EVOLUTION'S
ACHILLES' HEELS

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And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

MATTHEW 13:3-8

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NATURAL SELECTION

Natural selection: the cornerstone of Darwinian evolution

The full title of Charles Darwin's 1859 book expressed the concept of natural selection: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. 'Nature' preserved individuals that were best suited to the environment.

Natural selection is really a very straight-forward, commonsense idea. Creatures with features (traits) suited to survival in a given environment tend to survive better than those that do not have those features. For example, wolves with small ears, short legs, and a thick coat of hair will tend to survive better in the Arctic than wolves with big ears, long legs, and thin coats. These differences impact the ability of the animals to retain or lose heat, which are important traits for survival in a cold or hot environment, respectively.

'Nature' is not a sentient being. Therefore, it cannot do any 'selecting'. Yet, *natural selection* is a convenient phrase to use when discussing the survival or death of individuals and, more importantly, their genes, over time in different environments. In 1868, Darwin clarified that natural selection had no direction, no ultimate purpose or goal:

> This preservation, during the battle for life, of varieties which possess any advantage in structure, constitution, or instinct, I have called Natural Selection; and Mr. Herbert Spencer has well expressed the same idea by the Survival of the Fittest. The term "natural selection" is in some respects a bad one, as it seems to imply conscious choice; but this will be disregarded after a little familiarity …. For brevity sake I sometimes speak of natural selection as an intelligent power;—in the same way as astronomers speak of the attraction of gravity as ruling the movements of the planets, or as agriculturists speak of man making domestic races by his power of selection. In the one case, as in the other, selection

> does nothing without variability, and this depends in some manner on the action of the surrounding circumstances on the organism. I have, also, often personified the word Nature; for I have found it difficult to avoid this ambiguity; but I mean by nature only the aggregate action and product of many natural laws,—and by laws only the ascertained sequence of events.[1]

However, creatures need to reproduce, not just survive; otherwise, their traits will not be passed on to offspring. Anything that helps a creature to breed successfully (produce offspring that survive to reproduce) contributes to its 'fitness' and, hence, the species' ability to persist in a specific environment. How much influence the environment has on determining such fitness is a matter of debate, but this was Darwin's basic idea.

As we just read, Darwin also approved of Spencer's phrase "survival of the fittest", but many of today's evolutionists dislike the term because it leads people to think in terms of 'biggest', 'fastest', or 'strongest' and these traits do not always increase the ability to produce viable offspring. The 'fittest' are, by definition, *those that produce the greatest number of surviving offspring*. He who has the most children wins! There is confusion on this topic, going all the way back to Darwin himself. Just before the passage quoted above, he said, "It has truly been said that all nature is at war; the strongest ultimately prevail, the weakest fail." Despite the confusion, biologists use 'natural selection' in terms of *differential reproduction*; if you have more surviving offspring, more of your genes get passed on to succeeding generations. This distinction is important.

Natural selection in Paradise?

Since natural selection is simply differential reproduction, it would have operated in the Garden of Eden (Paradise) before the Fall, when sin ushered in the current era of 'struggle for survival' (Genesis 3:17–19). For example, consider a theoretical plant species (or kind) that was created with built-in genetic variants that affected an individual plant's ability to tolerate dry or swampy conditions. Over time, plants that tolerate wetter conditions would naturally produce more seeds (thus propagating those gene variants) in swampy conditions than those with those same variants growing on a dry hilltop. Likewise, the plants that more easily tolerate dry conditions would produce more seeds on that hilltop than those with the same variations living in a swamp. Over time, the genetic variants would become highly partitioned into their respective environments, potentially leading to 'speciation'. No 'death of the unfit' is involved, only greater or lesser numbers of offspring. The same could apply to animals (who

1. Darwin, C.R., *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication*, 1st edn., vol. 1, iss. 1, John Murray, London, UK, p. 6, 1868. See also Sarfati, J., The fact of natural selection, creation.com/cet, last update 31 Mar 2023.

were commanded to multiply). Thus, adaptive changes in the created kinds could (and should) have occurred in a pre-fall world.[2]

Natural selection was the only mechanism Darwin proposed in *Origin of Species* to explain the origin of all the diverse life forms on Earth, all from a single original life form (or from a few life forms, as Darwin allowed).[3]

He had no knowledge of genetics and mutations, or their molecular basis in DNA (see chapter 2). He proposed that small variations were always occurring and that those that favoured survival would be preserved, thus propelling an organism towards an entirely different organism (given enough time).

