

Review of Ray Comfort, *Evolution vs God*

By Jeffrey Stueber

The movie¹ *Evolution vs. God* opens with this quote from Richard Dawkins: “Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence.”² Rather than assume religion is the cop-out, this video attempts to show evolutionists are the ones who exercise blind faith.

First, Ray Comfort asks several professors and college students whether they know of any presently observable examples of evolution that show evolution can be believed by more than just faith. One unnamed man, who says he started to believe in evolution when he began to think for himself, instantly leaps to events 65 million years ago. Comfort interrupts him by pointing out those events are unobservable, but others follow in same fashion. Comfort concludes with a quotation from Richard Dawkins that we live only a short time, too short to witness evolution.

At this juncture, Comfort introduces the term “kind,” a word he defines somewhat nebulously but perhaps well enough for this video by giving some examples: the canine kind, coyote kind, domestic dog, feline kind, and human kind. Comfort asks Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Minnesota³ and blogger PZ Myers for evidence of evolution by asking him for an example of a change in kinds. Myers cites the evolution in the fossil record of the ancestor of cats and dogs. Unfortunately Comfort does not allow him to expand on this because Comfort is looking for evidence we can see now and not in the past. Next Comfort asks a biology major the same question, and this student is very frank in stating there is not much he can provide. A chemistry major says roughly the same thing and suggests he believes in evolution because of his faith in experts. Comfort returns to Myers who suggests stickleback fish are an example of a change in kinds even though they remain stickleback fish. When questioned on this fact, Myers says they are all distinctly different types of fish and doubles up on this suggestion by proposing that bacteria are a change in kinds. Comfort objects to this example, but Myers says they are still bacteria acquiring new metabolic capabilities. While Comfort questions Gail Kennedy, Associate Professor of Anthropology at UCLA, about it, she simply smirks.

What Comfort could have done is ask the question this way: “We know there is change in bacteria and finches, but what is the evidence these bacteria or finches become anything other than bacteria or finches? Could it be possible that after millions and billions of years they would be nothing more than bacteria or finches?” This would frame the issue as clearly as possible because

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0u3-2CGOMQ>

² The video does not detail where Dawkins’ statement comes from, but I found it came from a 1992 lecture at the Edinburgh International Science Festival. Alister McGrath, *Christianity: An Introduction* (Malden, MA:Blackwell, 2006), 102.

³ Located at Morris, Minnesota.

it brings up the question of where the animals came from if one kind could not evolve into another. It would also introduce the question of whether they would be supernaturally created.

The bait and switch between defining evolution as only a change in genetic makeup among similar animals with no evolution between kinds and defining it as the supposed fact that all life came about through changes from simple organisms to complex is not unique. Change in genetic makeup is compatible with creationism, but Darwinian evolution is proposing more than just genetic change. It's proposing its own version of secular creation. Phillip Johnson drew attention to this fact back in 1991 when stating

“Evolution” in Darwinist usage implies a completely naturalistic metaphysical system, in which matter evolved to its present state of organized complexity without any participation by a Creator. But “evolution” also refers to much more modest concepts, such as microevolution and biological relationship. The tendency of dark moths to preponderate in a population when the background trees are dark therefore demonstrates evolution – and also demonstrates, by semantic transformation, the naturalistic descent of human beings from bacteria.⁴

What Johnson is saying is that evolutionists believe all life came from natural processes where simple organisms gave rise to more advanced life forms through changes in DNA. All changes – including genetic changes from one-celled organisms to multi-celled organisms and changes from an ape-like ancestor of man to man - are examples of evolution. Evolutionists, however, refer to more modest concepts such as changes in the colors in moths as evolution also. Such modest changes are compatible with creationism, but evolutionists claim any change – whether a mere change in color or a change from ape to man – confirms that evolution is true.

Often the video reaches humorous proportions. Myers suggests we are still fish – a claim that is obviously not true. One interviewee claims that we came out of the ground as mammals and, when pressed on this, claims we either came out of the ground or sea and then claims to not know where we came from. What is funny about this exchange is that a man who seems so sure of his evolutionist beliefs is obviously not sure when asked for details.

