

The Evolution Delusion

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*How to Recognize the Unsupported
Claims of Darwin's Theory*

Bart Rask, MD



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*The Evolution Delusion:
How to Recognize the Unsupported Claims of Darwin's Theory*

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*To my lovely wife, Christan, who has given
me much support during this project.*

“There is no place for dogma in science. The scientist is free, and must be free to ask any question, to doubt any assertion, to seek for any evidence, to correct any errors.”

—*J. Robert Oppenheimer*

Table of Contents

<i>Forward by Ian Macreadie</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xv</i>
Chapter 1 Defining Evolution and its Problem	1
The Theory of Evolution Defined	1
The Evolution Problem	3
Chapter 2 Evolution versus Science: Setting the Stage	9
Logic and Science	9
What is Science?	11
Needing Alternative Hypotheses	21
Does Macroevolution Qualify as Science?	23
Chapter 3 The Empirical Limits: Microevolution versus Macroevolution	41
Reproductive Isolation and Common Ancestry	42
Microevolution: Traditional Definition	45
Macroevolution: Traditional Definition	45
Empirically Determined Microevolution versus Macroevolution	46
Microevolution Examples	51
Purported Macroevolution Examples	54
Chapter 4 How Studies Fail to Support Macroevolution	65
Genetics and Biochemistry	67
Microstructures	74
Macrostructures	77

Chapter 5 Complementary Coevolution: Why Macroevolution
Evidence is Elusive 93
DNA and Biochemistry Basics93
Complementary Coevolution.96
Purported Examples of Complementary Coevolution100

Chapter 6 Genetics and Evolution 107
Increasing Genetic Information by Evolution107
Purported Genetic Signs of Common Ancestry109
Human versus Chimpanzee DNA.111
Is There DNA Evidence of Evolution?114

Chapter 7 Reproductive Evolution 121
Species and Interbreeding121
Complete versus Partial Reproductive Isolation123
Purported Evidence of the Evolution of Reproductive
Isolation.124
The Challenge of Sperm and Egg Evolution128

Chapter 8 The Origin of Life 137
Extraterrestrial Biomolecule Sources.138
Abiogenesis.138
RNA World Theory140
The Origin of the Cell and Related Structures146

Chapter 9 Techniques for Determining Age. 153
Assessing the Validity of Measurement Tools154
Dendrochronology156
Radiometric Methods of Dating160
Carbon-14 Dating.164
Uranium-Lead Dating.167
Rubidium-Strontium Dating172
Potassium-Argon Dating175
Argon-Argon Dating176
“Cross-Checking” Radiometric Dating177

Chapter 10 Summary and Conclusion 185
 What the Evidence Shows 186
 The Theory of Macroevolution is Not Science 188
 What We See Differently 189
 Weaknesses of this Text 192
 Conclusion 192

Challenges and Responses 195

Appendices to

Introduction 211
 Chapter 2 213
 Chapter 3 221
 Chapter 4 235
 Chapter 5 251
 Chapter 6 263
 Chapter 7 271
 Chapter 8 281
 Chapter 9 289

Author Index 297
Subject Index 299

Forward

Bart Rask sets the tone of his book with a reflection on the many thousands of publications on evolution raising the question “They couldn’t all be wrong, could they?” His book challenges the interpretations raised in the publications, refuting the basis of macroevolution.

Rask acknowledges the phenomenon of microevolution which involves changes to existing genetic information, including point mutations, deletions, and movement of DNA between species by horizontal gene transfer. These changes are random and sometimes they can lead to a change which might be selected. For example, a point mutation or acquisition of a plasmid could lead to an antibiotic resistant microbe which might then grow where the parental did not grow. He objects to examples like this being used to support macroevolution which involves new genes to produce novel functions. He reviews the literature on the two types of evolution, providing some published examples of microevolution. He provides references to publications that have been put forward to support macroevolution and addresses their limitations in terms of rigours demanded by science.

In the first several chapters Rask discusses the rigors of good science leading to the development and testing of hypotheses. Be aware that the discussion is heavy going and is aimed squarely at those who make claims without proper evidence and testing. But for those who want the truth Rask’s arguments are solid. He clearly demonstrates that the hypothesis that we exist by macroevolution is untenable, untested and should not be given the status that it currently receives.

Many steps in life require molecular interactions and multi-subunit associations. Rask demonstrates the difficulties of “co-evolving” such complexes: a change involving an interface will require a ‘complementary’ change in the interacting interface, so that inter subunit interactions are preserved.