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Evidence for natural selection is commonly held up as 'proving evolution'. Since organisms can often adapt to changes in their environment via natural selection, there is no shortage of stories of natural selection. Thus, we are continually bombarded with the message that evolution is 'happening all the time'. But is this really *evolution*?

'Special' versus 'General' theories of evolution

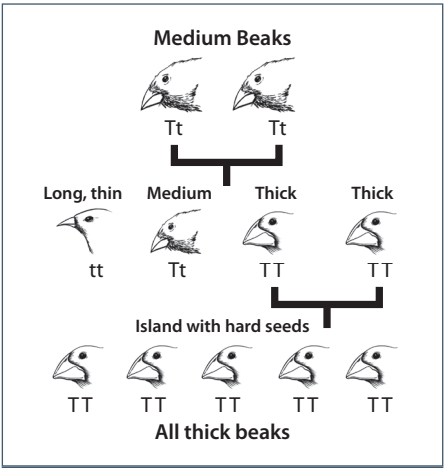
What is evolution? Is it 'change over time' or 'the common ancestry of all species'? While trying to combine these two ideas, Darwin's theory entailed the formation of new species (speciation), although he did not really explain how new species formed (and how it happens is still somewhat controversial). The definition of the word 'species' will be discussed later. For now, we just have to understand that speciation simply involves the origin of, for example, a variety of rabbit that no longer breeds with its ancestor rabbits (via behavioural differences, size differences, or due to geographical separation that eventually leads to the two populations looking superficially different). This is quite different from seeing a new species as a step in turning microbes into mankind.

Darwin assumed that the variation seen between species was limitless. He assumed that the observed variations between dog breeds, pigeon breeds, or in the beaks of different species of finch[4] in the wild demonstrated the type of change that could be extrapolated, almost without limit, to explain not only the species of finches but the origin of finches, pigeons, dogs, and everything else. He did

2. See: Carter, R., Natural selection in Paradise: why natural selection is part of the creation model, creation.com/natural-selection-in-paradise, 14 May 2020.
3. He would backtrack later, saying he gave too much weight to natural selection as the causative agent and in his 1871 book *The Descent of Man* he introduced even more controversial ideas (now called sexual selection, kin selection, and group selection), which evolutionists still argue about today.
4. Darwin observed such finches while in the Galápagos. See Wieland, C., Darwin's finches, *Creation* **14**(3):22–23, 1992; creation.com/darwins-finches.

not discuss the evolution of humans until 12 years later in *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, presumably because including human evolution in *Origin* would have reduced the likelihood of its acceptance.

It is a huge leap to go from looking at variations in an existing feature (such as shorter, thinner, longer, fatter beaks) to explaining the origin of beaks, finches, birds, reptiles, mammals, and everything else. How does looking at variation in dogs explain the *origin* of dogs (wolves)? There is a fundamental logical disconnect here, which highlights a major Achilles' heel of evolution.



Beak shapes in finches: Sorting of pre-existing genes could produce variety in beak shapes. Then, natural selection could remove information for thin beaks.

Indeed, the evolutionist, Professor G.A. Kerkut, a well-known British authority on invertebrates, distinguished the 'special theory of evolution' (STE), which is akin to speciation, from the 'general theory of evolution' (GTE), which concerns the common ancestry of all living things. He argued that the latter, GTE, is conjectural:

> [T]here is the theory that all the living forms in the world have arisen from a single source which itself came from an inorganic form. This theory can be called the 'General Theory of Evolution', and the evidence that supports it is not sufficiently strong to allow us to consider it as anything more than a working hypothesis. It is not clear whether the changes that bring about speciation are of the same nature as those that brought about the development of new phyla [major divisions of living things, of which there are about 80, including microbes]. The answer will be found in future experimental work and not by the dogmatic assertions that the General Theory of Evolution must be correct because there is nothing else that will satisfactorily take its place.[5]

Incidentally, Kerkut included the origin of life in GTE. Why is it, then, that so many today do not want to include the origin of life in their definition of evolution? Could it be because those who understand something of the complexity of the simplest living cell know that the origin of life is a lost cause? See chapter 3.

5. Kerkut, G.A., *Implications of Evolution*, Pergamon, Oxford, UK, p. 157, 1960.