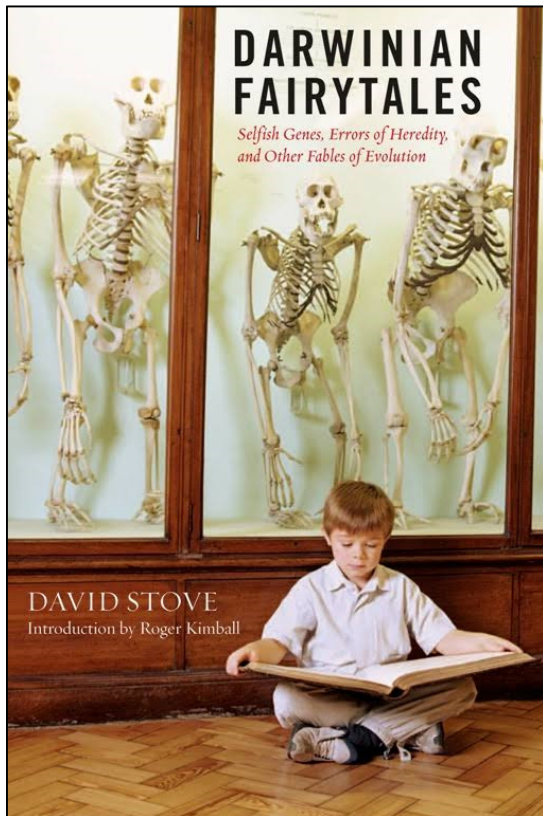


Books Creationists Should Own

-David Stove's *Darwinian Fairytales*

Jeffrey Stueber



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David Stove begins his book *Darwinian Fairytales* explaining what he calls "Darwinism's Dilemma." If Darwin's Theory of evolution were true, there would be in every species a constant and ruthless competition to survive: a competition in which only a few in any generation can be winners. But it is perfectly obvious that human life is not like that, however it may be with other species.¹

Evolution by natural selection, Stove says, is a general theory that applies to all species including humans, and if it is not true of humans it is not true. This is an internal contradiction in evolutionist belief, and if there is an internal contradiction in a world view or belief system, then that world view would not be true.

¹ David Stove, *Darwinian Fairytales: Selfish Genes, Errors of Heredity, and Other Fables of Evolution* (New York: Encounter, 1995), 3.

Stove presents three ways of attempting to get out of this dilemma: the Cave Man story, the Hard Man story and the Soft Man story. But, none of them resolve it.

The Cave Man story claims that humans at one time struggled for existence with only the fittest surviving, but humans do not act that way now. Stove counters that “If Darwin’s theory of evolution is true, no species can ever escape from the process of natural selection.”² Stove is also blunt in noting that if Darwin’s theory were true, the human race would never exist and does so only because, contrary to Darwinian belief, cooperation was always stronger than competition. Evolutionists resolve this dilemma by supposing that we overcame our need for a struggle for existence and learned to cooperate. One example from my own research should suffice.

Humanist Fred Edwords ponders why genocide exists and asks whether people who commit it are mad, whether it occurs because of poor education or whether it is driven by religious fanaticism. Edwords finds all these explanations incorrect and finally yields to Peter Singer who finds the war Moses led against the Midianites³ is similar to that of bonobos and chimpanzees. Singer believes that if Moses had read a textbook on genetics he would have found justification for his actions. Why? Genocide, Singer supposes, eliminates genetic competition and gives benefits to the victors. Edwords says we don’t want to live in a world like that, of course. We now have “civilization” which is, as he says, “humanity’s effort to repeal the law of the jungle...a conspiracy of the weak against the strong for the benefit of all.”⁴ In other words, we used to act Darwinian, but not now. Or, to put it differently, we used to act as Darwin’s theory supposes but now we don’t.

I question when was it that people consciously decided such a struggle is no longer suitable and cooperation is better? Cooperation supposes people have the capability to consciously decide to cooperate, but atheist materialism does not allow room for conscious decision making. Since natural selection supposes that the fittest survive via struggle, and since evolutionism supposes we are at the mercy of material processes alone, then we cannot escape the need to evolve via struggle. That is Stove’s point. To circumvent this desire to evolve via natural selection one would have to employ an ability to “think it through” and to consciously contradict that way of surviving. It would be as if I decided that I was going on a hunger strike despite my strong desire to eat. Cooperation would require that kind of conscious rebellion against nature. A robot would not be able to do that but a human would if he or she had a conscious soul.

Stove’s second way, the Hard Man story, presumes that the struggle for existence is a fact, and if humans act different, then humans are acting against their nature. The problem with this suggestion is

² Stove, 4.

³ Holy Bible, Book of Numbers, chapter 31, New International Version,
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=numbers+31&version=NIV>

⁴ Fred Edwords, “Why Genocide?” *The Humanist*, January/February, 2009, <http://thehumanist.com/january-february-2009/why-genocide>

that it ignores the fact that humans may act in a way that falsifies evolution . If humans survive now overwhelmingly because of altruism rather than a struggle for existence, then how can Darwin's evolutionist theory be true? Again, I offer one example from my own research.

