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Contextualising Darwin's Theory of Evolution in the Yorùbá Human Concept

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Olaleye Samuel Kayode [α] & Gbadamosi Oluwatoyin Adebola [σ]

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I. Introduction

Human beings from different cultures and religions have grappled with the puzzle related to their origin. There are several accounts of how humans emerged on the earth. The established account in some world religions revolve around creationism, which is a belief premised on the notion that human beings were created perfect from their progenitor, the first man, called Man or Adam. Greenberger asks a fundamental question: How did I get here? Answering this question has been a major task for humanity over the ages. Although each people's mythology had its own explanation for how the world was formed and the place of man in it, as man learned more through observation and scientific study, some of the myths supported in the past were challenged.[1]History reveals to us a dramatic turn which seems to threaten this established belief; this was the discovery of the notable British Scientist, Charles Darwin, whose submission was a belief that is at odds with creationism. Charles Darwin came up with a notorious claim which challenges the concept of an intelligent design or purpose in creation. This claim of Darwin is known as the theory of evolution. This theory also challenges the lofty state in which humans seen to occupy among other creatures which different mythologies including African cosmology present. According to Coyne, "the battle for evolution seems never-ending, and the battle is part of a wider war, a war between rationality and superstition, and what is at stake is nothing less than science itself and all the benefits it offers to the society". [2] The Yoruba community, Nigeria, is part of this larger society of humanity and this paper tends to suggest how the theory of evolution can enhance further understanding of some Yoruba beliefs, chiefly, its concept of a human being.

II. History of the Theory of Evolution

The theory of evolution did originate from Charles Darwin; he must have been influenced by the works of some scientists before him. According to Nardo, some scientists started talking about evolution in the early 1700s which was not even totally new at this time. One of such scientists was a Frenchman, Pierre de Maurpertuis, who pointed out that people often bred new kinds of species in greenhouses and gardens. This is significant because it indicates that people could alter some things in living things under right conditions. [3] Maupertuis proposed a new idea to explain this phenomenon; he said there are tiny particles inside each living organism, which later scientists call genes. He believed that these particles are blue-prints for physical attributes, inherited from both parents or from distant ancestors. Over time, some of these particles might disappear or become damaged in one generation; this would result to different or new physical features in future generations.[4] Years after Maupertuis, another theory of evolution was developed; this was from an English man Erasmus Darwin. Erasmus Darwin was the grandfather of Charles Darwin and he held the

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[1] R. Greenberger, 2005. *Darwin and the Theory of Evolution.* New York: The Rosen Publishing Group Inc. 4

[2] J. Coyne, 2009 *Why Evolution is True.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. xi

[3] D. Nardo, 2009. *The Theory of Evolution: A History of Life on Earth.*Minesota: Compass Point Books. 21

[4] D. Nardo, 2009. *The Theory of Evolution: A History of Life on Earth.*Minesota: Compass Point Books. 21

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belief that species evolved as a result of change in their environment. Species that could adapt to the changes survived and those that could not die out.[5] Erasmus's theory of evolution must have clearly influenced his grandson Charles Darwin who shares the same belief and even tried to explain the same notion in clearer terms.

Charles Darwin benefitted from the works of others while developing a comprehensive theory of evolution that went beyond the views available at that time and also offered a radical set of claims on the origin and development of species.[6] His interest in evolution must have been stirred by the works of his grandfather years before he delved into works related to evolution. Mel Thompson, while narrating the story of Charles Darwin (1809-82), reveals that although he tried to study medicine at Edinburgh, he did not graduate as a doctor, but years later, he went to Cambridge with the aim of becoming an ordained minister. In 1831, he got the opportunity to be on board of *HMS Beagle* as a naturalist aiming to undergo an exploration of South America wildlife. This trip was significant in his life because it had a lasting impression on him and must have influenced the path he chose in his study of nature. On his return in 1836, he had a conviction in the particularity of the various species he saw, believing that each specie must indeed develop from another. As a result of this conviction, the next two decades of his life went into gathering data and evidence and also developing his 'theory of natural selection', by the year 1859, he was successful in publishing his *Origin of Species*, a highly controversial book at the time of publication because it suggested a mechanism---Natural Selection which threatens traditional beliefs of creationism.[7]The theory of evolution was not originally called this term, but scientists have come to associate the following terms like Natural Selection (which Darwin favoured) or Descent with Modification, Transmutation and Adaptation with the idea surrounding this theory.

