

The Great Darwin Hoax

Abridged Version

By Robert Porter Lynch

As a twenty-first century leader, you are best empowered to make intelligent decisions about people when you are supported by an insightful and accurate belief system. In this respect, most leaders have been seriously led astray by erroneous thinking or confused by highly conflictive theories. We need to set the record straight and illuminate the path forward as we attempt to put the ship of fate back on course.

In 1859 Charles Darwin a relatively obscure naturalist (now we'd call him an evolutionary biologist), publishing his findings in a book called *Origin of the Species* which his study of plants and animals.¹ In it he described the slow process of how plants and animals (including humans) evolved over a prolonged period of time as a result of either variations in the genetic structure (a modern term) of the species, which reoriented itself to the very slow changes in geological conditions (such as climate), or because a competing species invaded the territory and choked out less adaptable species (such a trees choking out sunlight for bushes). of varying the configurations of a species; either it would adapt to the new environment, or become extinct. Darwin called the process *natural selection*.

Coining the term "Survival of the Fittest"

Herbert Spencer, a well known intellectual of the Victorian era, who had earlier in the decade proposed the idea of evolution, latched on to Darwin's concept of natural selection, referring to it as "survival of the fittest," a term that has stuck now for a hundred and fifty years.

Today nearly every student has heard of Darwin's controversial theory. *Origin of the Species* is widely considered the most important biological book ever written because it influenced so many other thinkers who followed in the fields of biology, medicine, sociology, politics, and business, to name a few.

Flaw in Survival of the Fittest

Darwin recognized a serious flaw in his theory of natural selection as it applied to humans. In *Origin of the Species*, Darwin was seeking a unified universal theory that explained both plant and animal evolution over the eons of time. Natural selection – adaptation by variations (what we now know as genetic structure) -- explained it. But Darwin was troubled with this explanation in *Origin of the Species* because evolution moved slower than a glacier: While natural selection may cause the evolution of flowers and plants, or insects and mammals, it certainly did not shed light on the much more rapid evolution of the human species.

Humans Required a Special Theory of Evolution

To provide the answer, Darwin relied on further developing the concept of sexual and cultural selection and its relationship to the uniqueness of the human species, along with the development of social capabilities.

Working tirelessly with a now far deeper understanding of his subject, twelve years after the publication of *Origin of the Species*, Darwin published his massive treatise: *The Descent of Man (1872)*. It was twice as long as *Origin of the Species*, and laid out the fundamental differences between humans and other animals. In the *Descent of Man*, Darwin also proposed that natural selection was not the process of human evolution, but conscious choice played a major role – sexual roles and expectations, as well as cultural and family expectations probably had more influence on human evolution than natural selection. He concluded that man's morale conscience; the ability to think rationally; and the

¹ While it did raise some controversy at the time, it was not an instant best seller. Robert Chamber's 1844 book *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, a precursor to Darwin's theory, was a far better seller in Victorian England for quite some time.

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combination of courage and collaboration were unique to humans and had enabled man to transcend the slow path of other species.

Exploiting a Defective Theory

In the mean time, Spencer's championing of *survival of the fittest*² excited steel industrialist, Andrew Carnegie, who became an adoring advocate of Spencer and the *Survival of the Fittest* construct, which provided a compelling rationale to industrialists to grab as much as they could, after power was *in the nature of things*. . Spencer advocated that science validated that it was perfectly natural -- thus right and good -- to rise to the top of cut-throat world of capitalist competitors. Carnegie personally considered Spencer to be the person who most influenced his thinking. Carnegie wrote, paraphrasing Spencer. "There is nothing detrimental to human society in it, but much that is, or is bound soon to become, beneficial."³

Several years later, Carnegie codified this thinking in his 1889 essay "The Gospel of Wealth," stating:

*"While the law [of competition] may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it ensures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore ... great inequity of environment, the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race."*⁴

This kind of thinking fueled the egos of Robber Baron Capitalists, continuing full-force into the twentieth century, as leaders explained their dubious actions in terms of survival of the fittest.

