

# Darwinism: A Teetering House of Cards

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*Steve Cable examines four areas of recent scientific discovery that undermine evolution.*

## The Origin of Life: A Mystery

Confidence in Darwinism erodes as new discoveries fail to produce supporting evidence. Three books released in 2017,

- *House of Cards* by journalist Tom Bethel
- *Zombie Science* by biologist Jonathan Wells
- *Undeniable* by biologist Douglas Axe

address areas where Darwin's grand idea is weaker now than 150 years ago. As Bethel states, "Today, it more closely resembles a house of cards, built out of flimsy icons rather than hard evidence, and liable to blow away in the slightest breeze."[\[1\]](#) It is not just critics who recognize this weakening. In 2016, the Royal Society in London convened a meeting to discuss "calls for revision of the standard theory of evolution."[\[2\]](#)



Four areas where Darwin hoped future work would support his theory will be

examined. The first area is the origin of reproducing beings.

Darwin only hoped that life may have originated in a “warm little pond.” But as one scientist states, “The origin-of-life field is a failure—we still do not have even a plausible coherent model, let alone a validated scenario, for the emergence of life on earth.”[{3}](#)

Darwin assumed the first reproducing cells were very simple. In truth, the simplest cells are composed of impressively complex machines which could not have arisen directly from inorganic components. But there are no known simpler life forms. As Michael Behe commented, “The cell’s known complexity has increased immeasurably in recent years, and points ever more insistently to an intelligent designer as its cause.”[{4}](#)

The probability of even one of the amino acids necessary for life appearing by random mutations is effectively zero even given billions of years. As Doug Axe writes, “(Examining how) accidental evolutionary processes are supposed to have invented enzymes without insight, we consistently find these proposals to be implausible.”[{5}](#)

Another professor states, “Those who think scientists understand the issues of prebiotic chemistry are wholly misinformed. Nobody understands them. . . . The basis upon which we . . . are relying is so shaky we must openly state the situation for what it is: a mystery.”[{6}](#)

Facing insurmountable odds against life appearing, some materialists propose an infinite number of parallel universes.[{7}](#) With infinite chances, even the most unlikely events could occur. But, as Axe points out, “The biological inventions that surround us (are) fantastically improbable, with evolution explaining none and the multiverse hypothesis explaining only those absolutely necessary for wondering to be possible, . . . this hypothesis fails to explain what we see.”[{8}](#)

Even after resorting to unobservable fantasy situations, the challenges presented

by the origins of life cannot be overcome. A Darwinian model begins with a self-replicating life form. Currently, this appears to be a hill that no one knows how to climb.

## **An Example of Macro-evolution: Still Searching**

Darwin's theory is dependent upon the unobserved concept of macro-evolution, i.e. intergenerational differences accumulating into different species over time. Darwin believed his magic wand of natural selection could direct this process toward increasingly complex beings. Has further research confirmed his belief?

Let's begin with fossil evidence.

The number of fossils studied has blossomed over the last 150 years. All the types of species which exist today appear in the fossil record over a relatively short period of time.<sup>{9}</sup> And, in most cases, with no transitional forms between them undermining Darwin's theory. As science historian Stephen Meyer concludes, "As more . . . fossils are discovered (failing) to document the great array of intermediate forms, it grows ever more improbable that their absence is an artifact of either incomplete sampling or preservation."<sup>{10}</sup>

And evolution proponent Stephen Gould wrote, "The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees . . . have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference."<sup>{11}</sup> *Nature* editor Henry Gee put it this way: "To take a line of fossils and claim that they represent a lineage is not a scientific hypothesis that can be tested, but an assertion that carries the same validity as a bedtime story."<sup>{12}</sup>

Clearly, the fossil record challenges rather than supports conventional evolutionary theory.

Let's continue by looking at experimental evidence.

