

How did species evolve? Giants of genetic theory go mano a mano

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A disagreement between the twin giants of genetic theory, Harvard University's [Richard Dawkins](#) and EO Wilson of Oxford University, is now being fought out by rival academic camps in an effort to understand how species evolve. At root it is a dispute about whether natural selection, the theory of "the survival of the fittest" first put forward by [Charles Darwin](#) in 1859, occurs only to preserve the single gene. Wilson is an advocate of "multi-level selection theory", a development of the idea of "kin selection", which holds that other biological, social and even environmental priorities may be behind the process. But Dawkins is unconvinced.

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