The Evolution Delusion

The probability of such double changes occurring simultaneously is infinitesimally small. Examples are presented to support the implausibility of such evolution. A similar argument also appears in the discussion of reproductive isolation which limits fertilization due to the matches that occur between sperm and eggs of the same species.

The formation of life from non-life (abiogenesis) is discussed in chapter [8]. Rask refers to the experiments that address primitive life and the huge, well-recognised gap in how it can be explained. Challenges are the lack of means to produce basic building blocks of life by non-biological processes and the inability to assemble the macromolecular structures from the building blocks with non-biological processes. Such processes have never been demonstrated to occur by purely chemical processes: they rely on enzymes that enable such chemical reactions to occur. These enzymes are usually proteins and proteins do not occur without cellular biosynthesis and they require a nucleic acid template. This is an insurmountable problem for abiogenesis. Therefore, abiogenesis advocates have explored the enzymatic properties of RNA which turn out to be extremely limited. RNAs are discussed as a means to making dipeptides, however, clearly there remains a huge gap in the orderly, template-directed of protein synthesis involving a message in the codons of the nucleic acids...plus the replication of the nucleic acid template itself is always known to require an enzyme. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the origin of cellular organelles, and again it is concluded that there is no demonstrated mechanism for their origins, just untestable speculation.

Dating methodology is extensively discussed by Rask in chapter 9. He notes that a reference gold standard is critically important but when we are outside of the range of reference standards, extrapolations are performed. The problem is that extrapolation is based on assuming that we can project a trend accurately. Astounding anomalies in tree ring and all radiometric dating methods are discussed. Furthermore, the assumptions for dating methods are listed and shown to be unreliable due to the pre-requisite assumptions and the history of samples which can be subject to environmental effects that effectively contaminate them.

Summing up, Rask reiterates differences in microevolution and the purported macroevolution. He re-states that there is no evidence for any novel information being added to life, and further, that even gene duplications do not add novel functions. There is some discussion of the evidence of a whole genome duplication in yeast followed by some loss of genes and

some resulting new functions. As pointed out by Rask the evidence for this event is circumstantial. Personally, I think the example is very strong but I agree that the duplication event has not been proven and the event has never been observed in a laboratory. I consider that this example belongs in the microevolution category since the event would not create new information: it would simply rearrange pre-existing information.

Something that is unusual in for productions of this type is that Rask has sought peer review from practicing evolutionists who have provided some frank critique. One reviewer is an anonymous emeritus professor of biology while another is Dr. Nicholas Matzke. Rask has included the verbatim comments from the peer reviewers in an addendum to his book and he has responded those comments.

Overall, I found that Rask's book discusses the main current and most important issues in evolution. Rask's book treats the claims of evolution and evidence for it with a balanced critique, using approaches that are demanded of good science. He presents and acknowledges the evidence for microevolution and shows that no data exist to support macroevolution. Supposed support from microevolution is improper because that process never adds new genetic information.

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Introduction

The National Center for Science Education advocates the mandatory teaching of evolution in schools because “it is the fundamental, unifying theory that underlies all the life sciences,” and “it has formed the basis of productive and active research for over 140 years” (Petto 2005). The National Academy of Sciences rejoiced that, with the growing dominance of the theory of evolution, “no longer were explanations for the origin and marvelous adaptations of organisms to be sought in terms of [the] supernatural ...” (Avisé and Ayala 2006). But, can *all* evolution explanations be excluded as supernatural?

Tens of thousands of scientific research papers on evolution have been published to date. Experts in fields ranging from molecular biology to physiology to paleontology have explored the many different facets of the theory. These experts are well-respected professors at prestigious universities; their peer-reviewed published works seem to reinforce one another with respect to how species have developed over time. They could not all be wrong—could they?

Some claim that evolution is “only a theory,” while others see it as a “fact” (Dawkins 2009:8). For those who claim evolution as “fact,” what evidence confirms this position? For those who claim that it is a theory, what kind of theory is it? Is it a *scientific* theory or a metaphysical or imaginary theory? Differentiating between a scientific and a non-scientific theory is crucial to understanding the debate about evolution.

In 2010 I sought to compile the strongest evidence in favor of evolution, in order to understand why this theory is so widely accepted by the scientific community. I began my research with *The Greatest Show on Earth*, written by the famed evolutionary biologist and leading popular proponent of the theory, Richard Dawkins. His work covers an extensive range of evolutionary topics and is well-referenced in the most convincing studies. Upon reviewing the references, however, it then became clear that the data did not really provide the support for the theory that the authors claimed.