Perhaps someone has recreated macro-evolution in the lab. Studies of fast replicating populations have shown no ability to accumulate multiple changes. Attempts to create macro-evolution in fruit flies, bacteria and viruses concluded “Neither in nature nor under experimental conditions have any substantial effects ever been obtained through the systematic accumulation of micro-mutations.” [{13}](#)

Bethel points out, “The scientific evidence for evolution is not only weaker than is generally supposed, but as new discoveries have been made . . . , the reasons for accepting the theory have diminished rather than increased.” [{14}](#)

Yet biology departments still spout their unfounded belief in the “magic wand” ability to produce an unimaginable array of advanced creatures in what “amounts to the triumph of ideology over science.” Even some materialists see through this charade. One geneticist at Harvard wrote, “If scientists are going to use logically unbeatable theories about the world, they might as well give up natural science and take up religion.” [{15}](#)

“Darwin might well have been dismayed (at) the meager evidence for natural selection, assembled over many years. . . . It is worth bearing in mind how feeble this evidence is any time someone tells you that Darwinism is a fact.” [{16}](#)

## **The Challenge of Irreducible Complexity**

Darwin wrote his theory would “absolutely break down” if an organ could not be formed by “numerous, successive, slight modifications.” [{17}](#) Have such organs been found? Irreducible complexity and functional coherence say yes.

Irreducible complexity means that some known functions require multiple parts that have no purpose without the other parts. For a Darwinian process to create these functions would require useless mutations to be indefinitely maintained until combined with other useless mutations. Michael Behe’s analysis has shown the 4 billion years of the earth’s existence are not sufficient for such complex

functions to be created by random mutations.

Even if an improbable series of events occurred allowing **one** of these complex forms to arise through a set of random mutations, it would need to happen thousands, if not millions, of times to produce our complex life forms.

In *Undeniable*, Axe introduces “functional coherence,” defined as “The hierarchical arrangement of parts needed for anything to produce a high-level function—each part contributing in a coordinated way to the whole.” Axe examines the role of functional coherence as a microscopic level and concludes, “The fact that mastery . . . of protein design is completely beyond the reach of blind evolution is . . . evolution’s undoing. . . . The evolutionary story is . . . something much less plausible than hitting an atomic dot on a universe-size sphere over and over in succession by blindly dropping subatomic pins.” [\[18\]](#)

In *Zombie Science*, Jonathan Wells considers the number of irreducibly complex subsystems required to evolve fully aquatic whales. These features include flukes with specialized muscles, blowholes with elastic tissues and specialized muscles, internal testicles with a countercurrent heat exchange system, specialized features for nursing, and many others. For Darwinism, these changes are insurmountably large. Whales certainly appear to be the product of design, not unguided evolution.

He also points to advanced optical systems. The process by which light detection becomes an intelligent signal to the brain is irreducibly complex. Two scientists wrote, “the prototypical eye. . . cannot be explained by selection, because selection can drive evolution only when the eye can function at least to a small extent.” [\[19\]](#) These scientists determined the eye was irreducibly complex and could not be developed by natural selection.

Richard Lewontin, a committed materialist, does not believe natural selection can explain complex life forms. He cannot conceive of any gradual set of useful incremental changes resulting in a flying being. Unless a small change gives an

advantage, “the change won’t be selected for, and obviously, a little bit of wing doesn’t do any good.” [{20}](#)

So we can agree with Darwin on this issue: his theory “absolutely breaks down.”

## **DNA and Molecular Science Muddy the Scenario**

Has uncovering the role of DNA filled the gaping holes in Darwinism or created more?

A species’s DNA sequence, we are told, contains all the information needed to create new members. But Douglas Axe states, “(We) would be shocked to know the . . . state of ignorance with respect to DNA. The view that most aspects of living things can be attributed neatly to specific genes has been known . . . to be FALSE for a long time.” [{21}](#)

The higher-level components making up a species are not entirely specified by its DNA. As Wells explains, “After DNA sequences are transcribed into RNAs, many RNAs are modified so they do not match the original transcript. . . . (changing) over time according to the needs of the organism.” The claim that “DNA makes RNA makes protein” is false.” [{22}](#)

Creating new complex functions requires multiple changes in the DNA sequence AND in other elements making the chance of random mutations creating new species untenable.

