



The Origin of Species/The Voyage of the Beagle

Charles Darwin , Richard Dawkins (Introduction)

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Easily the most influential book published in the nineteenth century, Darwin's *The Origin of Species* is also that most unusual phenomenon, an altogether readable discussion of a scientific subject. On its appearance in 1859 it was immediately recognized by enthusiasts and detractors alike as a work of the greatest importance: its revolutionary theory of evolution by means of natural selection provoked a furious reaction that continues to this day.

The Origin of Species is here published together with Darwin's earlier *Voyage of the 'Beagle.'* This 1839 account of the journeys to South America and the Pacific islands that first put Darwin on the track of his remarkable theories derives an added charm from his vivid description of his travels in exotic places and his eye for the piquant detail.

(Book Jacket Status: Jacketed)

The Origin of Species/The Voyage of the Beagle Details

Date : Published October 14th 2003 by Everyman's Library

ISBN : 9781400041275

Author : Charles Darwin , Richard Dawkins (Introduction)

Format : Hardcover 1024 pages

Genre : Science, Nonfiction, Classics, History, Biology

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From Reader Review The Origin of Species/The Voyage of the Beagle for online ebook

Hallie Huffman says

I love that he is so animated about his work, but wow, this is extremely detailed. However, I love that the man revered for such amazing connections is also just a guy complaining about his hotel accommodations!

I had to abandon this. Too much flowery language for me.

Steven Peterson says

This is an excellent volume. Two of Charles Darwin's major works are included: "The Voyage of the Beagle" and "The Origin of Species." There is a well written and sprightly introduction by evolutionary theorist Richard Dawkins. One additional good feature is a Chronology, beginning on page xxxiv.

Dawkins sets the stage with his 20+ page introduction. He speaks eloquently of the importance of Darwin's work, and the profound nature of his theoretical perspective on evolution. He places Darwin's work in an historical context, in which we see other theorists before Darwin working on how to explain change in animal species. He concludes with the strong statement that (Page xxix): "[Darwin:] also gave us by far the most plausible theory for how evolution has taken place, the theory of natural selection."

Darwin's "The Voyage of the Beagle" provides a view of his trip, as the resident naturalist, on the ship Beagle, during which time (left England in 1831 and returned in 1836) he made myriad observations that helped him work through his theory of evolution. As he notes elsewhere (page 537), the facts that he observed on this voyage "seemed to me to throw new light on the origin of species. . . ." Upon reflection, he felt that this voyage had been a wonderful developmental experience in his life. He observes (Page 516): "In conclusion, it appears to me that nothing can be more improving to a young naturalist, than a journey in distant countries. It both sharpens, and partly allays that want and craving, which. . . a man experiences although every corporeal sense be fully satisfied."

There follows his chef d'oeuvre, "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection." The chapter headings are key for understanding the logic of evolution, with natural selection as a key force in explaining change in species, among which chapters are "Variation under Nature," "Struggle for Existence," "Natural Selection," "On the Imperfection of the Fossil Record," and "On the Geological Succession of Organic Beings." A brief quotation at the end of this book encapsulates the basic logic (Page 913):

"These laws [of nature:]. . . being Growth with Reproduction: Inheritance which is almost implied by reproduction; Variability from the direct and indirect action of the external conditions of life, and from use and disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for Life, and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing Divergence of Character and the Extinction of less-improved forms."

Such a straightforward logic: inheritance of characteristics from generation to generation; variability in characteristics within a species; more individuals born than the carrying capacity of the land can provide for; selection of those individuals' whose characteristic best facilitate survival and subsequent reproduction. Darwin surely had errors and problems in this work. Nonetheless, it remains one of the most important

scientific contributions of the last millennium.

His theory has stood up well over time; one major problem, the explanation for the transmission of characteristics from generation to generation, was solved independently by the developing understanding of genetics. When natural selection and genetics were wed in the "synthetic theory of evolution," associated with thinkers like Mayr and others, Darwin's theory reached its culmination.

Edward says

Introduction

Note on the Text

Preface

Postscript

--Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle Round the World, 1832-36

An Historical Sketch

Author's Introduction

--On The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life

Glossary

Index to 'The Voyage of the Beagle'

Index to 'The Origin of Species'

Jubin Chheda says

Right at outset I was skeptical about reading about science that may be a couple of hundred years out of date. The feeling you get when reading Newtonian Physics. Often coming across propositions that have subsequently been famously refuted. Nonetheless, this remains a phenomenal read if only for the step by step building of a case. Gathering vast reams of evidence from the observations of the time, Darwin presently the case, that cannot be revolutionary enough. The excitement at times is palpable as you realize how breaking with the norm this is at the time, while still building up on the shoulders of colleagues. This is a tome on the scientific method. This should be required reading for anyone learning science! Another fascinating aspect was learning about the views on flora and fauna at the time - the world was an exciting place then, as it renews the fact the universe is an exciting place now. If and when alien life is discovered, how fascinating will it be to learn about it's evolution. If intelligent, how fascinating will be to learn about how they came to learn about science, how did their Darwin come to this conjecture!