The Evolution Delusion

I found the same problem with the references listed in Kenneth Miller's *Finding Darwin's God*, another pro-evolution popular science book. Could this be a trend? As a reviewer for a major medical journal, I noticed that the standards for making conclusions based upon the data differed in evolution literature compared to medicine.

After reviewing many references, taking care to avoid overlooking key sources, I consulted with two university evolutionary biologists about my doubts concerning certain aspects of evolution. One was Nicholas Matzke who, at the time, was a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California at Berkeley in the Department of Integrated Biology. Prior to this he had been the Public Information Project Director at the National Center for Science Education and was the lead investigator in the 2005 *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* Trial which successfully argued against teaching intelligent design in the classroom. (See Appendix for Dr. Matzke's disclaimer). The second consultant was a professor emeritus at a major American university who wished to remain anonymous, perhaps because he would be embarrassed if his colleagues discovered he was entertaining questions from a macroevolution doubter in a culture that does not take doubters seriously. Both responded to my critiques with thoughtful rebuttals. They pointed me to a number of additional studies that, they claimed, refuted my anti-macroevolution position. Their feedback allowed me to pinpoint the faults of evolution theory, and thus refine the arguments presented in my first book published in 2013. This book represents a revised and updated version of my investigation.

Previous arguments against evolution have centered either on theology or claims that biologic systems are too complex to have arrived by the evolutionary process. Neither of these approaches addresses the validity of the alleged scientific evidence for evolution, which is the basis for its belief by many. This book takes a different approach: My thesis is that although there is evidence to support the smaller changes that engendered some species, called microevolution, there is no evidence to support the larger changes that allegedly engendered most species, called macroevolution. In addition, I will show that the theory involving macroevolution does not qualify as a scientific theory. My method includes a critical analysis of hundreds of representative studies in a broad swath of subdisciplines within the scientific literature on evolution. These analyses, in which I check if the data do indeed support the

conclusions, reveal a universal disconnect between the authors' claims about macroevolution and the actual evidence they provide.

Four philosophers of science and scientists* (Denton 2021; Meyer 2005; Richards 2021; Stadler 2016) who are intelligent design advocates are referenced only as they relate to criticisms against this book's thesis in ways that may align with some evolution advocates. Intelligent design (ID) is the belief that the origin of species involved a supernatural force, but is presented as a science by re-defining the criteria for science. Conventional scientific criteria involve empirical evidence which is based upon the experiences of our senses. Since the supernatural or intelligent forces of ID purportedly involved in making the species cannot be directly perceived, ID advocates have dispensed with experience-based empirical evidence as a scientific criterion. Ironically, since macroevolution also cannot be supported by experience-based empirical evidence, both macroevolution and ID satisfy the alternative scientific criteria, but not the conventional criteria. Since I support my arguments against macroevolution by the lack of experience-based empirical evidence, ID advocates object to my arguments since the same rationale would also dispute ID.

Generalizations are made about the entirety of evolution literature based upon a large representative sample and consultation with experts. The appendices offer additional references and other supportive information. They are included to show that the examples in the main text are not anomalies and that my conclusions are indeed supported by many sources. They are left out of the main text for readability.

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*Michael Denton, Stephen Meyer and Jay Richards are senior fellows at the Discover Institute, an organization which advocates intelligent design. Richards is also a research assistant professor at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

The Evolution Delusion

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Chapter 1

Defining Evolution and its Problem

The Theory of Evolution Defined

The theory of evolution is meant to explain the adaptive complexity, diversity, and similarities of life. The National Academy of Sciences describes evolution as a “change in the hereditary characteristics of groups of organisms over the course of generations” (NAS 1998a:13). It answers questions such as, “Why are there so many different kinds of plants and animals?” (NAS 1998b:1). It explains why “even distantly related species share many anatomical and functional characteristics” (NAS 1998b:1).