Darwin, in his *Origin of Species,* explained the theories of natural selection and transmutation (a term he rather used than evolution in the first five editions of the book) in the development of life on earth. He held that natural selection is the theory or principle that living organisms adapt or change as their environment is changing in order to survive. Individual organisms whose traits make them best suited to the changes are the most "fit". It also means that their traits are adaptive and that they have a better chance at survival and reproduction than other individuals of their kind and that the organisms without adaptive traits are more likely to die off without reproducing.[8] Thompson also explains natural selection as follows: within species, "those who survive to adulthood are able to breed, passing on those characteristics to the next generation. By this mechanism, these characteristics improve the chance of survival; hence, the characteristics of species are gradually modified in favour of those that facilitate survival".[9]The theory of evolution was earlier associated with an idea called "transmutation" published anonymously in 1844 called the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*. Although this book was described as amateurish, it was quite popular in its days because it sold nothing less than eleven editions.[10]Natural selection also comes to play when organisms maximize minor continuous variations, this does not occur suddenly, but one that advances by little and sure, though sluggish, steps. "Mutation" refers to a change in physical traits, and the prefix "*trans*" means across. Transmutation is the process of moving across line between older specie and a newer one by developing new traits or enhancing existing traits.[11]

Adaptation, according to Brock, quoting Rose and Lauder, indicates a reference to a process and also to the product of such process;"it is the process of modifying one thing to another and the condition of being adapted. Adaptation looks to the past and to a trait's selective history, while fitness points to future reproductive success. The process of adaptation (natural selection) is a cause of states of adaptation."[12] The process of adaptation can be seen as a form of reworking or adjustments which is within in order to fit into or survive the prevailing environmental conditions. This can also be seen as an unfolding of traits in species which are necessary conditions for survival. According to Mayr, the term evolution is derived from this concept of unfolding (unfold itself), and this connotation continued well into the Post-Darwinian period. It was perhaps the major reason Darwin avoided the term "evolution" in his *Origin of Species.* Evolution means the unfolding of a built in plan; evolution does not produce genuine change, but only consists in the maturation of immanent potentialities.[13] The point here that evolution is not a genuine change but a *pseudo*-change because it is not change in the actual sense but

[5] D. Nardo, 2009. *The Theory of Evolution: A History of Life on Earth*. Minesota: Compass Point Books. 21

[6] B. Sweetman, 2010 *Religion and Science: An Introuctuction*. New York: Continuum Int Publishing. 89

[7] M. Thompson, 2013, *Religion and Science.*Np: Hodder Education. 92

[8] F. Bortz, 2014, *Charles Darwin and The Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection.* New York: Rosen Publishing Group Inc. 50

[9] M. Thompson, 2013, *Religion and Science.*Np: HodderEducation . 93

[10] A. Ellergard, 1990. *Darwin and the General Reader: The Reception of Darwin's Theory of Evolution in the British Periodical Press 1859-1872. Chicago*: The University of Chicago Press. 11

[11] F. Bortz, 2014, *Charles Darwin and The Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection*. New York: Rosen Publishing Group Inc. 50

[12] J. Brock, 2000. *The Theory of Adaptive Systems: The General Theory of Evolution.* San Diego: Academic Press. 2

[13] E. Mayr 1963, Population*, Species and Evolution: An Abridgment of Animal Species*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 3-4

