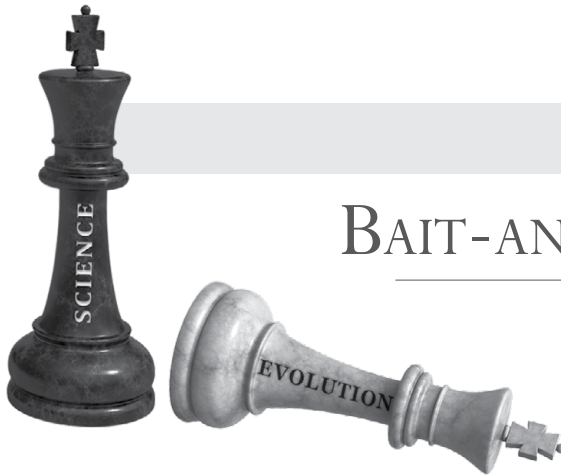


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BAIT-AND-SWITCH

In all discussions, it is important to define terms consistently and honestly. Socrates, in Plato’s *Phaedo*, stated succinctly, “To use words wrongly and indefinitely is not merely an error in itself, it also creates evil in the soul.” Many informal logical fallacies come from faulty or changing definitions.¹

Evolution

The theory that Dawkins and other materialists are really promoting, and which creationists oppose, is the idea that particles turned into people over time, without any need for an intelligent designer. This “General Theory of Evolution” (GTE) was defined by the evolutionary biologist, Prof. G.A. Kerkut of Southampton University, as “the theory that all the living forms in the world have arisen from a single source which itself came from an inorganic form.”²

However, one common logical fallacy is *equivocation* or ‘bait-and-switch’, that is, switching the meaning of a single word (evolution) part-way through an argument. Dawkins is unfortunately frequently guilty of this:

“...when there *is* a systematic increase or decrease in the frequency with which we see a particular gene in a gene pool, that is precisely what we mean by evolution.” (p. 33)

1. Sarfati, J., Loving God with all your mind: logic and creation, *J. Creation* 12(2):142–151, 1998; creation.com/logic.
2. Kerkut, G.A., *Implications of Evolution*, Pergamon, Oxford, UK, p. 157, 1960. He continued: “the evidence which supports this is not sufficiently strong to allow us to consider it as anything more than a working hypothesis.”

Similar definitions include evolution = “change in gene frequency with time” or “descent with modification”. An example is the atheist Eugenie Scott, Executive Director of the pretentiously named National Center for Science Education, the leading US organization devoted entirely to pushing evolution.³ She approvingly cited a teacher whose pupils said after her ‘definition’: “Of course species change with time! You mean that’s evolution?!”⁴

However, if that were the issue, then I would be an evolutionist! In fact, I can’t name anyone who doubts the occurrence of “systematic increase or decrease in the frequency with which we see a particular gene in a gene pool.” Certainly much fewer than the 40 % that Dawkins is so concerned about.

This leads to another common fallacy, *knocking down a straw man*: refuting a caricature of the opponent’s position. Since creation is defined as the opposite of evolution, if evolution is defined as per Dawkins, it leads to the caricature that creationists deny any sort of “systematic increase or decrease in the frequency with which we see a particular gene in a gene pool.” Yet as will be seen, a large part of his book is concerned with showing that such change in gene frequency occurs, i.e. knocking down a straw man.

My chapter 2 defines the terms “species” and “kinds”, showing that “kind” is much broader than “species”. Biblical creationists realized this long before Darwin, and still do—rapid speciation is expected in the biblical model but is a surprise to many evolutionists.

Chapter 3 explains natural selection, and shows that it’s not unique to evolution.

Chapter 4 deals with the worst equivocation in *Greatest Show*: examples of alleged evolution in action. These are invariably examples of change and natural selection, but have nothing to do with the GTE.

Only a theory?