In Chapter VI of his 1859 book *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin (2003) defined his foundational theory of evolution as “descent with modification” (p. 160) and later explained in Chapter XIII that “these characters have been inherited from a common ancestor” (p. 441). Darwin’s concepts continue today as the University of California Museum of Paleontology defines “[b]iological evolution, simply put, is descent with modification” (UCB 2020). Smithsonian Institute anthropologist Briana Pobiner describes evolution identically as “descent with modification” (Than 2018). Robert Moss (1999), a biology professor at Wofford College, agrees: “‘Evolution,’ in the context most biologists intend to use it, should be defined simply as ‘descent with modification,’” adding, “That’s the way Darwin used it, and that is the correct way” (p. 111). Evolutionary biochemist Douglas Theobald (2012) describes the same concept with slightly different terminology: “Universal common descent is the hypothesis that all known living, terrestrial organisms are genealogically related. All existing species originated gradually by biological, reproductive processes on a geological timescale.”

The Evolution Delusion

The National Center for Science Education (NCSE 2016a) also defines evolution as “common ancestry and descent with modification,” and describes the process for evolutionary change in a population as “natural selection and genetic drift.” Random mutations of DNA* in one or more individuals along with natural selection of the most advantageous mutants is the mechanism for evolution to generate populations of new species. Stony Brook University evolutionary biologist Douglas Futuyma (1986) writes:

The changes in populations that are considered evolutionary are those that are inheritable via the genetic material from one generation to the next. Biological evolution may be slight or substantial; it embraces everything from slight changes in the proportion of different alleles [genes] within a population (such as those determining blood types) to the successive alterations that led from the earliest protoorganism to snails, bees, giraffes, and dandelions. (p. 7)

Michigan State University biology professor Richard Lenski explains that “the most plausible molecular model” for evolution is “natural selection on randomly occurring variation” (Sniegowski and Lenski 1995:553). Mutations are believed to be generated randomly since there are no known natural forces that can produce non-random mutations. Natural selection, on the other hand, is not random but is guided by how well a particular mutation enables its host to thrive in its specific environment. Finally, The National Academy of Sciences also asserts that: “Genetic variation is random, but natural selection is not” (NAS 1998c:16).

For many evolutionists, the theory explains how life developed into different species—but does not speculate about the origin of life per se. Darwin specifically avoided discussing the origin of life in his book, and evolutionists generally (with some exceptions) continue to take the same approach today (Pereto et al. 2009; Paz-y-Mino et al. 2011). The official position of the National Center for Science Education (NCSE 2016b) is that “evolution is a scientific theory that explains the emergence of new varieties of living things in the past and in the present; it is not a ‘theory of origins’ about how life began.”

*RNA is a potential source of mutations for some viruses and in hypothesized pre-biotic life, as speculated in the RNA world theory (Chapter 8).

The theory of evolution is most commonly defined by evolutionists as descent with modification from a common ancestor. The proposed mechanism for these modifications is random genetic mutation in one or more individual descendants, followed by their natural selection by the environment to generate a new species.

The Evolution Problem

“Descent with modification from a common ancestor” means that some ancient creature (the common ancestor) had successive progeny—i.e., children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.—that gradually developed into different types of creatures (Figure 1-1). The implication is that some simple life form, perhaps a single-celled species, evolved into a multicellular one. Subsequent descendants of this multicellular species then evolved organs, appendages, etc. The theory asserts that new body parts and biochemical systems arose gradually to increase an organism’s complexity with its associated new functions. The problem: *Is there evidence that a natural process can create such functional complexity?*

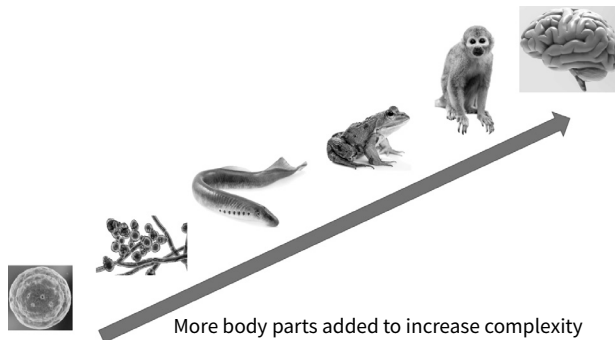


Figure 1-1. Descent with modification asserts that over successive generations, the progeny of a single-celled creature (bottom left) will add more functioning body parts, including multicellularity, fins, legs, placenta, and a well-developed frontal lobe.

Darwin (2003) himself addressed the difficulty of conceptualizing the capacity for descent with modification to produce complex structures such as the eye:

To suppose that the eye with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts

The Evolution Delusion

of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd to the highest degree. (p. 172)

Darwin's dilemma regarding the evolution of complex structures was solved for him upon noticing the variation of eye complexities in nature. He rationalized that a complex organ could indeed evolve by means of a succession of smaller structural additions, each favored by natural selection (p. 173).