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only an un-folding of in-built characteristics which are existing potentials which have always been present. This logic here is that just as a boy becoming a man is not actually a genuine change but only an unfolding of the in-built manly potentials which had always been present, so exactly what Darwin implies in his discovery though he tactfully evaded the use of the word "evolution". According to Sweet man, Darwin observed on his trip on *HMS Beagle*, that species of animals have differences. Although some of these differences were slight, they suggested that descent with modification (as Darwin called it) was gradual, not sudden as some had suggested. It seemed also to imply that change occurs (trans-mutation) when populations are isolated from each other. The big question was, how did the evolution, trans-mutation, adaptation or natural selection in the species take place? Sweetman goes further to narrate that Darwin on his return from his trip, began to see how the origin and nature of species can be accounted for. This he did by using concepts like descent with modification, natural selection, species adaptation, survival of the fittest, all of which are the main ideas in his revolutionary book. Interestingly, the idea of natural selection was a suggestion to him by a native method by English Farmers to produce desirable herd of cattle and dogs. If artificial section could produce small changes in animals in a relatively short time, then natural selection could produce significant ones.[14]

Darwin proposed also, using the finches on the Galapagos as an example, to show that there was a struggle for existence in nature and that those that survive do so. Only because they are the "fittest", not the strongest or healthiest, but those best able to cope with the particular environment they find themselves in. This illustrates two main points of Darwin, first, species are genetically related to each other (common descent) and second, natural selection is the process that drives evolutionary change. Which further leads to the process of micro-evolution(evolution within a specie) and macro-evolution which suggests the case that widely different species might be genetically related as in the case of human beings and the apes. This genetic connectedness of all species is known as macro-evolution. Darwin believed that all the present available species we have in the world evolved from common ancestors, this goes back in history to the very first forms of life, which some speculate were one-celled organisms that appeared between four and five million years ago in the sea. He argues further that more complex life forms evolved from simple life forms, by means of a mechanism –natural selection. A diagram of this whole process is known as tree of life which narrates the journey from one single-celled organism and gradually over billions of years to complex species including human beings, although he tried to avoid the subject of human beings in his first book *Origin of Species,* he did so in his later book *Descent of Man*(1871).[15] The concept of macro-evolution is the basis of the Tree of Life and a subject of much controversy especially the serious implication of relatedness between human beings and lower animals. The implied conclusion necessary for macro-evolution is that human beings and animals especially the apes have a common ancestor. This is so unacceptable, especially during the days of Darwin, and the basis for which the theory of evolution is a subject of intense debate even within contemporary circles.

III. The Arguments that Humans Descended from the Apes

Scientists, philosophers and theologians have had intense arguments on the subject of evolution from the days of Darwin, and for the problem to still continue generating interests and reactions within contemporary circles indicates the seriousness of the subject. The arguments are premised on the implication of such notion on world religions which suggest creationism, notably that of a perfect human being which is at odds with the conclusion of evolution. However, there have been different bases of comparism between human beings and lower animals especially the apes which have been identified as the closest to human. The structure of the brain, the vertebrae, the feet, the fingers or toes and many other characteristics are bases for comparison.

Regal opines that "the controversy on the nature and the extent of the difference in the structure of the brain in man and the apes, which arose some years ago, has not yet come to an end, though the subject matter of the dispute is, at present, totally different from what it was in former times."[16] History reveals to us that the subject of evolution, chiefly that of man, is one that has been debated intensely from different quarters, each school of thought holding tenaciously to its beliefs. A school of thought inferred from the position of Darwin that man descended from apes, although Darwin was very cautious about making this claim. Another school of thought does not share this opinion and has tried to weaken the basis of the argument that man's ancestry can be linked to the apes.