Alvin Plantinga tells of evolutionist Herbert Simon whose article "A Mechanism for Social Selection and Successful Altruism" ponders the existence of altruism. Why, for instance, do people like Mother Teresa go so far to help others at their expense when the rational thing to do is act in ways that increase one's fitness and spread one's genes to future generations. Simon proposes two answers. People, he supposes, may act altruistically because they believe others think they should act that way. The other possibility is that people cannot make a distinction between altruistic behavior and behavior that increases one's fitness.⁵ In other words, people don't behave as evolutionists claim they should.

Finally, the Soft Man approach merely denies there is any contradiction between Darwinism and truth and Stove devotes little attention to it. It's an example of what he calls "intellectual helplessness." Here evolutionists avoid the issue just as I have found they do with other conflicts in their beliefs.

Stove is often quite humorously blunt in his critique of evolutionists, including Richard Dawkins. Stove saunters into his critique by pointing out how foolish it is to think that genes alone can control human behavior with the characteristic of selfishness.— hence the title of Dawkins' book *The Selfish Gene*. As Stove explains, Dawkins claims he does not attribute consciousness to these genes, and selfishness is only a metaphor. Mary Midgley, who is quoted by Stove, says Dawkins has acquired "the useful art of open, manly self-contradiction"⁶ because Dawkins believes we are mere puppets of material forces but cannot apply that belief to himself. He thinks genes are selfish, but that doesn't make any more sense than supposing prime numbers are sex crazed (an example Stove uses), or that books can be shy, or a couch awestruck. Genes are living, of course, but only do what their chemistry tells them to do and nothing more and, as such, are mere automatons no more capable of being selfish than a lump of coal.

At this point Stove is wonderfully brutal on Dawkins. Stove quotes an opinion by a colleague of Dawkins, endorsed by Dawkins, that memes⁷ are spread from person to person just as viruses do, and when a meme is planted inside one's mind it literally parasitizes the mind. Stove says it is impossible to read these words without feeling anxiety for Dawkins's sanity and struggles to find what words could restrain him from going over the edge. When it comes to the "discovery" of memes by Dawkins, Stove calls it one of the most effortless discoveries ever made because everyone knew that ideas existed and were passed from person to person. All Dawkins did is give them a new name and imagined he had contributed something new.

⁵ Alvin Plantinga, "Methodological Naturalism," *Origins & Design*, 18:1, <http://www.arn.org/docs/odesign/od181/methnat181.htm>.

⁶ Stove, 182. Stove's reference for his discussion of Calvinism is John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), translated by H. Beveridge (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Printing Company, 1845), Vol. 1, 203-209.

⁷ A meme is defined as "an idea, behavior, style, or usage that spreads from one person to another in a culture." "In his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, British scientist Richard Dawkins defended his newly coined word meme, which he defined as 'a unit of cultural transmission.'" Merriam-Webster Dictionary, online, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meme>

Returning to altruism, Stove lays out the problem it poses for evolutionists. “Altruism ought to be non-existent, or short-lived whenever it does occur, if the Darwinian theory of evolution is true. By the very meaning of the word, altruism is an attribute which disposes its possessor to put the interests of others before its own.”⁸ Darwinism until the mid-1960s said that all species act in a way that increases their survival and the survival of their descendants. The level of unselfishness in parenting presented this theory with serious difficulty. The answer to this dilemma is what sociobiologists call “inclusive fitness” that postulates that individuals seek to increase not just their individual fitness but the fitness of the group that the individual shares most of its genes with (parents, children, grandchildren, and so forth). This theory explains why each individual is altruistic, but is it true?

Stove deals with this theory in the same blunt humorous way he deals with other Darwinian fairytales. He doesn’t doubt that there is a connection between being related to others and the amount of altruistic behavior toward them. Then again, he says, there is a connection between Newton’s laws of motion and the state of the solar system, and, there is a connection between being fond of pastry and being of Cornish descent. However, a lot more is needed to explain human behavior than such reductionism.

Let me interject here. I frequently see television commercials for the Wounded Warrior Project which helps wounded veterans recover from their injuries and resume their civilian life. I do not donate to the Wounded Warrior Project. I, however, do frequently donate food to food banks and money to church. These donations will benefit people not related to me. How would activities like these be explainable or even commonplace given evolutionary presuppositions *unless*, of course, evolution was false?

After a chapter introducing us to how sociobiologists have created a religion around evolutionist beliefs, Stove tells us how William Paley finally had his revenge. Paley, an 18th century theologian philosopher, argued for God’s existence using natural theology. For instance, he argued that if you found a watch lying on the ground, you would never believe that it came about by random processes but was, instead, intelligently designed. This similar argument is used today in intelligent design theorists and creationists and is often dubbed the “watchmaker argument”. This argument is criticized by evolutionists such as by Dawkins in his book entitled, “The Blind Watchmaker”.⁹

Stove, now deceased, is obviously intelligent and equally devastating to evolutionist belief. He’s also quite correct and shows evolutionist belief to be a myth. The reason for such belief is not because material processes create it, but because there is a conscious choice to believe despite all the dilemmas it faces.

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⁸ Stove, 201.

⁹ Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design* (New York, Norton, 1987). Dawkins says “Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.” (p. 1)