For example, Bernie Ebbers (the now disgraced CEO of the now extinct WorldCom), when he acquired a company, would throw the leaders of the respective divisions in a room and let them "duke it out" to reveal which alpha male was dominant; and that determined who would command the division. It worked well in producing short term profits, and then collapsed itself into a black hole, like a dying star. Hitler also used this tactic, letting his senior officers fight amongst themselves, driving the most powerful to prevail devoid of any sense of overriding principle or reason.

When the survival of the fittest league hijacked Darwin's thinking about lower animals (including reptiles and mammals) and applied it to humans, they changed the entire landscape of leadership thinking. Today, if you ask a group of business leaders about Darwin's key theme, nearly everyone will state: *Survival of the Fittest*, meaning a dog-eat-dog strategy requiring dominance and aggression over others. And this belief system has predominated for the last century and a half, causing many leaders to take action based on this extraordinary but erroneous belief.

When the survival of the fittest advocates commandeered Darwin, they split myth from reality. (Remember, a myth is a half lie, half truth, disguised as the truth.) Darwin would be horrified to see how his truths about humans been obscured for all these years. But ask any group of leaders about human behavior, and the majority are likely cite how this is a dog-eat-dog world driven by natural selection - survival of the fittest. They will proudly extoll their adherence to this strategy.

²Spencer believed that the state should not interfere with the natural evolution of society, thus he was opposed to any form of help for the poor because they were simply unfit, and should be eliminated; those people with mental defects were best off dead, and government should not intercede in supporting, regulation of sanitation, housing and the medical profession, etc. (Hofstadter, p 390-393)

³From PBS Program: www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carnegie/peopleevents/pande03.html

⁴Carnegie, Andrew; "Wealth," reprinted in *The Andrew Carnegie Reader*, ed. J.F. Wall, University of Pittsburgh Press. Pittsburgh, (originally published 1889), p132

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What Darwin Really Said about Humans

To set the record straight, this is what Darwin said about human beings (from *Descent of Man*)

Intellectual Qualities of Humans

- **Reason & Attention:** Of all the faculties of the human mind, Reason stands at the summit. Hardly any faculty is more important for the intellectual progress of man than Attention.
- **Imagination:** Without the higher powers of the imagination and reason, no eminent success can be gained.

Social Qualities of Humans

- **Conscience:** Of all the differences between man and the lower animals, the *Moral Sense of Conscience is by far the most important*. It has rightful supremacy over every other principle of human action.... The moral faculties are generally and justly esteemed as of higher value than the intellectual powers.
- **Golden Rule:** "As you would have men to do unto you, do you unto them likewise;" ...is the foundation stone of morality.
- **Fellowship:** Man is a social being... Endowed with social instincts take pleasure in one another's company, [humans] warn one another of danger, defend and aid one another in many ways.... these instincts are highly beneficial to the species.
- **Courage** is the most noble of all the attributes of man, leading him without a moment's hesitation to risk his life for that of a fellow creature; or ... to sacrifice it for some great cause. " No man can be useful or faithful to his tribe without courage. This quality has been universally placed in the highest rank.

Competition versus Collaboration

- **Teamwork in Competition:** When tribes come into competition, the tribe with the greater number of courageous, sympathetic, and faithful members... other will succeed better and conquer the other
- **Sympathy:** Is of high importance to ...aid & defend one another. [It is].... one of the most important elements of the social instincts. A man who possesses no trace of sympathy and social instincts [is] an unnatural monster
- **Law of Honour** [is] the law of the opinion of our equals. Man can generally and readily distinguish between the higher and lower moral rules. The higher are founded on social instincts, and relate to the welfare of others. The lower rules ... relate chiefly to self.
- **Self Interest:** Selfish and contentious people will not cohere, and without coherence nothing can be effected

The idea that human excellence will be consistently manifested based on *survival of the fittest* is not only wrong, but unsubstantiated by any systematic empirical evidence. Sports teams and hundreds of scientific experiments have consistently supported Darwin's real premise in the *Descent of Man - civilizations acting honorably and collaboratively outperform civilizations that are selfish, greedy, and domineering*.