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Paul makes clear that, even though God has revealed Himself in nature—so that no one is with excuse—given the cloudiness of our vision and the corruption of our sight, we can no longer see what is clearly there. The heavens are telling the glory of God, but human sinfulness refuses to see what is plainly evident. -- Dr. Albert Mohler, in an article from ICR's Acts and Facts, October 2010.

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Evolution Storytellers Unrepentant

Posted on September 10, 2010 in [Mammals](#), [Mind and Brain](#), [Darwin and Evolution](#), [Early Man](#), [Politics and Ethics](#), [Dumb Ideas](#)

Evolutionists have been criticized for telling “just-so stories”¹ for decades and decades, even by other evolutionists (see [08/08/2010](#)), yet the storytelling continues, as recent examples in the news media illustrate.

1. Blame Mom: In its “Science News” category, [Science Daily](#) trumpeted the headline, “**Acting Selfish? Blame Your Mother!**” In the article, we are told, “The **fact that our female ancestors dispersed more than our male ancestors** can lead to conflicts within the **brain** that **influence our social behaviour**, new **research reveals.**” And what did the Oxford scientists use for evidence? Very little: “They found that because, **historically, women moved about more than men**, and so are **less related to their neighbours**, our paternal and maternal **genes are in conflict over how we should behave** – with our **paternal genes encouraging us to be altruistic** whilst our **maternal genes encourage us to be selfish.**” Before now, you may have thought that men tended to be the wanderers, or the more selfish. Not according to this evidence-deprived tale. The scientists did not prove a relationship between any gene and selfishness, or between any gene and any behavior, for that matter – even less that Mom’s genes are more selfish than Dad’s.

Oxford zoologist Andy Gardner went further. He even evolved the proverbial cartoon demon and angel on the shoulder: “This leads to conflicts over social behaviour: the **genes you receive from your father are telling you to be kind** to your neighbours, whereas the **genes you receive from your mother, like a demon sat on your shoulder, try to make you act selfishly.**” Gardner did not consult his mother for her opinion on this story. Maybe she would have cast her husband in the demon role.

[Science Daily](#) printed this story without any critical analysis whatsoever, basically just regurgitating a press release from the [University of Oxford](#) that, curiously, illustrated the theory with a contrived photo of a demon and an angel on a hapless man’s shoulders, whose expression suggests he is a witless dupe of conflicting genetic voices in his brain. Apparently, the Oxford team did not apply their theory to their own motivations for writing the story in the first place.

2. Thank Mom: Redeeming dear mother, [New Scientist](#) gave some hairy ape-mom of past eons appreciation for bequeathing us with large brains. Michael Marshall wrote, “**Thank mothers for large ape brains.**”

For evidence, he cited a study by two London profs who compared brain size with metabolic rate for hundreds of marsupials and placental mammals (we are the placental type). “Placental babies are **connected to their mothers** via the placenta **for a long time,**” Vera Weisbecker [U of Cambridge] explained, conveniently failing to explain why inside connections are superior to outside connections like a pouch and a nipple. From there she launched a story: “So if she has a **high metabolic rate, the baby is more likely to benefit.**” Those poor kangaroos and wallabies are left behind as big-brain wannabees.

Marshall continued, “By contrast, marsupial babies are born while they are still very small, then spend a long time feeding off their mothers’ milk – **a slower way to grow a large brain,**” he said without providing a graph of lactation vs brain development. “**Placentas offer a continuous**

supply of rich nutrients” he said, without providing a table of comparative nutrient richness of placentals vs marsupials.

Problem: not all nutrient-enriched placental mammals have big brains. “However, the pair found **no difference in the average brain sizes of marsupials and placental mammals** – as long as they **excluded primates**,” Marshall admitted. The placental-vs-marsupial distinction appears to have just dropped out of the story as irrelevant. Solution: change the plot. “**These, it seem** [sic], got their **disproportionately large brains from a double maternal boost**. They are supplied with large amounts of energy by their mothers during gestation, and then receive **additional months or even years of care** after birth.” Funny the kangaroos never thought of that. Doesn’t Dad get any credit?