The original conflicting “trees of life” were created examining the morphology, i.e. the structures of species. These trees suggest different major nodes but almost no transitional forms. Can DNA analysis help? Research has shown that groupings based on morphology are not supported by DNA analysis. As Wells notes, these conflicts “are a major headache for evolutionary biologists.” [{23}](#)

This disconnect from recent gene research is not limited to a few cases. As

reported in 2012, “incongruence between (trees) derived from morphology . . . , and . . . trees based on different subsets of molecular sequences has become pervasive.” [{24}](#)

But DNA analysis alone has a great degree of uncertainty. In one study looking at fifty genes from seventeen animal groups, multiple conflicting ideas on the evolutionary relationship between the animal groups were proposed. [{25}](#) All had seemingly absolute support from the DNA evidence, but all could not be true.

Originally scientists thought DNA was primarily junk sequences not contributing to the characteristics of a species. This junk represented functions which were replaced or had no current usefulness. As Francis Crick, one of the discoverers of DNA’s structure, said, “The possible existence of such selfish DNA is exactly what might be expected from the theory of natural selection.” [{26}](#)

But recent research shows at least eighty percent of the human genome contributes. As Wells reports, “The evidence demonstrates that most of our DNA is transcribed into RNA and that many of those RNAs have biological functions. The idea that most of our DNA is junk, . . . is dead.” [{27}](#)

The facts uncovered about the functioning of DNA and other elements in passing on characteristics to the next generation appear to make more holes in evolutionary theory.

## **A Philosophy Props Up Its Poster Child**

Recent, scientific insights have weakened Darwin’s theory. Yet many are unwilling to discuss its weakness. Why this reluctance? It falls into two camps: 1) a commitment to materialism and 2) a desire for academic acceptance. Materialism is a religious viewpoint where everything has a natural explanation. A spiritual component or events resulting from an outside force are rejected. Science is not materialism. Science attempts to identify and quantify the forces that make the universe. A materialist scientist adds a religious restriction: only



natural forces can be considered.

Bethel states, “Although Darwinism has been promoted as science, its unstated role has been to prop up the philosophy of materialism and atheism.”

Wells suggests, “Priority is given to proposing and defending materialistic explanations rather than following the evidence wherever it leads. This is materialistic philosophy masquerading as empirical science, . . . zombie science.” [{28}](#)

Atheist Colin Patterson offers an honest view regarding the theory of evolution as “often unnecessary” in biology. Nevertheless, it was (taught as) “the unified field theory of biology,” holding the whole subject together. Once something has that status it becomes like religion.” [{29}](#)

Until they have a better theory, they will stand behind it rather than consider alternatives. They fear any uncertainty will lead to questioning other aspects of materialism, such as that free will and love for others are simply a façade promoted by natural selection.

Bethel points out, “If our minds are . . . accidental products of a blind process, what reason do we have for accepting materialist claims as true?” [{30}](#) After all, our minds are selected to improve our survivability, not to discern what is true.

Many scientists are not die-hard materialists. They believe there may be a spiritual aspect of our existence. Yet they promote the materialistic view. For most, this inconsistent approach is a reaction to the threat of censure from the establishment.

Axe claims, “The religious agenda is the enemy that threatens science. . . . Everything that opposes the institutionalized agenda is labeled ‘anti-science.’” [{31}](#)



The same arguments used against intelligent design apply more accurately to Darwinism. Bethel states, “(Some) have said that design can’t be measured and therefore it is a religious belief. . . . They might also have said the macro-evolution has not yet been measured, or so much as observed.” [\[32\]](#)

In this review, we have seen

1. No materialistic concept for life’s origin
2. Little evidence of transitional life forms
3. Strong evidence complex functions could not arise through random changes
4. DNA playing havoc with the basic tenets of Darwinism.

Now we wait for the façade raised by supporters of a flawed concept to collapse.

## Notes

1. Tom Bethel, *Darwin’s House of Cards: A Journalist’s Odyssey Through the Darwin Debates*, Discovery Institute Press, 2017, page 20.
2. Ibid, page 20.
3. Eugene V. Loonin, *The Logic of Chance: The Nature and Origin of Biological Evolution*, FT Press, 2011, page 391.
4. See Behe, back cover comment for Thomas E. Woodward and James P. Gills, *The Mysterious Epigenome* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2012).
5. Douglas Axe, *Undeniable: How Biology Confirms Our Intuition That Life Is Designed*, HarperOne, New York, 2016, page 63.
6. James Tour, “Animadversions of a synthetic chemist,” *Inference* 2:2, May 19, 2016.
7. Axe, page 227.
8. Axe, page 230.
9. Meyers and other quotes on the Cambrian.
10. Stephen Meyer, *Darwin’s Doubt*, New York, Harper Collins, 2014, page 70.
11. Gould, *The Panda’s Thumb*, page 181.
12. Henry Gee, *In Search of Deep Time: Beyond the Fossil Record to a New*

*History of Life*, New York: The Free Press, 1999, p. 32, 113-117.

