

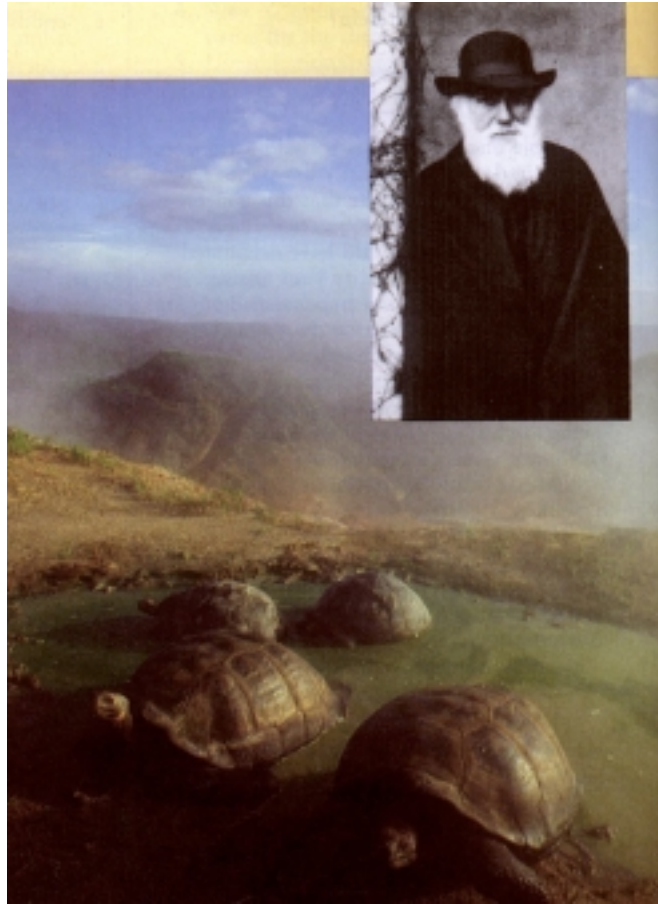
# EVOLUTION: THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

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## Evolution: The Debate

Few modern day social debates have caused greater polarization between two groups of people than Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution. On one side of the debate you have the Evolutionists who subscribe to the doctrine that life in the universe began as a random act that miraculously defied the odds and evolved without any influence from a higher being. On the other extreme you have the creationists who disagree with any thought or idea that they feel conflicts with the foundation of their belief system and that may force them to reevaluate their views on God and man. Which side is right?

## Evolution: What Is It?

Most of us are familiar with the name of Charles Darwin and his Theory of Evolution but perhaps fewer of us understand the actual mechanisms of how evolution is suppose to work.

What is the Theory of Evolution? Let me first answer this by saying what evolution is not. Perhaps the most common misunderstanding about the Theory of Evolution is that physical changes can somehow spontaneously occur within an animal that gives it some advantage in dealing with a new challenge or stress placed upon it by it's environment. That is to say, it is the animal itself that somehow knows to grow or evolve longer hair, for example, to survive the increasingly cold winter months. But this is not what Darwin's Theory of Evolution teaches. For it is not the animal that controls its own evolutionary path but it is the environment itself. For example, if the winter months did become too cold for a particular species of animal to survive then the environment would simply kill off all of the animals within that species that did not have the longer hair needed to stay warm and survive. In effect the only animals left to reproduce and carry on the species would be the animals that possessed the genetic trait for longer hair. Thus a completely "new" subspecies of long haired animals would eventually replace the older species of short haired animals.

Using ones imagination you may be able to see how over a period of millions and millions of years of environmental change that a particular species of animal could eventually evolve or change into something completely different from what it once was. But where did that particular trait for longer hair come from and why was it in only some of the animals? We will get to that question in a moment but for now let us say how extremely advantageous it is for a species of animal to have as much genetic variety among it's individuals as possible. For the greater the diversity or differences among the individuals of a species the greater chances that species has of surviving whatever changes the environment may throw at it.

Through what Darwin called "Natural Selection" the often harsh conditions of the environment allow only the fittest animals to survive to pass on their own genetic traits to their young, thus the term "Survival of the Fittest". If the environment in which the animal lived never changed, including climate, food sources or predators then the Law of Natural Selection would not take place and the animal living within that environment would have no mechanism or need in which to make it change or evolve.

