

Why Draw Evolution in a Straight Line When it doesn't Happen that Way?

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Commentary

Evolution does not take a predetermined, linear course. Nonetheless, there are numerous photographs that imply differently. Evolution is depicted as a straight progression from primitive to advance in everything from museum exhibits to editorial cartoons. You've probably seen photos showing a chimp standing up and advancing through numerous hominids to a modern human. Yes, they are capable of being amusing. However, common depictions of evolution are completely inaccurate. "Climbing a stairwell to success" This misconception dates back to before 1859, when Charles Darwin presented his scientific theory of evolution through natural selection. Until then, the traditional view of how the world was organised was that it was organised by a "progression in perfection." The idea of the "great chain of being," or "scala naturae" in Latin, expresses this concept: all animate and inanimate beings on Earth could be organised according to an increasing scale of perfection, starting with mushrooms at the bottom and progressing through lobsters and rabbits to human beings at the top. This viewpoint, which dates back to Plato and Aristotle, is flawed in three ways. First, it asserts that nature is hierarchically arranged. It isn't a haphazard collection of beings [1,2].

Second, it anticipates two guiding principles: things progress from simple to perfect, from primitive to modern. Finally, it is assumed that there are no intermediate levels in this hierarchy. A barnacle and a coral reef on the same rung are both equally complicated. No one is in the middle of two steps. In the 1960s, a variant of Jesuit philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's scala naturae gained popular. Although life is somewhat branching, he believed that there is a direction to evolution, a movement toward increasing cognitive complexity and, eventually, identification with the divine, that is, God. Scientists' conceptions of the world, at least since Darwin, have been organised around transitions - from inanimate chemicals to life, from earlier organisms to various types of plants and animals, and so on. All life on Earth is the result of progressive changes that have resulted in the diversity and exuberance of species that we see today. Evolutionary biologists are

particularly interested in two transitions. There's the transition from inanimate to animate: the beginning of life. There's also the appearance of the human species as a descendant of a monkey [3].

The most common depiction of human evolution is as a linear and ongoing process. You've probably seen this portrayal in photos, logos, and political and social propaganda. However, none of these depictions accurately reflect the dynamics of Darwin's hypothesis. The only graphic he gave in his book "On the Origin of Species" is a tree diagram, the branching of which is a metaphor for how species emerge, which is by dividing. The lack of an absolute time scale in the illustration acknowledges that progressive change occurs on timescales that differ from organism to organism depending on generation length. The most common depiction of human evolution is as a linear and ongoing process. You've probably seen this portrayal in photos, logos, and political and social propaganda. However, none of these depictions accurately reflects the dynamics of Darwin's hypothesis. The only graphic he gave in his book "On the Origin of Species" is a tree diagram, the branching of which is a metaphor for how species emerge, which is by dividing. The lack of an absolute time scale in the illustration acknowledges that progressive change occurs on timescales that differ from organism to organism depending on generation length [4,5].

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