13. Soren Lovtrup, *Darwinism: The Refutation of a Myth*, New York, 1987, page 351.

14. Bethel, page 45.

15. Richard Lewontin, "Testing the Theory of Natural Selection," *Nature* 236 no. 5343, p. 181-182.

16. Bethel, page 79.

17. Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 2nd ed., 1860, page 189.

18. Axe, page 184.

19. Gehring and Ikeo, "Pax6: mastering eye morphogenesis and eye evolution," *Trends in Genetics* 15, 1999, 376.

20. James Schwartz, "Oh My Darwin!: Who's the Fittest Evolutionary Thinker of All?," *Lingua Franca* 9, no. 8 (1999).

21. Axe, page 271.

22. Wells, page 90.

23. Wells, page .

24. Liliana Davalos, Andrea Cirranello, Jonathan Geisler, and Nancy Simmons, "Understanding phylogenetic incongruence: Lessons from phyllostomid bats," *Biological Reviews of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* 87, 2012.

25. Antonis Rokas, Dirk Kruger, and Sean B. Carroll, "Animal evolution and the molecular signature of radiations compressed in time," *Science* 310, 2005.

26. Francis Crick, *What Mad Pursuit: A Personal View of Scientific Discovery*, New York, Basic Books, 1988, page 147.

27. Wells, page 128.

28. Wells, page 17.

29. Bethel, page 149.

30. Bethel, page 174.

31. Axe, page 54.

32. Bethel, page 161.

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# “I Have No Problem Deriving Meaning in Life as an Evolved Biological Organism”

Dr. Ray Bohlin

**Dear Raymond Bohlin,**

I am also a graduate of the University of Illinois and found your article on the Probe Ministries website interesting reading. I was surprised at the low-quality answers you had received from evolutionary biologists about morality and meaning. To me it is absolutely wonderful, amazing, and awe-inspiring that you and I, or any human beings can have actual conversations and exchange ideas. It is amazing to me because I believe that we are a result of evolution unguided by any supernatural god. To me there can be deep conviction that we are biological organisms and that there is no god while also maintaining a deep sense of meaning and purpose. It seems to me that if you believe God created everything around us, then He did an embarrassingly poor job. Why have around 50% of our DNA be wasted garbage from a violent evolutionary past? If people are created in God’s image, why give them an appendix? Surely if you were truly an all-powerful being capable of anything, you should have done much better. But, if we are a result of random chance and evolutionary process unguided by a supernatural power, then the world is amazing. It is awe-inspiring to have such amazing diversity of life and to have a species with the power to be aware of itself. That 50% of our DNA actually works becomes amazing and wonderful testimony to the glory of the evolutionary process. If we are merely a creation of an all-powerful god, then we are clearly his rejects, because he should have been able to do much

better. But if we are a result of an evolutionary process then we are amazing and valuable.

**Similarly, I see the same problem with meaning. You claim that if we are “merely” biological then there is no real meaning. I would argue just the opposite. If we are merely the result of a supernatural god, then the best we can do is discover God’s predetermined meaning. We are unimportant and can never create any meaning in our lives. But if we are biological organisms in the absence of a supernatural god, then we are the creators of meaning. We are the meaning pioneers who must establish meaning, value, and morality as we go. To me, my life seems so much more meaningful if I feel that I can create meaning and values, and be one of the first species to truly experience love, beauty, and understanding. If I am just some all powerful-god’s creation, then my personal life seems meaningless because all meaning has been pre-established by some supernatural force beyond my meager comprehension. To say we are “merely” or “just” biological to me is insulting. Being biological does not prevent me from having as much meaning and purpose as I want in my life. But now, the responsibility lies on me. If I have a meaningless life, then it is my own fault for not creating any meaning. I personally find deep meaning and purpose in the love, compassion, and discovery of ideas that I share with my fellow humans who are also creating meaning and purpose in their own lives.**

Whether you consider the answers I received from evolutionary biologists to be disappointing or not, they are the standard answers. Your willingness to reach for something more and create meaning is what I would categorize as the third response, that of an existential leap for hope and meaning.