This was the title of the first chapter of *Greatest Show*, showing his irritation with evolution-critics who claim “evolution is just a theory”. On p. 185, Dawkins shows awareness of our “Don’t Use” list,⁵ yet he does not acknowledge that we (i.e. *Creation Ministries International*, or CMI) have also advised against “evolution is just a theory” in the same document. The section from that list reads:

“**Evolution is just a theory.**’ What people usually *mean* when they say this is ‘Evolution is not proven fact, so it should not be promoted

3. See Batten, D., and Sarfati, J., creation.com/how-religiously-neutral-are-the-anti-creationist-organisations.
4. Scott, E., Dealing with anti-evolutionism, *Reports of the National Center for Science Education* 17(4):24–28, 1997; quote on p. 26, with emphasis in original.
5. Arguments we think creationists should NOT use; creation.com/dontuse.

dogmatically.’ Therefore people should say *that*. The problem with using the word “theory” in this case is that scientists usually use it to mean a well-substantiated explanation of data. This includes well-known ones such as Einstein’s Theory of Relativity and Newton’s Theory of Gravity, and lesser-known ones such as the Debye–Hückel Theory of electrolyte solutions and the Deryagin–Landau/Verwey–Overbeek (DLVO) theory of the stability of lyophobic sols, etc. It would be better to say that particles-to-people evolution is an unsubstantiated *hypothesis* or *conjecture*.

“All the same, the critic doth protest too much. *Webster’s Dictionary* (1996) provides the #2 meaning as ‘a proposed explanation whose status is still conjectural, in contrast to well-established propositions that are regarded as reporting matters of actual fact’, and this usage is hardly unknown in the scientific literature. The dictionary further provides ‘6. contemplation or speculation. 7. guess or conjecture.’ So the critic is simply wrong to say that it’s a *mistake* to use theory to mean ‘speculation’, ‘conjecture’ or ‘guess’; and that scientists *never* use theory this way in the literature. So the attack is really cheap point-scoring, but there is still no reason to give critics this opportunity.”

Dawkins also acknowledges that the *Oxford Dictionary* likewise provides about the same meanings; Sense 1 is about the same as in our first paragraph, and Sense 2 is about the same as the #2 meaning. To avoid confusion, he proposes instead a neologism, ‘theorem’. This is not the same as ‘theorem’, which is a mathematical theorem, which is logically deducible from axioms. Instead, Dawkins writes:

“A scientific theorem such as evolution or heliocentrism is a theory that conforms to the Oxford dictionary’s ‘Sense 1’:

[It] had been confirmed or established by observation or experiment, and is propounded or accepted as accounting for the known facts; [it is] a statement of what are held to be the general laws, principles, or causes of something known or observed.

“A scientific theorem has not been—cannot be—proved in the way that a mathematical theorem can be proved. But common sense treats it as a fact in the same sense as the ‘theory’ that the Earth is round and not flat is a fact, and the theory that green plants obtain energy from the sun is a fact. All are scientific theorems: supported by massive quantities of evidence, accepted by all informed observers, undisputed facts in the ordinary sense of the word. As with all facts, if we are going to be pedantic, it is entirely possible that our measuring instruments, and the sense organs by which we read them, are the victims of a massive

confidence trick. As Bertrand Russell said, ‘We may all have come into existence five minutes ago, provided with ready-made memories, with holes in our socks and hair that needed cutting.’ Given the evidence now available, for evolution to be anything other than a fact would require a similar confidence trick by the creator, something that few theists would wish to credit.” (p. 15)

Whether the term ‘theorem’ will catch on is anyone’s guess. However, as our Don’t Use list stated, the other undoubted ‘theorems’ can be directly observed and tested, while evolution is a claim about the unobserved and unrepeatable past (see ch. 4 to refute claims that scientists have observed ‘Evolution before our very eyes’).

It is also disingenuous for an ardent antitheist like Dawkins to profess concern about a creator’s alleged deception. However, biblical creationists respond that the real deception would be for a creator to use evolution then tell us in the Bible something diametrically opposed in every respect—the time frame,⁶ the method,⁷ the order of events,⁸ and the origin of death and suffering.⁹

Furthermore, Bertrand Russell’s ‘created five minutes ago’ scenario can’t be disproven by empirical science, because even time measurement devices could have been created to read a false time period. This is one limit of the atheistic empiricism they both hold. But it *is* disprovable from the biblical axioms, since they teach a real history. In fact, there is no empirical way to prove the validity of empiricism itself; it is a ‘faith’ position.

