

## "DARWIN'S MISTAKE"

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*An article, with the same title as that used here, appeared a few months ago in a well known magazine, and received considerable attention. The point argued in it was that Darwin's notion of survival of the fittest was tautologous. Here the author points out that the fact that it has been possible for such an article to be published is no reason for creationists to become complacent. Moreover, it is pointed out that there are available to creationists better lines of attack than to urge tautology. For Darwin's theory requires that there be something to be selected, that variations which amount to new species or kinds arise. But the evidence shows that nothing of the sort occurs.*

The title above is that of an article by Tom Bethell, former Oxford philosopher and now editor of *The Washington Monthly*, as published in *Harper's*, February, 1976. It was reprinted under the title "Is Darwin's Theory on the Verge of Collapse?" in *Human Events*, March 13, 1976.

The author reviewed the acceptance by scientists of Darwin's natural selection theory that culminated in the Darwin Centennial at the University of Chicago.

But something has happened in the short interval between the centennial and the present. Some outstanding evolutionists, and others, have been considering seriously the idea that Darwin's natural selection theory is just a tautology, a statement repeated, an argument in a circle. They charge that there is no valid criterion for fitness. Thus in the alleged process of natural selection, or survival of the fittest, individuals judged to be the fittest are so designated on the basis of the fact that they are the ones which have survived.

Bethell maintained it should be abundantly clear that Darwin made a mistake and the mistake is fairly easy to detect. The mistake is said to be that his theory lacks a criterion whereby the fittest may be identified beforehand instead of it being necessary to wait and see which ones survive.

### Moths Do Not Evolve

However, one may consider the most commonly heralded example of alleged evolution, namely the case of the peppered moths in England. Before the industrial revolution, tree trunks were light in color and the light variety of the peppered moths blended with the background, while the dark variety of the same species stood out in contrast. As a consequence, birds ate the dark moths first because they could see them so much more easily. The light moths obviously were more fit and they were the survivors.

Certainly if anyone acquainted with general biological facts had been told that, as a result of the coming industrial revolution, tree trunks in the industrialized areas would be darkened, there would have been no difficulty at all for such an individual to predict that under the new condition the dark moths would be more fit and would be the survivors. This is exactly what happened. The dark moths became the predominant type in the industrialized areas, through a process of survival of the fittest.

This is a very good example of natural selection, but it is not evolution at all. The moths are not becoming anything different. But scientists and textbook writers

hail this as an outstanding example of evolution. Dr. Kettlewell, who did the research on the moths, said that if Darwin had lived to see this, he would have witnessed the culmination of his life's work!

When ecologists put pressure on factory owners to stop polluting the air, tree trunks became light again. Then, as could have been easily predicted, the light moths again became the predominant type. Is something and its opposite *both* evolution? In cases like this neither is evolution. The changes are merely in the ratios of the two varieties of the same kind of moths, and the moths are not becoming anything else. All this merely shows that "natural selection" is not synonymous with evolution, though many evolutionists tell the public that it is.

### Variation Is Limited

Thus it appears to be a fact that there *are* independent criteria for fitness in a particular environment, but evidence shows that this leads to no real evolution. It may be a truism that individuals which are better adapted to survive are the ones that tend to survive, but the question is: Do *new* varieties arise which are better adapted to survive in a particular environment than were the individuals which previously existed in that population? If such *new* variations occur and *continue* to occur in a population, it seems that natural selection is not a tautology, and a progressive sequence is to be expected.

However, centuries of animal and plant breeding, as well as careful observations in the field and in the laboratory, show that there is a limit to variation and that variation does not lead to real evolution. It is necessary when discussing these things to emphasize "real evolution," because some phenomena are commonly called evolution which are not evolution at all.

Bethell considered it to be of special importance that evolutionary theorists are not greatly bothered by the admission that Darwin's theory of natural selection is considered by some to be tautological "because they already had taken the precaution of redefining natural selection to mean something quite different from what Darwin had in mind". Actually, neo-Darwinism is defined in a number of different ways, but Bethell referred to the view that natural selection should be interpreted in terms of differential reproduction instead of in terms of the survival of the fittest. Evolutionary progress is thus to be through those which produce the largest number of offspring.