There a few examples of when evolutionary changes can occur within a species of animal that are independent of the influence of the environment. One example of such an evolutionary change would be when an animal within a species suddenly develops a completely new biological gene trait that is dominant over some existing trait. These new dominant gene traits occasionally occur in all species of animals as a mechanism working within the animal's genetic code to, again, create as much individual diversity within a group or population as possible. Such a new genetic trait could eventually be passed on to all of the individuals within that population thereby replacing the existing gene trait and causing a completely new evolutionary change within that

species. Such a new genetic trait does not necessarily have to be beneficial or advantageous to that animal. An example might be some of the common genetic diseases found in humans such as hemophilia (a blood clotting disorder). But for better or for worse, in the end it will ultimately be the environment that decides if this new genetic trait will either enhance or hinder that animal's chances for survival. For in the animal world, far removed from hospitals or modern life saving techniques, only the fittest can and will survive.

So evolution is not some drastically new species miraculously appearing overnight but a very slow and methodical process, driven by the environment and an animals own inherent genetic diversity that has been shaping the face of life on the planet since it's first conception.

## Creation vs Evolution

Ever since it was first theorized, evolution has faced a barrage of attacks on all fronts by religious groups who find it's principals to be a direct assault on their basic human dignity.

For these individuals, the thought that man may have evolved from some lowly life form less majestic and perfect than themselves is somehow unbearable. Some of these religious groups have successfully fought to have all teachings of evolution completely removed from their schools with little or no compromise on how it could otherwise be taught or presented to their students.

On the other extreme of the spectrum you have the so-called humanistic evolutionary theorists who view all individual beliefs in God as nothing more than an archaic and superstitious hindrance to good science. Given their wish they would have all people viewing life and the world as they do, in terms of what can only can be measured or observed. What about the people in the middle who neither share the views of extreme evolutionists or the creationists? Is there some middle ground of rationality where the silent majority resides?

## The Silent Majority

Compared to other sciences, the science of evolution is comparably young. The science of alchemy or chemistry has been around since the middle ages. Once thought to be a craft that dabbled in the black arts, today the science of chemistry has improved the life of mankind immeasurably. But what if the early science of chemistry was banned before it had a chance to mature? Think of how different our lives would all be today if it were not for the discoveries made in chemistry. I dare say our lives might closely resemble the people who lived before the great industrial revolution at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. What if the theory of flight was outlawed before the Wright brothers stumbled upon the correct wing dimensions that gave their small plane enough lift to carry it 20 feet? After all, it could have been argued that man has no wings and there is no evidence or proof in the world that suggests that man can fly. A good argument in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but as we all know not a correct one.

Is the Theory of Evolution complete? Is there nothing new to add, no new revelations to be revealed or new fossil evidence to unearth? Certainly not! For the

sake of argument, let us say that the Theory of Evolution has not yet been proven to be an airtight, infallible Theory. Should we then just abandon it before it has time to ripen and either prove or disprove itself? For no false or incorrect scientific theory can withstand the test of time. But in the mean time, should we allow groups of people to dismantle or direct the natural unfolding of this scientific process simply because it does not make them feel good? If the answer to this question is “yes” then we all must ask ourselves- is it really the truth we are searching for? It is my personal belief that given enough time that all of the sciences and religions of the world will one-day have to meet each other at a single point of agreement. For truth is truth and it cannot be manipulated, forced or directed forever. Eventually all honest avenues of truth searching must collide at some common point. And so, it is really not so important whether or not the Theory of Evolution proves to be true or untrue as much as it is that the process of searching for the truth is allowed to continue on it’s journey unhampered.

I have observed many social issues of the world swing from left to right as they struggle to find the truth and equilibrium of the middle ground. I have observed this natural process taking place both in my own personal life’s struggles as well as in the greater struggles of our society. I have reasoned this swinging pendulum of struggle to be nothing more than the natural mechanism by which we all as individuals and as a species move forward and evolve. It is this natural process, that I have secretly named the “rubber band theory”, that I have found peace in the belief that the reason for struggle is not nearly as important as the overall process of struggling. That the evolutionary process that effects us all as individuals is a much smaller but identical microcosm of the greater evolutionary process that is influencing us all as a society and a species. A process that is moving us forward but sometimes backward yet apparently in the overall forward direction. It is this forward direction of progression alone which offers me evidence that evolution is a viable, working mechanism in operation today. And that I find the evidence of evolution not to be so much in the past fossil record but in current observations of the processes of life taking place all around us every day.