Cambrian Explosion was found in Chengjiang in China. At the time the cover of Time magazine read, *“Evolution’s Big Bang. New discoveries show that life as we know it began in an amazing biological frenzy that changed the planet almost overnight.”* The headline in the Chinese newspaper Peoples Dialog read, *“Chengjiang Fossils Challenge Evolution.”* The National Museum of Natural History in Beijing built a large display with an impressive collection of the fossils, stating how the evidence challenges Darwin’s theory. It even quoted Darwin who was concerned that the sudden appearance of a large number of animals during the Cambrian Period would challenge his theory.

In the U.S., however, the evidence received little attention. The prestigious

California Academy of Sciences didn't even mention the discovery on their "Hard Facts" wall of evolution. Instead, their "hard facts" remained as confirmation of Darwin's original predictions. J. Y. Chen, a Chinese paleontologist lecturing in the United States, put the situation this way, "In China we can criticize Darwin, but not the government. In America, you can criticize the government, but not Darwin." Our school textbooks give little attention to the Cambrian Explosion. The guardians of Darwinian orthodoxy are firmly entrenched to assure that no disconfirming evidence ever gets into the texts or into our students. If word sneaks into the classroom through an inquisitive teacher who might bring in an article describing such things, that school district needs to prepare itself for the onslaught of an ACLU lawsuit, and the teacher will perhaps find him- or herself looking for another job or line of work.

There are several other biological "Explosions" in the fossil record besides the Cambrian that have no precursors — such as the sudden appearance of multi-cellular creatures, plants, and human beings. These are being collectively referred to as the "Big Bangs of Biology." If there are no precursors, then there are no *"numerous successive slight modifications,"* and according to Darwin himself, *"my theory would absolutely break down."*

The most devastating evidence disconfirming evolution, however, is to be found in the modern science of biochemistry. This group of sciences studies the basic building blocks of life — the cell — what it is and how it operates. In Darwin's time, before the invention of the electron microscope, the cell was thought to be no more than a simple blob of protoplasm that was easily moldable. Biologists thought that the cell could easily evolve itself, under the right environmental conditions, into body plans and parts eventually morphing into brand new living creatures. With the power of the electron microscope, the researchers found, however, something even more amazing than what the astronomers found when they turned their telescopes toward the heavens. The living cell is more complex than the cosmos! There are a hundred trillion cells in just one human body, all working together as an exquisitely fine-tuned system. Each grouping of cells (internal systems such as the cardiovascular, respiratory, nervous, etc.) has its own specialized function and cells to perform it — all centrally controlled by the brain. What we have learned about the cell as a building block is nothing short of miraculous. Each cell is a complex of interacting components (organelles), and each cell is more complex than an entire city! There are manufacturing facilities,

power plants, transportation systems, waste treatment facilities, distribution centers, quality control plants, computerized information systems, and process control computers, each precisely engineered and programmed to carry out life moment by moment. These facilities even *build themselves* while conducting the functions of life, and miraculously *self-replicate* to do the same in the next generation! The engineering and programming are at a level so far above the genius of our own ability that biochemists simply marvel when they peer inside just one tiny cell a few millimeters across. Yet the genius of the biochemist to comprehend all this is contained in the 3-pound “blob of tissue” on the top of her neck.

In the 1970s, the “blueprint” for this engineering marvel was discovered and the “code” was broken for how the process works. DNA is a string of chemical molecules some 10 feet long in a human cell. The string consists of 3 billion pairs of molecules represented by the alphabetic characters A-T-C-G, which is encoded in a 4-bit scheme (like the numeric 0-1 binary code in a computer). This “genetic code” defines and carries out the assembly instructions to build the body’s entire protein infrastructure. In 2000, the Human Genome Project announced it had decoded all the instructions that make up the blueprint for the human body — some 30,000 genes. This is a remarkable scientific achievement, but it has devastating consequences for the Darwinian theory of new species being created by “*numerous slight modifications.*” Not only are these systems so complex that they cannot be built up over time that way, but they are “irreducibly complex” and contain “complex specified information.” That means that all the parts required to make a particular function work have to come together at one time and contain the precise information required. Any part missing or not precisely engineered; any information not specifically called for by the blueprint; any part not arriving at the exact time needed; any system not properly quality controlled or properly regulated will make the system fail. Yet our bodies, and those of every other living thing on planet Earth don’t normally miss a heartbeat even though trillions of these operations are carried out with utmost precision every second of our lives.