But how is this so "quite different" from Darwin's statement of natural selection, since it is the fittest that tend to produce the greatest number of offspring? Bethell admitted that this interpretation of natural

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selection merely explains how horses and tigers, for example, become more (or less) numerous and not how they came about in the first place.

If Darwin's idea is accepted that by one means or another superior or more fit varieties (with respect to the environment) are continually being produced in nature, his natural selection theory is hardly to be considered a tautology. Where Darwin and modern evolutionists make their mistake is in believing that the kinds of variations which *do* occur can lead to real evolution.

### Conclusion and Cautionary Note

Bethell concluded that Darwin is in the process of being discarded, though as gently as possible and with a minimum of publicity. But such a prediction may be premature. Such has been claimed before. Back in the 1920's there was much talk of the scientists' giving up their faith in Darwinism. The general public did not distinguish between scientists' faith in evolution and their faith in the Darwinian explanation of the mechanism of evolution. As a result, for several decades at least it was erroneously believed that scientists were giving up their faith in evolution. But their faith in Darwinism came back stronger than ever, as may be demonstrated by quotations from leading evolutionists.

More recently it has been said that Darwinism might be given up because of the discovery of neutral mutations, though not much is heard about this any more. Now it is said that Darwinism may be discarded because Darwin's original natural selection theory is a tautology (in spite of the alleged "quite different" interpretation of it today).

In the first place, under the terms which Darwin expressed his natural selection theory, it is not clear that it is a tautology. In the second place, it is more obvious that cases like that of the peppered moths are not evolution at all than it is that Darwin's theory is a tautology. If it does not bother evolutionists to call the case of the moths evolution, it should not bother them to accept natural selection at face value.

One thing is certain. If anyone disagrees with evolutionary theory in general and has his hopes raised by the announcement that Darwin's theory may be "on the verge of collapse," then such a person is bound to find only disappointment. Even if Darwin's theory were on the verge of collapse, and even if it did collapse altogether, this would have no more effect on evolutionists' faith in evolution now than it did in the 1920's. The fact is that evolutionists now are promoting evolution more vigorously than ever; and also they are resisting more strongly than ever those who are opposing evolution.

**Added Note:** The May 15, 1976 issue of *Human Events* contains an article by Stanton Evans commenting upon the *Harper's* article by Tom Bethell as well as on the article by Dorothy Nelkin on "The Science Textbook Controversies" in the April, 1976 issue of *Scientific American*. The gist of the article is favorable to creationists, and it shows that the issues raised by creationists are receiving more serious consideration in the secular press. (Added by Editor: Readers will want to give special attention to the "Letters" in the July issue of *Scientific American* in response to the Nelkin article.)

## PROBABILITY AND THE MISSING TRANSITIONAL FORMS

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*It is easily documented even from the writing of evolutionists that fossil evidence for transitional forms is missing. The purpose of this paper is to calculate the probability of this, given the assumption that evolution occurred through micromutations. The conclusion is that the transitional forms did not exist.*

### Introduction

By evolution is meant the molecules to man theory of evolution. The term "transitional form" is used for those supposed forms that were both intermediate and ancestral. That such forms are virtually absent from the fossil record (as discovered) is admitted by G. G. Simpson for he stated,

... continuous transitional sequences are not merely rare but are virtually absent ... Their absence is so universal that it cannot, offhand, be imputed entirely to chance, and does require some attempt at explanation, as has been felt by most paleontologists.<sup>1</sup>

And Simpson has admitted that nowhere is there a trace of a fossil to close the gap between the horse and any presumed ancestor, and has stated,

This is true of all the thirty-two orders of mammals ... The earliest and most primitive known members of every order already have the basic ordinal characters, and in no case is an approximately continuous sequence from one order to another known. In most cases the break is so sharp and the gap so large that the origin of the order is speculative and much disputed.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, D. M. Raup and S. M. Stanley in 1971 stated, "Unfortunately, the origins of most higher categories are shrouded in mystery; commonly new higher categories appear abruptly in the fossil record without evidence of transitional forms."<sup>3</sup>

That the absence of transitional forms in the fossil record, as far as it is known, cannot be attributed entirely to chance is readily admitted by Simpson in the first quote above. This paper will prove an even stronger assertion using well known ideas from probability. The consequence is that there never were any such transitional forms.

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