Dokun-Babalola, in his book, *Evolution: What Darwin Did Not Tell You: Rispote to the Book 'The Greatest Evil on Earth',* argues intensely against the position that man descended from apes. He obviously

[14] B. Sweetman, 2010 *Religion and Science: An Introuctuction.* New York: Continuum IntPublishing. 90

[15] B. Sweetman, 2010 *Religion and Science: An Introuctuction.* New York: Continuum IntPublishing. 90-93

[16] B. Regal, 2004, *Human Evolution: A Guide to the Debates*. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio INC. 315

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does not share the position of others that human's ancestral-ship is in the apes. He refers to a number of attempts that have been made to show the connection between man and the apes. He agrees that although many resemblances may be alluded to between the apes and humans, however, he claims assertively that "the only historical evidence that could support the ancestry of man must come from fossils, and unfortunately, the fossil record of man and apes is very sparse".[17] The simplest meaning of Dokun-Babalola's assertion is that we do not have sufficient evidence to claim that man descended from apes. Another significant inference which can be drawn from the title of his book to indicate his position on the subject of the theory of evolution is that he clearly believes that some scholars are merely saying what Darwin did not say while using his name, Darwin's, as the basis of their argument. Bulhof also shares this position of Dokun-Babalola. He says also that Darwin only referred to the idea that man descended from the apes vaguely. Bulhof quotes Darwin in his book *Origin of Species* where he says: "no more than much light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history". Bulholf goes further to suggest the meaning of what Darwin says, he believes that Darwin must have *racked* his brains on finding the wordings of this phrase. In 1837, the question of this position of man, if his hypothesis about nature were correct, had occurred to Darwin, but he was obviously reluctant to draw this conclusion----that man descend from apes. A valid question can be deduced from the conclusion of the theory of evolution: had mankind too developed gradually according to the evolutionary theory? This was shocking in the days of Darwin. Bulholf calls Darwin a good strategist, because Darwin had no desire to compromise his book by suggesting such a possibility, even though he was thinking strongly along those lines, and, on the other hand, he had no desire to close his eyes to the issue.[18] It is quite apparent that Darwin was in a dilemma and he was very cautious in making the obvious conclusion his hypothesis suggested inspite of the fact that his hypothesis points heavily in favour of what he was careful in asserting. Followers of Darwin did not share his reluctance and they were more outspoken on the origin of man. This is the reason why it is claimed that "they" referring to followers of Darwin, were saying what he did not say. It would be better, however, to suggest that "they" helped Darwin to say what he wanted to or what he was reluctant to say.

Thomas Huxley was a very notable follower of Darwin and he is believed to be one of the very few whom Darwin shared his ideas with. According to Hehrich, Huxley was a prominent Darwinist and prominent discoveries in the field of Zoological Science are credited to him. Huxley shows clearly that the controversial ancestry of man from the ape family is the indispensible import of the theory of evolution. He published an outstanding work in the year 1863 (four years after Darwin published his *Origin of Species),* titled, *Evidence of Man's Place in Nature*. This book contained three essays:

1. On the Natural History of Man like Apes.
2. On the Relations of Man to the Lower Animals.
3. On Some Fossil Remains of Man. Huxley clearly believes that if the theory of descent is correct as a whole, it is impossible not to regard the apes most resembling humans as the animals from which the human race has been immediately evolved.[19]

T.C Winkler, also like Huxley, did not share the reluctance of Darwin on the issue of the ancestry of man, the idea that man descended from the apes posed no threat to him at all. Winkler's acceptance of the theory of evolution did not mean that he believed that life developed at random. He believes that there is a clear plan underlying the evolutionary process, that is, that man may be descended from the apes, but man is nonetheless a totally different sort of creature. Winkler goes further by making a very remarkable though hilarious statement which shows his stand that humans descended from the apes. He says "If only people realised that their descent from the apes lay millions of years ago, they would not be so shocked about having apes in the family"[20].

