

The Essence of Evolution
SBC Leadership Forum
Charles Darwin Live Performance Script

2nd Draft - 10/26/95

Visuals

Monologue

Meeting theme logo

Photo, Darwin, p. 391, Bowlby, with chyron
ID, "Charles Darwin, 1869"

VO: Ladies and gentlemen, few men in history have had as profound an effect on the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us as has our next speaker. He is here to bring us insights into the nature of competition that are both timeless and universal. Please welcome the *ultimate authority* on the natural role of competition...

Charles Darwin.

DARWIN: Good morning.

I am at a loss as to whom I should thank for that grand introduction, but I am most humbly grateful. Just how it is that any man of my era could be considered to have anything of value to say to persons living in your incredible era dumbfounds me, I must confess. Your social customs confuse me greatly, your technologies are beyond my understanding...but your economic system -- I find that surprisingly sensible. This, I am sure, is due to the many striking similarities I find between the workings of your free market economy and the workings of nature, to which I devoted my life; it seems to me that they both follow the same set of natural laws. And it would also seem that these laws produce very similar results in

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Split photo, "Dr. Erasmus Darwin, 1731-1802," p.17, Bowlby & "Dr. Robert Darwin, 1766-1848," p. 42, Bowlby

Cambridge, p. 95, Bowlby

Audubon beetle

Drawing, Darwin, p.11, Dibner

both systems. If you will indulge me, I will relate something of the origins of my ideas in an effort to explain.

My father, and his father before him, were physicians, and quite distinguished. But, as I had shown no aptitude for this profession, I was sent to Cambridge to become a clergyman. I found this direction quite agreeable but, once there, found myself drawn rather more strongly to the company of geologists and natural scientists.

Consequently, "no pursuit at Cambridge was followed with nearly so much energy as collecting beetles...I will give you proof of my zeal: one day, on tearing off some old bark, I saw two rare beetles and seized one in each hand; then I saw a third and new kind, which I could not bear to lose, so that I popped the one which I held in my right hand into my mouth. Alas it ejected some intensely acrid fluid, which burnt my tongue so that I was forced to spit the beetle out, which was lost, as well as the third one."

I graduated not really well suited for any established profession, and was in the process of debating which direction my life should

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Painting, Fitz-Roy, p. 70, Chancellor

Drawing, map, p. 34, 35, Dibner

Drawing, H.M.S. Beagle, p. 7, Dibner

Painting, "Josiah Wedgewood II, 1769-1843,"
p. 49, Bowlby

Drawing, H.M.S. Beagle floor plans, p. 12,
Dibner

take, when I received "a letter...informing me that (a certain) Captain Fitz-Roy was willing to give up part of his own cabin to any young man who would volunteer to go with him without pay as naturalist to the Voyage of the *Beagle*." The purpose of the voyage was geographical, to survey in detail the Southern portion of South America, then to return by circumnavigating the globe. For an aspiring naturalist, it was an opportunity so unique as to be utterly compelling.

"I was instantly eager to accept the offer, but my father strongly objected, adding words fortunate for me, 'If you can find any man of common sense, (he said) who advises you to go, I will give my consent.'...(Well,) as my uncle thought it would be wise in me to accept the offer, and as my father always maintained that he was one of the most sensible men in the world, he at once consented in the kindest manner. I had been rather extravagant at Cambridge and to console my father said, 'that I should be deuced clever to spend more than my allowance whilst on board the *Beagle*;' but he answered with a smile, 'But they all tell me you are very clever.'"

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Collage/build - Engraving, Mount Sariato, p. 29, Dibner; engraving, Fuegian Wigwams, p. 31, Dibner; engraving, Fuegian, p. 22, Dibner, engraving, p. 112, Chancellor, several Audubon drawings of individual S.A. plant and animal species

Drawing, bones, p. 85, Chancellor

Drawing, pampas cat, p. 118, Chancellor

Drawing, Finches, p. 97, Chancellor

The voyage of the *Beagle* was a series of natural wonders, each more marvelous than the last, and I sent back to England many crates of specimens, of both living and extinct forms, and what I observed in the process inevitably challenged some of my most closely held scientific beliefs, in particular my belief in the immutability of species, supported by the evidence that domesticated varieties of both animals and plants, when left alone, tended to revert back to the original stock.