Jan-Maat says

A couple of years ago I had the notion, even though I last studied science at about the age of nineteen (ah

how well I remember spending a Wednesday afternoon trying to measure the size of stars in tenths of a millimetre using a ruler whose smallest increment was a millimetre. I earned a fine headache from that and learnt that pointless exercises come in many flavours) to read some Darwin. On grounds of cost, in other words because it was the cheapest, I bought this awkwardly large volume containing both the Voyage of the Beagle and The Origin of Species.

Reading the Voyage of the Beagle I was struck straight away by the campaigns against indigenous peoples that Darwin witnessed in Argentina, New Zealand and Australia. There was something particularly horrible in the understated way that he described the ongoing efforts round the world by settlers to wipe out entire peoples. But I was also impressed by the casual nature of his science - at one point he accidentally eats a specimen for dinner (most of the bones were still intact) (view spoiler) and of course seeing how far he can ride a Galapagos tortoise becomes one of his objectives.

In contrast The Origin of the Species has smouldered slowly in my imagination, but I seem to have absorbed a lot of it.

Thanks to the internet you can sometimes come across people who don't believe in evolution and hold up the eye as proof that evolution is a silly concept. Yet Darwin starts off a chapter with that very objection and shows how evolution can quite reasonably explain the development of the eye. When a Victorian with their own raw brain power, bowel problems and an open mind out-thinks a contemporary with all the wonders that a modern education and technology can provide then there is a lesson to be learnt about progress.

Anyhow. One of the points that Darwin makes is about the enormous fecundity of plants. Some will produce hundreds or thousands of seeds of which perhaps a bare one will take and germinate. I remember this when things fail to grow in my flower bed. This for Darwin was an illustration of the struggle of the fittest to survive, as his cousin Francis Galton later summarised evolution through natural selection, a plant produces thousands of seeds precisely because they are unlikely to survive - that is its survival strategy so to speak (I don't believe we are meant to admit to thinking that plants are conscious or capable of strategising) Of course if the seed does germinate and grow and even if the climate and soil are friendly, the struggle doesn't end there, lurking ominously are slugs and snails and diseases each of which itself is a struggle to survive, *Nature red in tooth and Claw* as Tennyson said. A vision of the web of life that one suspects was decisively coloured for Darwin by the death of his daughter Annie while she was just a little girl.

I notice after a walk in the country how many seeds I've picked up and wonder if I am just a moving ecological disaster or simply a convenient mechanism for the dispersal of plant species. We learn that for us life would be impossible without earth worms, but earth worms could live perfectly well without us.

Anne says

Obviously a landmark in biology, and obviously pretty dry.

Dale says

For openers: it's not *survival of the fittest*, but rather *struggle for existence*.

With a ranking of #4 in the 1999 *Biography's* 100 Most Influential People of the Millennium and with that ranking resulting directly from this book, I almost felt compelled to give it five stars before opening the front cover--of my Kindle. But as I started to read, I knew at once it was worthy of the praise. Of course I was familiar with the theory. But the book itself is the distillation of years of careful research, observation, and thought. It is a work of scholarship. Darwin develops the case for natural selection gradually and much of his evidence comes not from the Galapagos but from his surrounding English countryside or in some cases from right outside his front door. He reasons that if man can *artificially* select certain traits in cattle or dogs, cannot nature, with its much larger variety and the multiplier of time, bring about a superior *natural* selection? In his book Darwin details his careful consultations with other leading plant and animal specialists and always gives them both credit and thanks for any influence he has received from their work. He methodically develops his ideas, not with a bravado or disregard from for other theories, but rather by a synthesis based on observation and fact. In the end, we are led to this question: what else, based on fact, record, and observation, can explain the world around us?

As 2018 winds down I hope to read more classics next year, as this one has served to show how they earned that praise.

Marymary says

From a single cell, a flower, a rat, to a human, from ocean to land, life's variety and wonderful is all in this book, Charles Darwin shows us a secret world of biology evolution. animals and plants adapt their environments. This book tells us if you don't run, you will be thrown in the back.

Simon Mcleish says

Review (of *The Voyage of the Beagle* only) originally published on my blog here in February 2007.

The eighteenth and nineteenth century saw many voyages of exploration by Europeans, most of which would have been followed by reports and books, ancestors of today's travel memoirs. Most of these voyages have now been forgotten, even the names they gave many places being swept away in our post-colonial world. The books produced are even more forgotten in general: the sort of books you sometimes see in the libraries of English stately homes, and maybe read by academics with related interests. The exception is of course this one (and this does not include the companion volumes with which it was originally published). Its survival is not so much due to its literary qualities, though it is eminently readable, but because of the use Darwin later made of this material; the observations made on this voyage, especially on the Galapagos islands, form an important part of the foundations of one of the most famous books of all time, *The Origin of Species* (also included in this Everyman edition).

