



EVOLUTION NEWS

& SCIENCE TODAY

SCIENCE ▾ CULTURE ▾ WRITERS ▾ CONTACT SUBSCRIBE DONATE

02.08.24

ABOUT

EVOLUTION INTELLIGENT DESIGN

Darwinists Devolve

John G. West

February 5, 2024, 6:36 AM

@ Print in X f

Like 462



One sign of a robust scientific theory is the quality of its most prominent proponents.

During its long history, Darwinian theory has had no shortage of gifted champions, starting with Charles Darwin himself.

Whatever else he was, Darwin was a masterful scientific communicator who collected and interpreted a vast array of observations from the natural world. One can't read his writings without being duly impressed. Darwin's civil and measured tone was calculated to persuade. Darwin was especially impressive in taking objections to his theory seriously and seeking to answer them.

Throughout the decades, Darwinism has had many other able scientific advocates. In our own lifetimes, there were Harvard biologists such as Ernst Mayr and Stephen Jay Gould.

And, of course, Oxford University boasted evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins. A convincing popularizer and polemicist, Dawkins at least started out as a serious scientist who raised some of the right questions.

The Rise of Intelligent Design

But as the intelligent design movement gathered momentum in the 1990s, something interesting started to happen.

On the one hand, intelligent design scientists and philosophers started publishing a stream of increasingly sophisticated books and research critiquing modern Darwinism or arguing more generally for the detectability of purpose in nature. Think about books such as *Darwin's Black Box*, *The Design Inference*, *No Free Lunch*, *Icons of Evolution*, *What Darwin Didn't Know*, *Nature's Destiny*, *The Privileged Planet*, *Debating Design*, *The Edge of Evolution*, *Signature in the Cell*, and *Darwin's Doubt*. Or think about the research by Douglas Axe and Ann Gauger challenging the evolvability of new functions in proteins through Darwinian means.

On the other hand, as the case against Darwin was growing, the proponents of Darwinism seemed to be shrinking in stature.

Consider Brown University biologist Kenneth Miller, author of the anti-ID polemic *Finding Darwin's God* in 1999. Miller was a gifted debater, but his arguments all too often relied on citation bluffing and critiquing straw-man versions of the ideas of Michael Behe and others.

Francis Collins, in his book *The Language of God*, was even shallower in his critique. Indeed, if you read Collins's book today, you'll find that many of his arguments, including junk DNA, have been increasingly thrown overboard by mainstream science.

So who was left to champion the old time religion of Darwinism?

Passing the Baton — Down

Well, you had evolutionary biologist Jerry Coyne at the University of Chicago, a loudmouth atheist (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) who has declared war on religion. At least he was at a prestigious academic institution, and he could muster an argument if he had to.

You also had biologist P. Z. Myers at the University of Minnesota Morris. He too could debate, although the quality of what you got was decidedly second rate. His preferred mode of discourse was invective. As he once instructed his fellow evolutionists, they should “screw the polite words and careful rhetoric. It's time for scientists to break out the steel-toed boots and brass knuckles, and get out there and hammer on the lunatics and idiots” — by which he meant, of course, anyone who dared to criticize Darwin's theory.

In short, serious defenders of Darwinism were getting scarcer.

The trend continued as more and more thoughtful intellectuals gave up their Darwinian faith. For example, in 2005 Nobel laureate physicist Robert Laughlin at Stanford University observed: “Evolution by natural selection... has lately come to function more as an anti-theory, called upon to cover up embarrassing experimental shortcomings and legitimize findings that are at best questionable and at worst not even wrong” (Laughlin, *A Different Universe*, 168).

In 2012, atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel wrote a book with Oxford University Press, the subtitle of which declared: *Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*. Yale computer scientist David Gelernter wrote a piece in 2019 titled “Giving Up Darwin.”

In Search of a Theory

Meanwhile, on the Darwinian side, one of the world's most prestigious scientific organizations, the Royal Society in England, convened an international conference of scientists in 2016 in search of some new theory of evolution, because of the growing understanding that traditional Darwinism didn't adequately explain the most important advances in the history of life.

The remaining public champions of old-line Darwinism kept dwindling and devolving. Post-COVID, they seem to have become a truly endangered species.

So who is the most prominent public advocate of Darwin in America today?

Probably Dave Farina, aka “Professor Dave.”

Except Professor Dave isn’t actually a professor, and he doesn’t even have a PhD in a science or any other discipline. He makes his money off of YouTube videos. And many of his arguments consist of copious four-letter words, and I’m not speaking of the words “atom,” “gene,” or “cell.” Farina’s method is to attack anyone who disagrees with him as evil or an idiot — or both. More recently, Professor Dave has revealed himself to be a vile anti-Semite to boot.

Now people as nasty as non-Professor Dave can be rather depressing to deal with. But think about what it means that the most prominent defender of Darwin left is someone as small-minded and unserious as non-Professor Dave. What does it say when the most prominent defender in American society today is someone like THAT?

And what does it say when the prominent defenders of ID include people like Stephen Meyer, William Dembski, Casey Luskin, Winston Ewert, Michael Behe, Marcos Eberlin, Guillermo Gonzalez, Ann Gauger, Emily Reeves, Brian Miller, Jonathan McLatchie, Douglas Axe, and many others?

I think it says the future does not belong to Darwinian materialism.

So take heart! As we approach another birthday of Charles Darwin on February 12, Darwinists may be devolving, but intelligent design proponents are progressing.

JOHN G. WEST

SENIOR FELLOW, MANAGING DIRECTOR, AND VICE PRESIDENT OF DISCOVERY INSTITUTE

Dr. John G. West is Vice President of the Seattle-based Discovery Institute and Managing Director of the Institute's Center for Science and Culture. Formerly the Chair of the Department of Political Science and Geography at Seattle Pacific University, West is an award-winning author and documentary filmmaker who has written or edited 12 books, including *Darwin Day in America: How Our Politics and Culture Have Been Dehumanized in the Name of Science*, *The Magician's Twin: C. S. Lewis on Science, Scientism, and Society*, and *Walt Disney and Live Action: The Disney Studio's Live-Action Features of the 1950s and 60s*. His documentary films include *Fire-Maker*, *Revolutionary*, *The War on Humans*, and (most recently) *Human Zoos*. West holds a PhD in Government from Claremont Graduate University, and he has been interviewed by media outlets such as CNN, Fox News, Reuters, *Time* magazine, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Washington Post*.

Follow John |  Profile  Website  Twitter

Share

@     Like 462

Tags

and Darwin's Doubt Ann Gauger atheists Brian Miller Brown University
Casey Luskin Charles Darwin citation bluffing Darwin Day Darwin's Black Box
Darwinian materialism Darwinian theory Darwinism Dave Farina Debating Design
Douglas Axe Emily Reeves Ernst Mayr Finding Darwin's God Francis Collins
Guillermo Gonzalez Icons of Evolution intelligent design Jerry Coyne
Jonathan McLatchie Junk DNA Kenneth Miller Marcos Eberlin Michael Behe
Nature's Destiny No Free Lunch Oxford University Oxford University Press
P. Z. Myers Professor Dave proteins Richard Dawkins Robert Laughlin
Signature in the Cell Stanford University Stephen Jay Gould Stephen Meyer
The Design Inference The Edge of Evolution The Language of
The Privileged Planet Thomas Nagel University of Chicago University of Minnesota
What Darwin Didn't Know William Dembski Winston Ewert

[CONTACT](#) | [SUBSCRIBE](#) | [DONATE](#) | [ABOUT](#) | [PRIVACY](#) | [SEARCH](#)

© 2024 Discovery Institute