3. How the animal got its personality: Whenever an evolutionary story begins with “How...” there is a risk of sounding like Kipling’s “How the Camel Got Its Hump.” [New Scientist](#) published its latest entry in, “**How animals evolved personalities.**” Notice that the question was switched from “Did personalities evolve?” to “how did they evolve?”

Max Wolf at the Max Planck Institute took up the story. For evidence, he played video games: he “created **simple simulated animals with personalities** that were either consistently aggressive or meek, or flipped between the two.” Presumably he applied a little intelligent design to do this – maybe even a little moral judgment.

As Wolf took his sim-lambs and sim-wolves and pitted the aggressives against the meeks, the latter did not inherit the sim-Earth, “until Wolf **introduced a new one that could learn** about the behavioural patterns of others.” Without explaining the evolution of learning, he found that was the “Aha!” moment. “Learners’ and those with a consistent personality **wiped out animals whose behaviour was not consistent.**” Well, it’s all about survival of the fittest, not consistency, you know.

But modern evolutionists are a kinder, gentler bunch. They view cooperation as Darwin’s fairy godmother. “These types together formed **a more stable society** because the **learners could adjust their behaviour** to that of the others, and so **avoid costly conflict**,” the article ended. “The study shows that sociality **could be a strong factor in the evolution of personality differences**, says Sasha Dall of the University of Exeter, UK.” A strong factor? Are there others?

4. How the leader got his authority: Appropriately, Anjana Ahuja’s article on “**The natural selection of leaders**” in [New Scientist](#) begins, “**Imagine this.**” From then on, imagination is the key to her story: “In our new book, Mark van Vugt at VU University in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and I **propose** that leadership and followership **behaviours** can be **traced to the earliest days of our species**,” she said, having observational access only to living populations, not those in the earliest days. “Given that all human groupings – be they nations, gangs or cults – have **leaders and followers**, and that these **behaviours appear spontaneous**, our **thesis** is that leadership and followership are **adaptive behaviours.**” If evolution is the only game in town, that follows naturally: they are adaptive, not subject to moral assessment.

And what evidence does Ahuja provide to prove her proposition? Evolution itself: “In other words, they are **behaviours that evolved** to give our ancestors a **survival advantage** (our book’s title, *Selected*, reflects **the role natural selection plays** in leadership).” Since she and her colleague observe modern people groups often selecting leaders from the bottom up, they assume that ancient primitive humans, and even other animals, found this kind of selection “natural” or advantageous for survival.

The plot permits some corollary sub-plots. Since she sees many modern leaders being tall (a photo of Barack Obama stands alongside the article, with the caption, “Was he born for the job?”), she projects tallness as a survival advantage selected for in primitive human populations. She sees modern leaders (like Obama and Putin) being fitness buffs, and projects that brawn was selected over brain by cavemen. Strangely, she did not evaluate how Kim Jong Il ever became leader of North Korea.

It would seem that if this is the way evolution made us, we should just go with the flow.



“That is **not to say** that workplaces should become **havens of primitivism**,” she cautioned, however. Backpedaling a little from the implications, she found room for us thinking machines to overrule our Darwinian urges. “**Evolution might have bestowed on us** an instinctive suspicion of leaders who are short, female or who belong to a different tribe (skin colour is an obvious badge of belonging), **but we need to ask whether such prejudices belong in today’s interconnected world**, in which citizens of all colours and religions **need to rub along**.” Why would evolved machines ever wish to do such a thing?

From there, she got preachy, implying that humans “should” contradict our evolutionary heritage: “Perhaps the **most important take-home message** in our book is that **there is a mismatch between the way we lead and follow today, and the way our ancestors operated**.” Fortunately for us, her just-so story provides “**insights** into our recent past [that] **may help improve things**.” To be consistent, though, it would seem that evolution improved things on its own for a long time without our needing to intervene with immaterial things like design, plan, conscious thought, ethics, and leadership training.