Coyne a contemporary scholar also shares the belief of Winkler and Huxley. The title of his book, *Why Evolution is True*, shows clearly his position that he believes that he agrees with the conclusion of the theory that human in his present state is as a result of processes of descent. Coyne makes an emphatic statement

Evolution is more than a theory, it is a fact. And rather than casting an aspersion on Darwinism, the evidence gathered by scientists over the past century and a half support it completely, showing that evolution happened as Darwin proposed through the working of natural selection. For those who oppose Darwinism

[17] O. 2015 *What Darwin Did Not Tell You: Rispote to the Book 'The Greatest Evil on Earth'*. Singapore: Strategic Books Publishing and Rights Co, LTC. (Ebook)

[18] I. Bulholf 1992 *"The" Language of Science: A Study of the Relationship Between Literature and Science in the Perspective of a Hermeneutical Ontology: With a Case Study of Darwin's Origin of Species.* Leiden: E.J Brill. 39

[19] H. Hehrich, 1886 *The Evolution of Man: A Popular Exposition of the Principal Points of Human Ontogeny and Phylogeny.* New York: D. Appleton and Company.

[20] I. Bulholf 1992 *"The" Language of Science: A Study of the Relationship Between Literature and Science in the Perspective of a Hermeneutical Ontology: With a Case Study of Darwin's Origin of Species*. Leiden: E.J Brill. 39

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purely as a matter of faith, no amount of evidence will do ---- theirs is a belief not based on reason.[21]

Ssaokuth and Ndaloh also, in their work, say that Darwin believed that humans and animals evolved over millions of years ago from simple living cells to the complex beings we know today. They show the stages in human evolution which they believe can be divided into two broad categories:

1. Evolution from the apes to the earliest man which occurred about 30 million years ago when the first ape appeared on earth. It then passed through several stages until it emerged as *Homosapiens*. This class has two further subdivisions; (a) *Aegytopithecus*- Earliest ancestor of both humans and apes. (b) *Procunsul-Aegytopithecus* developed into *Procunsul*.
2. Evolution from earliest man to thinking man; this occurred in six stages:
   a) *Kenyapithecus*- lived about 12 million years ago.
   b) *Zinjantmropus*- lived about 2 and 2 ½ million years ago.
   c) *Homo Habilis*- hardly man or man with ability
   d) *Homo Erectus- Homo Hablis* evolved into *Homo Erectus*
   e) *Homo Sapiens*- thinking or intelligent man
   f) *Homo Sapiens Sapiens*- this was the final stage of the evolution of the early man.[22]

It can be seen, then, how radical the theory of evolution is. If the theory is true, as some scholars posit, one would then be forced to agree even if done reluctantly, that humans developed gradually from the lower animals to the rational thinking man we have now. This is a very serious assertion which has a lot of implications especially within religious circles because it strips humans of the glorious image he is believed to have among living creatures. It also threatens, the concept of creationism held in some world religions like Christianity and Islam where human is believed to be created perfect. However, the Yoruba concept of man is clearly different from the western one, creating a departure from the western ideas of creationism seen in Christianity.

IV. The Yoruba Concept of a Human Being

It is a general belief of almost all the religions in the world that humans were created by a Supreme Being known as the Creator and was called different names from different parts of the world. The Jews for instance called him Yahweh, Arabs call him *Allah,* while in Asia and India, God is found in monism and pantheism [23] . In Africa, the presence of God is recognized and acknowledged in various names and attributes ascribed to him. He is called *Nana Buluku* by the Fon of Dahomey, *Odomankoma* by the Akan of Ghana. The Komo people of Sierra-Leone call him*Meketa* while the Ibo speaking of Nigeria call him *Chukwu* and the Yorùbá calls him *Ọlọ́run* or *Olódùmarè*[24]. Among his attributes in Yorùbálandare, *Ẹlẹ́dá*– the Creator, *Ọlọ́fin Òrun*– the king in heaven and *Ezechitaoke*– the king that creates among others. With this assertion, therefore, man is part of the created order of God.

For life to begin, according to *Ifá*-divinationin Yorùbá religion, there are some events that must take place physically and spiritually. These are the events that had been placed and organized by *Ọlọ́run*, the secret of which was best known to him alone. However, to actualize this, He commissioned *Ọbàtálá* to mold the physical part of man that Olódùmarè gave breathe of life to as a newly created being. This breath of life is called *Ẹ̀mí* – the soul and is the infinitesimal part of the Creator, Olódùmarè in man[25]. This is the indestructible part of man that goes back to Olódùmarè when man dies. It is the intangible part of man that first lived in heaven, performed some activities, like the choosing of *Orí* at *Ìdó* market, the choosing of *Ìwà* at *Ojùgbòròmẹkùn* market, and offering of different kinds of *ẹbọ* – sacrifice at different places and time inside *Igbó nlá* in heaven before the coming of man to the earth[26].

