
7 Men Who Rule the World From the Grave

A Book Study based on the book by Dave Breese

#1: Charles Darwin

Charles Darwin: A Little Biography

- Born in 1809 to an important family in Litchfield, England.
- Grandfather Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) was mostly known for poetry, but dabbled in evolutionary thought.
- Charles studied medicine, theology, and eventually botany and the natural sciences.
- Was invited by J.S. Henslow to be the official naturalist on HMS Beagle for a five-year voyage to South America, which set sail December 27, 1831.
- Charles gathered a collection of insects and birds and made extensive notes on his observations, keeping a diary that “was to become one of the most important in history, a diary that would chronicle a set of experiences that led to a decisive shift in thinking about the natural sciences...leading ultimately to changes in the entire culture of many a nation.” (24).

An Intellectual Revolution

- After the voyage, Darwin took his observations and wrote, *The Origin of the Species*, a book that brought about “the most revolutionary change that has ever occurred in man’s view of himself” (Walter Sullivan, pg. 24).
- “Darwin is seen as giving the world a comprehension of itself so unlike the view held in the past that, in a sense, he restarted history” (25).
- Though the world adopted Darwin’s views almost in-full, Darwin said, “I am well aware that scarcely a single point is discussed in this volume in which facts cannot be adduced, often apparently leading to conclusions directly opposite to those at which I have arrived” (Darwin, pg. 27).
- **Darwin’s theory: *natural selection*. Those who survive in a world of scarce resources and who live long enough to pass on their genetic makeup will cause an accumulation of slight differences that will eventually lead to an organism so different that no one would place them in the same species.**

The Flaws of Darwin’s Theory

- Flaw #1: the present doesn’t prove *origins*.
 - The major flaw: *the present cannot prove anything about the past*.
 - Present data is not proof of the past, and certainly not of origins.
 - What we think or conclude about present data is subjective, and is not science.
 - This is why experiments are performed.
 - This is why results rarely confirm conclusions.
- Flaw #2: Science cannot determine what a *species* is.
 - Wikipedia: A species is often defined as the largest group of organisms in which two individuals can produce fertile offspring, typically by sexual reproduction. While this definition is **often adequate**, looked at more closely it is **often problematic**. For example, in a species complex, the boundaries between closely related species become unclear or disappear altogether. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Species> – emphasis mine).

- Darwin: “Hence, in determining whether a form should be ranked as a species or a variety, the opinion of naturalists having sound judgment and wide experience seems the only guide to follow” (31).
- Conclusion: The *Origin of the Species* is a *necessarily subjective* book about origins of *species*, which the author himself says can only be determined by a majority vote of people who think like he does.

Science: What It Is and What It Cannot Do

- What is science? At its core, it is *observation*.
 - Science observes *that which is*.
 - Science observes *combinations of that which is*.
 - Science observes *phenomena* (i.e.: matter in motion).
 - Science performs *experiments* in a controlled environment.
 - Science is *empiricism* (conclusions based on observation).
- What Science cannot do:
 - Science cannot know the ultimate nature of things.
 - *What is life?*
 - *How does the mind affect the body?*
 - Science cannot know the origin of things.
 - *Origin of the Species* was Darwin’s theory based on looking at the present.
 - Science cannot speak of past processes.
 - Observation is superficial to know how something went from point A to point B unless the observation is of the process as it happened.
 - “To say, therefore, that the theory of evolution is scientific is to deprive the word scientific of any meaning, for scientific knowledge has to do with observation and experiment” (41).
 - Science cannot predict the future with certainty.
 - All science can do is *tentatively suggest near term results*.
 - The limitation has to do with unforeseen elements.

The Assumptions of Social Darwinism

- Social structure is engineered and controlled by impersonal forces.
 - Darwinian thought jumped from the origin of the species to the methods by which society operates.
 - Previously, it was assumed that there was a God who presided over the affairs of men.
 - Darwinianism concludes that there is no God, but impersonal forces in history (namely, the force called *survival*) shape society.
 - Example: there is a Darwinian view of marriage and a Judeo-Christian view of marriage.
- Society is moving upward to a better future.
 - Social Darwinianism is utopian.
 - This is why Darwinian thinkers are called *progressivists*.
 - Progressive thinking: Evolution has brought us to the point that man is now no longer in need of a god-idea, but man is his own god.
- Humans are just a more evolved animal.
- The idea of soul, spirit, and eternal are just the result of chemical actions of the brain.
 - The evolutionist always becomes a behaviorist.

Next Week: Karl Marx