Science is supposed to explain things with reference to natural laws and observable, repeatable evidence, not vacuous appeals to the Stuff Happens Law ([09/22/2009](#)) and imaginary scenarios that amount to tall tales. Only rarely do any of these articles in the popular science media criticize the ideas as just-so stories. That’s because many of them simply reprint press releases from the universities and research centers that have a vested interest in making their scientists *not* look stupid.

1. The essence of an evolutionary “just-so story” is its arbitrariness, lack of evidence, lack of critical analysis, and lack of consideration of alternative explanations. Named for the silly “Just-So Stories” Rudyard Kipling wrote for children, just-so stories are made-up tales to explain the origin of any trait in the living world, assuming evolution produced it. As such, they are a form of [circular reasoning](#): “Evolution produced this trait, which illustrates how evolution produces traits.”

Who could forget Richard Lewontin’s memorable candor when he said, “We take the side of science” [read: Darwinism] “in spite of the **patent absurdity of some of its constructs**, ... in spite of **the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories**, because we have a **prior commitment, a commitment to materialism**” (see full quote in the [Baloney Detector](#) under [Subjectivity](#)).

The situation is analogous, maybe even homologous, with state-controlled media like *Pravda*, in the height of the communist dictatorship, with its prior commitment to Marxism, interpreting world events in the light of class struggles, and glorifying the progress of the regime while conveniently overlooking the failures (like millions starved because of Lysenko-driven artificial famines). How about a bloodless coup? “Mr. Darwin, [tear down this wall!](#)”

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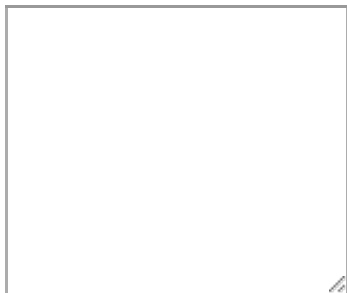


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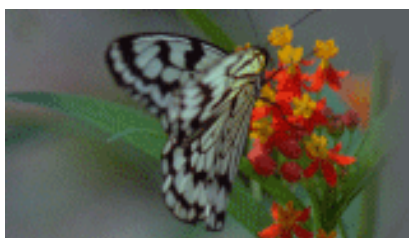
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Creation Scientist of the Month



[Sir Charles Bell](#)

1774 - 1842

Have you heard of Bell's Palsy? Bell's Nerve? Bell's Phenomenon or Bell's Spasm? These are medical terms attributed to the work of Charles Bell, a Scottish surgeon who is regarded as the premier anatomist of the early 19th century. If you are the youngest in the family, take heart: Charles was the youngest of four boys, but outshone his brothers – one another distinguished anatomist, and one an esteemed jurist. Charles Bell was also a devout Christian who saw the hand of God in human anatomy. He contributed to the Bridgewater Treatises, that collection of natural theology essays by esteemed scientists. He also provided an annotated and illustrated edition of Paley's venerable Natural Theology....

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It took six years of constant study of evolution to overcome the indoctrination found in public schools of my youth. I now rely on your site; it helps me to see the work of God where I could not see it before and to find miracles where there was only mystery. Your site is a daily devotional that I go to once a day and recommend to everyone. I am still susceptible to the wiles of fake science and I need the fellowship of your site; such information is rarely found in a church. Now my eyes see the stars God made and the life He designed and I feel the rumblings of joy as promised. When I feel down or worried my solution is to praise God the Creator Of All That Is, and my concerns drain away while peace and joy fill the void. This is something I could not do when I did not know (know: a clear and accurate perception of truth) God as Creator. I could go on and on about the difference knowing our Creator has made, but I believe you understand. I tell everyone that gives me an opening about your site. God is working through you. Please don't stop telling us how to see the lies or leading us in celebrating the truth. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you." -(a renowned artist in Wyoming)

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