It is during the choosing *Orí* and *Ìwà* that the would-be child in the spiritual chooses the vehicle, that is, the parents that would bring him (man) to the physical world. After completing the whole exercise, *Ọbàtálá* will seal all the chosen and the activities of man with *Àṣẹ* at*Ibùyàn* and be waiting for the parents that would bring him to the world according to his wish when he was choosing *Iwa* at *Ojugboromekun*market. We should note here that as the new child is picking his destiny at *Ìdó* market, he is also leaving and tying the knot of continuity for another round of his own successors on the hope that he would live long on earth to fulfil all that he has chosen in heaven. As soon as the parents the new childthat will come through to the earth are joined together in marriage, the child will enter the womb of the mother to begin the conception of another human.

[21] J. Coyne, 2009, *Why Evolution is True.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. xi

[22] A. SSaokuth& A. Ndaloh, 2006, *Peak Revision K.C.P. E Social Studies.* Nairobi: East African Publishing Ltd. 53-54

[23] Kenneth Boa, 1994, *Cults World Religions and the Occult,* U.S.A: Victor books, 17-18.

[24] J. OmosadeAwolalu& P. AdelumoDopamu, 1979, *West African Traditional Religion,* Ibadan: OnibouojePresss& Books Industries (Nig.) Ltd. 40-48.

[25] Ayo Salami, 2008, *Yoruba Theology and Tradition; the man and the society,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 29.

[26] Ayo Salami, *Yoruba Theology and Tradition; the Man and the Society,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 30.

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The part of entry of *Ẹ̀mí* – soul into the womb of the mother that will bring the child into the world is spiritually extremely important. This, according to an informant, is so because between the city of *Ìkọ̀lé Ọ̀run* and*Ìkọ̀lẹ́ ayé,* there are several spiritual … that the *Ẹ̀mí* that is coming to the world would encounter. This is like a war of which his conquest of those forces would determine his ability to get to the earth with all the good things (*Ìwà*) given or taken at *Ojugboromẹkun* market. Fatoba[27] is of the opinion that it is at this level that the sixteen major *Odù*(including the seventeenth *Odù*known as *Ọ̀ṣẹ́túrá*or *Odusọ*which *Babaláwo*hardly mentioned) that represented the benevolent forces are located. At the same time, all the evil forces like the black witches, the wizards, *Àbíkú, Emèrè* and *Ẹgbẹ́run* are found there, too, and their jobs is to attack any *Ẹ̀mí* that is not fully fortified before he crosses to the earth. The major *Odù* are there to perform divination and sacrifice for those *Ẹ̀mí* that are coming to *Ìkọ̀léAyé* to prevent these evil forces from tampering with their destiny. However, they, the *Ẹ̀mí,* are free to accept or reject this offer as a result of their free will which will be givento them by the Creator. A chapter in *Ìrẹ́tẹ̀ Méjì*[28]lendscredence to this point raised above where *Ifá* says:

Ìwọòtẹ̀,	You Ote
Èmiòtẹ̀	I Ote
Ọ̀tẹ̀ di méjì	Otebecame two
Lóbá di òdodo	It turned to truth
A dífáfúnAlóríirema lẹ́sẹ̀ ire	*Ifa*divination was made for the one with a blessed inner head that lacks a blessed leg
Tínbọ̀lákìkòlé ọ̀run wásíkọ̀lé ayé……	That was coming from heaven to the earth

Alorire had chosen good *Ori* and good *Ìwà* in both markets and has offered various sacrifice he ought to offer. He has also chosen the parents that will bring him to the world. On his way to the earth, he met the major *Odùs* who welcomed him and advised him to offer sacrifice again so that his journey to the world would be smooth and he would be successful on earth. He was advised to perform this sacrifice so that he would be insulated against all evil so that the evil forces will not change or tamper with all the goodies he has chosen. However, *Obatala* has sealed his destiny with his *Àṣẹ,*as a result, it needed no further fortification from anyone.