Nevertheless, biologists Reznick et al. (2002) point to the difficulty of obtaining evidence to support how the eye or other complex structures could evolve:

Visualizing such a process would be easiest if steps in this sequence were preserved in closely related living organisms; however, no such sequence exists for eyes because the intermediate stages have been lost through extinction. Our best alternative is to compare distantly related species that display what appear to be intermediate stages in evolution. (p. 1018)

There is a logical problem with the authors' rationale. Is the method "to compare distantly related species" valid for showing support for a theory claiming that complex structures originated by "descent with modification"?

This book will show that although there certainly is evidence to support the evolution of some species from a common ancestor, the same cannot be said about the evolution of most species. If there is no evidence to support certain types of evolution involving the vast majority of species, then the theory must be restricted rather than all-encompassing, as it is now. One may be able to reason that various species of the *Equus* genus (horse, donkey, zebra) had or could have had a common ancestor and are products of evolution, but the claim that a single-celled creature could have progeny with legs and a liver is less obvious and needs to be challenged. These allegations of dramatic changes are justified by scientists who claim that they could have occurred over millions or billions of years, pointing to the fossil record and shared anatomical and biochemical characteristics of modern creatures as evidence. But is this an adequate justification? This book will show that some aspects of the field of evolution involve bending scientific conventions in order to obliquely make its case for scientific compatibility.

My aim is not to challenge the claim of universal common ancestry by trying to disprove it, since it is difficult to prove a negative. Since the theory of evolution is taught as a science, and scientific theories require empirical evidence (according to many evolutionists), the burden of proof is on the evolutionist to provide this evidence, not on the doubter to disprove it nor offer a “better” hypothesis. Evolutionists claim that there is plenty of evidence that supports universal common descent. But is there? Although there is evidence to support the “smaller” evolutionary changes that produced some species, called *microevolution*, the thesis of this book is that there is no empirical evidence to support the “larger” evolutionary changes, called *macroevolution*, purported to give rise to most species.

Microevolution versus macroevolution

Evolution is classified as microevolution or macroevolution based upon the presence or absence of empirical evidence, respectively, and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Regarding reproduction in the animal kingdom, empirical evidence shows that for two individuals or populations to have had a common ancestor, interbreeding must have occurred at every generation from that common ancestor to the contemporary population; there are no examples to the contrary.

Microevolution. Microevolution involves a change in the magnitude or transfer of the production or activity of existing *components* and their functions. A *component* includes genes, enzymes or other proteins, microstructures, organelles, organ subsections, organs, appendages and other structures. No functions are created which are new to nature, but can be modified to a similar function. Examples include a gene that codes for brown melanin mutates to code for red, the loss of lactose metabolism, or the transfer of antibiotic resistance.

Macroevolution. Macroevolution is production by the host of new, additional, beneficial components compared to its ancestors, or changing an existing component to exhibit a different function. For example, microevolution would be a mutation to an enzyme in a glucose metabolic pathway to allow metabolism of the chemically similar sugar galactose; macroevolution would be a mutation to *add* an enzyme to the glucose metabolic pathway that allows production of vitamin C. Microevolution would be when an appendage shaped for swimming in water mutates to swim faster; macroevolution would be

The Evolution Delusion

a mutation of the same appendage to walk on land. Regarding reproduction in the animal kingdom, microevolution would be when one population evolves into separate populations who rarely interbreed, but could. Macroevolution is when one population evolves into separate populations with no ability to interbreed, not even in vitro, i.e., they exhibit *reproductive isolation*.

The boundaries

The aim of this book is to evaluate evolution on the evolutionists' own terms, including their definition of evolution, their criteria for science, and their body of scientific literature. Criticisms against "evolution" in this text will refer only to macroevolution, since this is where the debate lies. The method involves evaluating a large cross-section of evolution literature from scientific publications and determining if the data support the macroevolutionary conclusion. References from "creation science" and related perspectives were excluded because the goal of this book is to address the purported evidence presented by the mainstream evolutionist. This book will show how the studies which claim to support the "large" changes of macroevolution really do not. The evolution of plant life and offering alternative theories to the origin of species are beyond the scope of this text.

Thesis: The macroevolution of most species is not supported by empirical evidence and is not a scientific theory. Offering alternative hypotheses to macroevolution are beyond the scope of this text.

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