But first to your criticisms of the Creator’s workmanship. Please be aware that the previous estimates of useless DNA were closer to 90%. I would not be so

quick to assume that the remaining 50% unaccounted for will remain so. We have only begun to unravel the mystery of DNA and its organization. My prediction is that there will be little left without some function after the next 100 years. One of the principal geneticists with Celera Genomics, the private company that arrived at its own independent human DNA sequence, was quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle* saying,

“‘What really astounds me is the architecture of life,’ he said. ‘The system is extremely complex. It’s like it was designed.’ . . . There’s a huge intelligence there. I don’t see that as being unscientific. Others may, but not me.” (February 19, *SFC*, Tom Abate, “Human Genome Map Has Scientists Talking About the Divine”).

So what we already know reveals not some clumsily ordered mess thrown together by natural selection, but a highly ordered and specified arrangement.

Over 100 years ago, there were dozens of reputed vestigial human structures such as the appendix, tonsils, and tailbone, but all of these have since yielded a function. The tonsils and appendix are members of the integrated immune system. Can we live without them? Yes, but we are better off with them. Surgeons rarely take out the appendix anymore as part of routine abdominal surgery unless absolutely necessary. The more we learn about our bodies the more complex and truly amazing they are. The power of adult stem cells is proving to be truly amazing and they have resided inside us all the time. I think it is rather presumptuous of anyone to suggest that they could have done a better job of designing our bodies. Our knowledge of how everything works is still progressing. What may seem sloppy today may soon be revealed as the right combination of characteristics to achieve an amazing design. That at least seems to be the pattern. We used to think cells were simple accumulations of membrane, protoplasm, and protein. The last sixty years have revealed ever increasing levels of complexity and organization never even dreamed of. I just don’t see how you can view our bodies as rejects. What would you change? What could have been

done better in your mind?

If we are the product of an evolutionary process than we truly are amazing. I will grant you that. So amazing that I would suggest that we are alone in the universe. The odds are so stacked against any kind of unguided evolution producing sentient beings such as ourselves, that there just isn't anybody else out there.

I don't understand your revelry in the ability to create meaning. What are we to create it out of? Nothing? Something doesn't come from nothing. Meaning grabbed out of thin air is still air no matter what you call it. In an evolutionary world view all that matters is survival and reproduction and as I said in the article, this ultimately fades away at death which is nothing more than extinction. So what good is the meaning you create? It is ultimately an illusion. A survival device and nothing more. How is that exciting? I am sorry if you are insulted by the characterization of being merely biological, but again, in an evolutionary worldview, that is reality. Your brain has evolved only as an aid to survival and reproduction, not as a truth- and meaning-creating machine.

If we share this meaning and purpose creating capacity with our fellow humans, certainly we arrive at different conclusions. If our conclusions are different, how do we judge who is right? Or does it really even matter? I would suggest that it doesn't matter at all. You are left with the post-modern dictum of "it may be true for you but it's not true for me." The statement is self-contradictory because it assumes that at least that statement is universally true, but how can it be?

Theism can provide true meaning and purpose through the One who is self-existent. Why you think God's assignment of true meaning and purpose somehow cheapens it baffles me. If I were to create a robot, I the creator determine its function and usefulness, not the machine itself. Remember also, that something must be eternal. As I said earlier, something does not come from nothing. So the fact that something is here means something has to have always been here. That something can be either material or immaterial. The material universe, according



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to current Big Bang cosmology, had a beginning. Therefore it certainly seems reasonable to assume that God is eternal. I don't suggest that the Big Bang proves God, but it does make the assumption eminently reasonable.

You may choose to create your own meaning if you like, but I cannot see how it can be anything but an illusion in an evolutionary, purely materialistic worldview.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.

Probe Ministries