

Some Answered Questions, Evolution and the Existence of Man

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



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Evolution and the Existence of Man

Question: What do you say regarding the theory of the evolution of beings to which certain European philosophers subscribe?

Answer: We discussed this matter the other day, but we will speak of it again. Briefly, this question comes down to the originality or non-originality of the species, that is, whether the essence of the human species was fixed from the very origin or whether it subsequently came from the animals.

Certain European philosophers hold that species evolve and can even change and transform into other species. Among the proofs they advance for this claim is that, through careful geological research and investigation, it has become clear and evident to us that the existence of the plants preceded that of the animals, and that the existence of the animals preceded that of man. They hold, moreover, that both vegetable and animal kingdoms have undergone transformation; for in certain strata of the earth, plants have been discovered which existed in the past but which have since disappeared, meaning that they evolved, became hardier, and changed in form and appearance, and thus the species have changed. Likewise, in the strata of the earth there are certain animal species which have changed and altered. One of these is the snake, which has vestigial limbs, that is, signs indicating that it once had feet, which have disappeared over time and left behind only a remnant. In like manner, there is in man's vertebral column a vestige indicating that like other animals he once had a tail, of which, they assert, traces still remain. At one point that member was useful, but as man evolved, it lost its utility and hence it gradually disappeared. Likewise, as snakes came to live beneath the ground and became creeping animals, they were no longer in need of feet and so the latter disappeared, leaving behind a remnant. Their principal proof is that these vestigial limbs are evidence of the existence of earlier limbs that have gradually disappeared for want of use, and that they no longer have any benefit or reason to exist. Thus, the fit and necessary limbs have remained, while the unnecessary ones have gradually disappeared as a result of the transformation of the species, but have left behind a remnant.

The first answer to this argument is that the antecedence of animals to man is not a proof that the essence of the human species was altered or transformed or that man came from the animal kingdom. For so long as it is acknowledged that these different beings have appeared in



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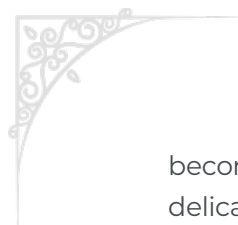
time, it is possible that man simply came into existence after the animal. Thus we observe in the vegetable kingdom that the fruits of different trees do not appear all at once; on the contrary, some appear earlier in the season and others later. This priority is not a proof that the later fruit of one tree was produced from the earlier fruit of another.

Secondly, these minor traces and vestigial limbs might have some great underlying wisdom which the human mind has so far been unable to fathom. How many things are found in this world whose underlying wisdom to this day has not been grasped! Thus, it is said in physiology—the science of the relations of the body's organs—that the underlying wisdom and cause of the differences in the colouration of animals and of human hair, or of the redness of the lips, or of the variety of the colours of birds, are still unknown and remain hidden and concealed. But it has been discovered that the blackness of the pupil of the eye is due to its absorbing the rays of the sun, for if it were of another colour—say, uniformly white—it would not absorb these rays. Now, so long as the wisdom underlying the things that we have mentioned is unknown, one may well imagine that the reason and wisdom of the vestigial limbs, whether in the animal or in man, is also unknown. Such an underlying wisdom of course exists, even though it may not be known.

Thirdly, even if we were to suppose that certain animals, or even man, once possessed limbs which have now disappeared, this would not be a sufficient proof of the transformation of the species. For man, from the conception of the embryo until the attainment of maturity, assumes different forms and appearances. His appearance, form, features, and colour change; that is, he passes from form to form and from appearance to appearance. Yet, from the formation of the embryo he belongs to the human species; that is, it is the embryo of a man and not of an animal. But at first this fact is not apparent; only later does it become plain and visible.

For example, let us suppose that man once bore a resemblance to the animal and that he has since evolved and transformed. Accepting this statement does not prove the transformation of species, but could instead be likened to the changes and transformations that the human embryo undergoes before reaching its full development and maturity, as was earlier mentioned. To be more explicit, let us suppose that man once walked on all fours or had a tail: This change and transformation is similar to that of the fetus in the womb of the mother. Even though the fetus develops and evolves in every possible way before it reaches its full development, from the beginning it belongs to a distinct species. The same holds true in the vegetable kingdom, where we observe that the original and distinctive character of the species does not change, while its form, colour, and mass do change, transform, and evolve.

To summarize: Just as man progresses, evolves, and is transformed from one form and appearance to another in the womb of the mother, while remaining from the beginning a human embryo, so too has man remained a distinct essence—that is, the human species—from the beginning of his formation in the matrix of the world, and has passed gradually from form to form. It follows that this change of appearance, this evolution of organs, and this growth and development do not preclude the originality of the species. Now, even accepting the reality of evolution and progress, nevertheless, from the moment of his appearance man has possessed perfect composition, and has had the capacity and potential to acquire both material and spiritual perfections and to become the embodiment of the verse, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness."^[131] At most, he has become more pleasing, more refined and graceful, and by virtue of civilization he has emerged from his wild state, just as the wild fruits



become finer and sweeter under the cultivation of the gardener, and acquire ever greater delicacy and vitality.

The gardeners of the world of humanity are the Prophets of God.