But “during the voyage of the *Beagle*, I (had) been deeply impressed by (firstly) discovering... great fossil animals with armor like that on the existing armadillos; secondly, by the manner in which closely allied animals replace one another in proceeding southwards over the Continent; and thirdly, by the South American character of most of the productions of the Galapagos archipelago, and more especially by the manner in which they differ slightly on each island of the group. It was evident that such facts as these, as well as many others could be explained (only) on the supposition that species gradually become modified; and the subject haunted me.”

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Drawing, "Darwin, 1853," p.303, Bowlby

"From my early youth I had the strongest desire to understand or explain whatever I observed - that is, to group all facts under some general laws." This gave "me the patience to reflect or ponder for any number of years over any unexplained problem. As far as I can judge, I am not apt to follow blindly the lead of other men," and "I have steadily endeavored to keep my mind free, so as to give up any hypothesis, however much beloved (and I cannot resist forming one on every subject), as soon as facts are shown to be opposed to it."

Drawing, Darwin's Study, p. 437, Bowlby

Thus, it took me twenty years after the voyage of the *Beagle* to assemble all the facts I had observed, along with the observations of other naturalists from all over the world, into what I considered to be a viable theory, which I published in a volume entitled *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. And it is in the principles established in that work that I find so many parallels to the forces that move your economy.

Photo, cover of Origin of Species, p. 339, Bowlby

The Dream by Henri Rousseau, p. 495, History of Art, H.W. Janson -- hold for duration to center attention on talent

The first of these is the principle of Competition. In nature, "all organic beings are exposed to severe competition," because "a struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic beings tend to

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increase...as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life.”

And I believe the same can be said for your Free Market economic system, for it seems to me that every time a new market or market niche opens up in your economy, it invariably gives rise to more suppliers than can survive there. And thus a competitive struggle for existence ensues, a struggle against both other competitors and against adverse economic conditions.

The second principle is Adaptation. In both nature and in a free market, “can we doubt that any individuals having an advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving? On the other hand we may feel sure that any variation in the least degree injurious would be rigidly destroyed. This preservation of favorable individual differences and variations, and the destruction of those which are injurious, I have called Natural Selection, or the Survival of the Fittest.”

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In nature, adaptations are the result of random variations, with competition determining which are advantageous and which are not. In a free market, consumers are the agents of Natural Selection, and here, too, adaptation is the key to competitive advantage. But in your case, variations arise only as the result of innovation, out of the conscious attempt to deliver greater value to the customer than does the competition. As in nature, competition selects some adaptations as successful and dooms others to extinction. In the end, only the Fittest survive.

Now, some see this process as cold and heartless, and they take no joy in it. But to them, I say, "Open your eyes!" Competition is the creative force of the universe, of nature and of human kind, and if you will embrace it, you will find great joy indeed.

Whilst voyaging with the *Beagle*, I saw "beautiful adaptations everywhere and in every part of the organic world; in the plumed seed which is wafted by the gentlest breeze, in the structure of the beetle which dives through the water, or in the humblest parasite which clings to the hairs of a quadruped or the feathers of a bird." And I wondered, "How have all those

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exquisite adaptations...to the conditions of life and of one organic being to another being, been perfected?"

Later, my greatest pleasure was to simply "contemplate a tangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by (natural) laws acting around us. And that, from the war of nature, from competition and adaptation, "the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely (ourselves), directly follows." Whether life was "originally breathed...into a few forms or into one...while this planet has gone circling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved."

MUSIC IN

As I look around me now, at the free and "natural" market you have created, I see

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economic adaptations that thrill my imagination. From frozen yogurt to lap-top computers, I see an economic system in which every individual is an agent for improving the system, bringing about through their conscious actions and choices, the evolution of useful adaptations in endless variety. Just as competition in nature enriches us by propelling life, in all its beauty and complexity, into every ecological niche available, competition in a free market enriches us by propelling businesses toward the ultimate fulfillment of our every human need and desire.

So I say to you: Competition should be embraced and celebrated, for it generates the grand array of adaptations that enrich all of life. And to each of you, I extend the hope that you will come to cherish your own individual place in that competition, for it brings out the Fittest in all of us.

MUSIC OUT