Since at that level, no one forces any *ẹmi* coming to the earth to offer *ẹbọ*, (strictly on freewill). Therefore, he was left to go. As soon as he got to the region of the witches and *Ajogun,* who have seen his destiny and all the goodies attached to it, put a mark of their *àṣẹ*on his left toe without asking him any question. He was conceived and given birth to on earth. When it was time for *Alóríre* to start making wealth, it was impossible. If wealth was in the right, his leg would take him to the left. Life became unbearable for him. He, therefore, consulted a *Babaláwo* for divination and the *Ìrẹtẹ̀ Méjì*(recited above) came out. It was then that he was told that *àṣẹ* had been put on his left toe which is taking him away from the places where he could have met with the good things he chose in heaven. He offered *ẹbọ*and he became a free man again. The verse ended with this song:

NíbiOríngbémi rè	Where the head is taking me to,
Tíunó fi dalájé	so that I will become wealthy,
Kẹ́sẹ̀ mi ó máṣibẹ̀	let my legs should not miss it.
NíbiOríngbémi rè	Where the head is taking me to,
Tíunó fi daláya,	so that I will become married man
Kẹ́sẹ̀ mi ó máṣibẹ̀	let my legs should not miss it.
NíbiOríngbémi rè	Where the head is taking me to,
Tíunó fi dọlọ́mọ	so that I will give birth to children
Kẹ́sẹ̀ mi ómámàṣibẹ̀	let my legs should not miss it.
Oríẹnilàwúreẹni	One's head is one's fortune
Bímobájílòwúrò	If I wake up early in the morning
Ma fọwọgbárími mú	I will hold my head
Oríẹnilàwúreẹni.	One's head is one's fortune

The Relationship between Man and Nature in Yoruba Understanding and its Link to the Theory of Evolution

Although there are ideas of creationism in Yoruba religion as seen in the works of Olodumare and the divinities saddled with the tasks of creation, there are also semblances of ideas of evolution in some myths and religious ideas. These show a link between man and nature. The "nature" we are talking about here include vegetation of all kinds, the birds of the air, animals on earth and in water. However, particular reference is paid to the animals in nature because of their relationship with man and what Darwin's theory is talking about. The natural environment of the Yorùbá accommodated all those creatures mentioned above and were believed to have been created by Olódùmarè before the creation of man, with the joint efforts of *Ògún* who supplied the skeleton of man, *Obàtálá,* who moulded the body and Àjàlà who was responsible for the inner head, man's lifeless body was made and Olódùmarè provided the vital force known as *Ẹ̀mí-*

[27] Ayo Salami, *Yoruba Theology and Tradition; the Man and TheSociety,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 30.
[28] Ayo Salami, *Yoruba Theology and Tradition; the Man and The Society,* Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 69

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breath[29]. *Ọ̀rúnmìlà,* the custodian of *Ifá* divination and intellectual development, who also in some accounts of Yorùbá creation stories, took part in the created order, was given the opportunity to give names to each plant, animal, bird with his own special names and identity.

According to Abimbola's[30] account, when all the creatures arrived on earth, a covenant was made among them that no species should exploit the other. This covenant included human beings too. However, as much as each species depended on the other for survival, it therefore, became important for one species to feed on the other, but not to be done with greed. Again, no matter the situation might be, no greedy member of same species feed on one another. That is, no matter how hungry is, a lion is, it will not eat its own kid or other carnivorous animals. This is the reason why the Yorùbá will say *Adìẹ kìí jẹ̀fun arawọn*[31].