Is there a better explanation than Darwinism for how all this has come about? Yes. In the 1990s a group of independently minded scholars from multiple disciplines joined together to develop a science of *intelligent design* in nature (ID). Design was always an intuitive fact of nature, but it didn’t have a scientific

program at its foundation — design was just obvious to everyone. But in the mid-19th century, after Darwin published his *Origin of Species*, design in nature was co-opted by evolutionary theory. This was more of a political takeover in the academy than a scientific revolution based on data. Up until the 1990s “design theory” lacked a rigorous scientific program, but it was time to develop a “design theory” and pit it against “evolutionary theory.” The Discovery Institute was given birth, and the rigor began discovery.org. The scientific foundation for design in nature (in fact, for design in all disciplines not just biology) is being firmly established. Only the current political domination by the evolutionary establishment keeps it from being widely known by the public, and out of the schools and textbooks.

As you might expect, the concept of Intelligent Design (ID) is repugnant to Naturalism, which is bent on finding a materialistic evolutionary answer to life — no matter how bizarre the proposal. Naturalism is not even open to the possibility that there may be other avenues of scientific discovery! Naturalism is a self-limiting ideological bias on science, whereas science in its nonideological form is open to the journey of discovering truth wherever the path may lead. Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Design Theory is that design is a specified purposeful complex arrangement of parts. The only mechanism we know that can accomplish such a feat is intelligence; and intelligence is a property of mind. ID proposes that mind (not matter, as Naturalism says) is the fundamental stuff of the universe — and of ourselves.

Since ID has theological and ideological implications, it has been rejected out of hand by the mainstream evolutionary elite, such as the National Academy of Sciences. This situation is reminiscent of how the Big Bang theory was initially rejected in astronomy because of its theological implication of a creation. Eventually, however, the data wins and the self-correcting scientific method yearning for truth follows the path of hard evidence. Ideally, it doesn't cling to defending old theories that don't work. But that takes time as old paradigms and prejudices don't die easily. Intelligent Design is a promising new line of research and needs to be given a place at the table of options, as well as a place in the educational system so that new and open minds can ponder it. Banning and censoring ID because it has religious implications is anti-science and anti-truth. At the same time, theologians can celebrate its inauguration as it aligns with what the Bible has proclaimed for 3,500 years — that God created life and it was good.

So where does that leave the “fact of evolution,” as it is called? The only fact of evolution is that adaptation within a species is an observable part of nature. Minor adaptations to internal and environmental changes enable a living organism to survive changing conditions. This is “survival of the fittest,” “evolution in action,” “micro-evolution,” and is all that Darwin really explained. Beyond this, Darwin speculated that these adaptations would continue over long periods of time with the ensuing small changes being accumulated (without limit) to produce brand new body plans, parts, and creatures. This “macro-evolution” has never been demonstrated. So Darwin’s main theory (origin of the species) rests on an unproven assumption. Whereas the fact of gravity is ubiquitously demonstrable, the most evolution (natural selection working on random mutation) has ever demonstrated is micro-evolution. To extrapolate and confuse micro- with macro-evolution is total misrepresentation. Finches, bacteria, butterflies, dogs, etc., can all be shown to change on a “micro” basis within their own kind (adaptation), but no creature has ever been shown to have the capacity to change into another kind — either in nature or by artificial means. Yet, every museum across America, every textbook in public school, most every TV documentary on the subject displays and portrays macro-evolution as a fact and uses very limited micro-evolution to prove to it. Most every Wikipedia search on the internet is controlled to testify to this misrepresentation (of the “fact of evolution”) and refer to Intelligent Design as pseudoscience. What’s going on? What is fact? What is fiction? What is wishful thinking? How does ideology play into this? In Dobzhansky’s terms, what in biology “makes sense in the light of evolution,” and what doesn’t?