The atheistic scientist must regard the orderliness of the universe as an *axiom*, a proposition accepted without proof, and which bears *no relation* to his other axiom of atheism. The biblical theist is in a better position because he can treat the orderliness of the universe as a *theorem*, *derived* from his axiom that the Bible’s propositions are true, including that the universe was created by a God of order, not confusion. It is not surprising that the biblical axioms also gave rise to modern science, as shown in ch. 17.

Difficulties

In a friendly interview¹⁰ about his book, Dawkins admitted that evolution has not solved every problem, and there are still “unsolved mysteries”:

-
6. Grigg, R., How long were the days of Genesis 1? What did God intend us to understand from the words He used? *Creation* 19(1):23–25 December 1996; creation.com/sixdays.
 7. Mortenson, T., Genesis according to evolution: If evolution over millions of years was the way God created, He could easily have said so in simple words. *Creation* 26(4):50–51, 2004; creation.com/gen-ev.
 8. Manthei, D., Two world-views in conflict, *Creation* 20(4):26–27 1998; creation.com/conflict. The Bible teaches that God created the earth before the sun, and whales and birds before land vertebrates, contrary to evolutionary order.
 9. Sarfati, J., The Fall: a cosmic catastrophe: Hugh Ross’s blunders on plant death in the Bible, *J. Creation* 19(3):60–64, 2005; creation.com/plant_death.
 10. Boyle, A., The not-so-angry evolutionist, <http://cosmiclog.msnbc.msn.com>, 14 October 2009.

“Dawkins cited four of his favourites ... during a talk at the University of Washington:

- **The origin of life:** It might surprise some of Dawkins’ critics to hear that he offers no explanation for what kick-started life in the first place. ‘That is a complete mystery,’ he said. [See ch. 13 for why it’s a major problem for his materialistic faith.]
- **The origin of sex:** Dawkins said scientists are also puzzling over ‘what sex is all about’—in evolutionary theory, that is. After all, sexual reproduction isn’t strictly necessary for the evolutionary process to do its thing. Some researchers surmise that sex helps weed out harmful mutations or provides more options for propagation. [This might go some way to explaining the persistence of sex, but not its *origin*.¹¹]
- **The origin of consciousness:** Where does subjective consciousness come from? Dawkins sees this as the ‘biggest puzzle’ facing biology. Scientists have their ideas, and one of the latest ideas is that consciousness serves as the Wi-Fi network for an assortment of ‘computers’ inside your brain. [Come again? That explains where it comes from? See also ch. 9, p. 147.]
- **The rise of morality:** What drives us to do good, even for people we don’t even know? The expectation of reciprocity provides a partial explanation, but ‘it doesn’t account for the extremely high degree of moral behavior that humans show,’ Dawkins said. He surmises that altruism might have arisen as a ‘mistaken misfiring’ of neural circuits involved in calculating the mutual give and take among kin. [That might conceivably ‘explain’ an isolated example of altruism, but not its origin and widespread persistence (a person who sacrifices their life for someone else fails to pass on their gene for altruism, causing it to disappear). It also doesn’t prove that it’s objectively *right* to act altruistically. See also ch. 17, p. 314.]”

When confronted with difficulties, evolutionists often proclaim: “It’s the scientists’ job to solve problems.” Fair enough. But the same evolutionists often find an alleged problem for creationists and demand an immediate answer or unconditional surrender. Yet the same allowance should be given to creationists: further research has often shown that an alleged problem is solved very well under a creation model, or that an alleged ‘proof’ of evolution is nothing of the kind.



11. See also Sarfati, J., *Refuting Evolution 2*, ch. 11.

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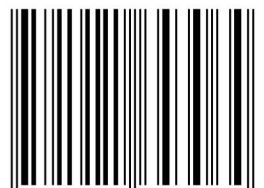
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