The voyage began in December 1831, reaching the Galapagos in September 1835 after spending several years surveying the waters around South America (the principal purpose of the voyage), returning to England a year later; a lengthy circumnavigation of the globe. When the *Beagle* departed, Darwin was only 22. Without a reputation to uphold, or an academic post which would have made it politic to peddle old orthodoxies, he was a modern, up to date naturalist, surely better able to make use of his observations (and the attention to detail with which he observed should be the envy of many scientists to this day) than a more eminent older man, who would, moreover, have probably been reluctant to spend so many years away from

European scientific culture. Darwin was a follower of Lyell, whose *Principles of Geology*, which had the same sort of revolutionary effect on that science that the principle of natural selection was to have on biology, had started appearing in 1830, the year before the *Beagle* set sail; he was given a copy of volume one by the *Beagle*'s captain. Lyell attributed the character of the most world's rock formations to forces acting over lengthy period of time rather than to a series of catastrophes in the much more recent past. (Indeed, his book should be at least as stringly anathematised by Creationists as Darwin's own ideas.) Darwin was one of the first scientific observers to take part in such an expedition who was able to bear Lyell's ideas in mind, and he describes how they informed his observations at several places in *The Voyage of the Beagle*, and a long geological history is essential to the principles of Darwinian evolution. It is clear, too, that the ideas which became known as natural selection were in the air (the introduction to the *Origin of Species* lists quite a number of precursors) and early thoughts about this, as well as rival theories like Lamarck's, may well have influenced the way that Darwin looked at the plants and animals he saw on the voyage.

The Voyage of the Beagle is not all about the natural world. There are interesting observations on the ways in which people lived in the countries he visited, particularly on the gauchos of Argentina, and a lot of material about the effects of colonisation on native peoples and the institution of slavery. On both these issues Darwin had quite modern views.

In terms of style, Darwin is a clear and writer with fascinating information to impart, though perhaps not as good (and certainly not as amusing) as Gerald Durrell, who must be the current bestselling author of natural history travel books.

In the end, though, the principal interest of *The Voyage of the Beagle* is its formative role in Darwin's later thought, and this makes it completely unique.

It should be noted that the text here is the second, 1845, edition. There is an interesting foreword to the Everyman edition from Richard Dawkins, which (somewhat predictably, but with a certain amount of justification) he claims evolution to be the greatest scientific idea of all time.

William2 says

Essential reading for anyone seeking the truth.

Lee says

It was written in 1800's, first part was the voyage of the *Beagle* (the ship's name) where he went sailing round the world in. From Europe to Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Galapagos, Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia, Tasmania, Keeling island near Sumatera, Mauritius, back to Brazil and finally reached home of England after 5 long years of journey. In each place, he would venture into the inlands by by foot or horses, climbing and hiking the hills and mountains, crossing the Andes range, experienced one of the largest earthquake and seeing the disaster of tsunami, staying with the cannibals, observing the cultures, while examining the rock, plants, insects, animals, etc.

Second part is his famous "*Origin of Species*". Wow ! Definitely a very heavy stuff. I keep goin wow ! Crazy ! Incredible ! How can he wrote-out so perfect statements and how he covered all his arguments, but yet his

style was so graceful and in fact deeply immersed in so humbled humility.

I'm still crawling page by page, actually sentence by sentence and to top 20 pages per day is closed to impossible. I can't help but to keep pausing to allow each statements absorbing through the thick skull of mine before reaching into my brain.

Fortunately, I have read a few easier books on evolution and natural earth before going for this one. Otherwise, I would have been experiencing rigor mortis, freezing stupor unable to move on my chair nor progressing to the next word anymore.

Pierre E. Loignon says

Darwin is the Homer of our actual occidental civilization because we generally hear an over simplification made in the mediocre journalistic spirit of our time.

If you read Darwin for real, you will see that he was a rigorous scientist that has nothing to do with a mythologist of evolution. For him, evolution is not the true ontological story of the world, but a theory describing changes that we can experiment in biology. Evolution does not explain any origin and can not be use to predict anything. It has also to be complemented with other principles. More than that, "The Origin of Species" is, in fact, explicitly, leaving the "origin" to a rational supra-being (which means, in our modern jargon, that Darwin is, also, a "creationist") and considers their "evolution" only, as a part of an intelligent design of the world, so it would have better been named "The Evolution of Species" if he had not to struggle against the "immobilists" of his time.

As for the Voyage..., it is the best of what you can get out of a British scientist who is reporting lots of biological novelties for his time and who is seeing the superiority of his nation everywhere he is travelling.

Simon Kissam says

Only read Voyage of the Beagle (though in the time it took me to read it normally I could read at least two books) but on here because this was the version I read it. Pretty boring I hate to say, but still 2 stars because like I didn't hate it, it was just kind of a struggle to read.

Dagný says

I'm taking a loooooong time reading this, but it is very interesting and I look forward to being able to say "Oh yeah, I've read The Origin of Species" and look all intelligent.

Heléne Du plessis says

I enjoyed the Voyage of the Beagle - it was an entertaining read. I found Origin of Species to be a bit of a

slog. Darwin often repeats himself, which I found very irritating (especially as he often goes on about how little space he has to fully explain his theory). He refers to Origin as an 'abstract', which should give you an idea of how tedious it can be.

It took me 5 years to finish Origin, since I saved it for the times when I had insomnia. Origin managed to put me to sleep when nothing else could.