Comfort, while questioning PZ Myers about the ethical results of evolutionist belief, asks him whether Hitler was putting into use the idea of the survival of the fittest. Myers denies Hitler was doing this. Comfort then asks him what Hitler was doing, and Myers retorts that Hitler was murdering people. Comfort asks him how that is not survival of the fittest and any different than a lion eating an antelope. Myers retorts that there is more to evolution than this crudeness and suggests that just because Hitler advocated this violence does not make it moral. That is true, but Myers misses Comfort's point. An animal can be the fittest by surviving in a harsh environment

⁴ Phillip Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1993), 153.

while another animal dies from that environment, or an animal can be the fittest by killing another. In either case, one animal is clearly the fittest, and evolution would be accomplished by these incidents. So why does Myers find discomfort in an evolutionist process like murder if that's how Darwinian processes operate? What Myers' approach to this subject shows is that he finds discomfort when evolution is actually applied in real life because he accepts the existence of objective moral precepts that do not come from evolution.

The one problem with this video is that the majority of people interviewed are students. No doubt if Comfort had interviewed people such as Richard Dawkins, Michael Ruse, and Eugenie Scott the answers might have been different. Comfort is welcome to go after easy targets, but his video won't do much to show any conclusive evidence that evolutionist belief is faulty.

The video is not without merit though. If evolution were really as much a fact as evolutionists claim, the professors interviewed would be able to give more examples than changes in fish and bacteria that remain fish and bacteria.

Comfort's video is not without critics. One video often cited is Jaclyn Glenn's atheist YouTube review.⁵ Not to be outdone, the website www.creationscience.info produced a reply to Glenn's video as well.⁶ Here are some of Glenn's missteps:

1. Glenn, quoting Richard Dawkins, suggests that creationists think evolution happens by one kind of animal giving birth to another. For instance, an ape would have to give birth to a human. Glenn points out that evolution is not that rapid, and I agree. However, no creationists I know argue this way.
2. Glenn thinks that just because evolution cannot be witnessed and scientists cannot necessarily understand how it happens, creationists immediately leap to the conclusion that God created life. That is a "god of the gaps" strategy that does not reflect modern scholarship. Creationists and intelligent design theorists claim positive reasons for attributing life forms to divine creation whether it involves a young earth, old earth, or even progressive creation.
3. Glenn takes aim at Comfort's argument that you cannot observe evidence for evolution in the fossil record. She likens that to a claim that aging doesn't exist because we cannot witness it. Yet, people and their children can, during a period of time, observe a child growing old. However, there were no people living when fossils were made.
4. Glenn assumes that molecular similarities between chimpanzees and humans show they are cousins via evolutionist relationship. However, similarities do not show common ancestry and may easily show common design – much like similarities between cars indicate similar designers.

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0k9NyHh7TQ>

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X70GFpKeRZk>

5. Glenn claims that evolution could be disproven by finding one fossil in the wrong location. Yet, I've found that evolutionist beliefs are not falsifiable and can be molded to fit any theory. If a rabbit, for instance, existed in strata before you would expect that rabbit, evolutionists would simply say that evolution proceeded more rapidly than expected and life evolved to that rabbit faster than we thought.
6. Glenn makes a big misstep criticizing Comfort's critique of the moral ramifications of evolution – particularly Comfort's claim that Hitler was putting natural selection into practice. Glenn retorts that evolution is a biological process, not a moral one, and we might as well sit in a circle and discuss the morality of a tsunami. It's interesting that Glenn never denies that Hitler was eliminating the unfit; she just wants to find a detour around the issue. What Glenn does is jump from human evil to natural evil as if to suggest both are morally equivalent. Yes, evolution is a natural process, but one with moral or immoral results and we can't ignore making ethical judgments about human actions. If humans did actions that happen to fall under the rubric of evolution, then we should describe them as moral or immoral. I think, like PZ Myers, she does not want to face the ethical ramifications of evolution.

Just as Bill Maher's video *Religulous* is not the final word as far as criticisms of religion, so Comfort's video is not the final definitive word in whether evolution is true or not. What the video does is show that people who believe in evolution can't necessarily give answers to simple questions about their beliefs. Often they demonstrate that their beliefs are based on faith in teachers or scientists who are presumed to have those answers. These "experts" do not have those answers, though, and faith in them is nothing but a cop-out and excuse to evade thinking about questions about creation and evolution.

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