In this antiquity about which we talk, some animals, birds and human beings were gifted to understand and speak the languages of human, animals and birds and that brings cordial relationship among them. This was responsible for the verses in *Ifa* referring to animals, birds and even plants understanding and speaking human language[32]. Things were done together by all creatures. However, it was unfortunate that the covenant among animals, plant, birds and human beings was broken by human. It was Peregun the wife of Orunmila, (the first woman to give birth to twins male and female) that gave birth to apes like children though they were human. They were named *Edun–Columbus* monkey. The same woman was responsible for the birth of *Erin, Ẹfọ̀n* – buffalo, *Àgbọ̀nrín, Agbe, Àlùkò* and so on. As a result of this, humans and the rest of creation regarded themselves as brothers and sisters. This assertion above corresponds with anthropologists like Richard Erskine Leakey, Milford Wolpoff, Philip Tobias, MauricaTaich and a host of others who have worked on the fossil of human and concluded that human's ancestors marched out of the forest and onto the African plane. They believe that early apes gave rise to three groups. One was *Gigantopithecus* which became extinct; another led to chimpanzee and gorillas. While the third was *Ramapithecus* whose line divided again to produce *Australopithecus* that branched to *Homo habilis,* who evolved into Homoerectus and finally becoming modern human. [33]This is possibly responsible for the reasons why some families and individuals are linked to some important animals in Yorùbáland through their *Oríkì*-praise poem, appellations and self-appraisal. Families like*Ìkòyí Ẹ̀sọ́, Olú Ọ̀jé*and so on are good examples. Parts of *Oríkìlẹ́ẹ̀jì*[34]– twins are;

Ẹ̀jìrẹ́ òrìlà	the twin
Ará Ìsọ́kùn	indigene of Isokun
Ẹ̀dúnjọbí	*Edun* combined to give birth to
Ọmọ ẹ̀dunnṣẹ́rẹ́ orí igi…	the offspring of *edun*that play on the tree

Another link between man and other creatures was given by Lijadu[35]. According to the account, when human beings were created, they were made one at a time. It was human beings that complained to Olódùmare that they needed people to populate the world. As a result Olódùmare asked human to make image of human which he commanded to become human beings. However, to the astonishment of human beings, the characters of these set of people made from images were different. They were behaving like animals, trees and birds. This factor might be responsible to why it is very easy for animals to transform to human beings at will, live and give birth to children till today. A hunter revealed his encounter with a buffalo who transformed into a beautiful woman to whom he got married to. However, the marriage did not produce any offspring as a result of the animal/human behaviours which the hunter could not tolerate.[36] However, he still retained one of the horns of the buffalo in his custody as a remembrance of her till today. *Ọya,* [37] one of the goddesses in Yoruba society and the wife of Ṣàngó, the third king of Ọ̀yọ́ Empire who was an antelope also loved transforming herself to human being when she was alive. It was when she did that in the presence of Sango that he saw her and eventually became his wife. Stories of these kinds are common in Yoruba society particularly, in *Ifá*traditions. A good example is the one sited in *Ọ̀fún Ogbè*[38]also known as*Ọ̀fúnNagbè where ifa says;*

[29] WandeAbimbola, 1997,*Ifa will mend our broken world,* U.S.A.: Aims Books, 14.
[30] WandeAbimbola, 1997,*Ifa sill mend our broken world,* 15
[31] Kolawole Abimbola, 2006, *Owe, Akanlo Ede ati Asayan Oro Yoruba,* Ilorin: Timiagbale Ventures, 15 ……
[32] WandeAbimbola 1997, *Ifasill mend our broken world*, 20.
[33] Time Magazine, 1977, *How man became man,* New York: Rockefeller Center, 48-52
[34] FamaAinaAdewaleSomadhi, 2009, *Reflections on the Wisdom of Ifa,* USA: Ile Orunmila Communications, 12
[35] E.A.Lijadu, 2001, *IfaMimoAlabalasePaleroKiini,* Ondo:J.A.Ifeoluwa Printing Press, 12-13
[36] SonsoMeji, Hunter, *Oral Interview*, October, 2016, Arulogun Village, Ibadan.
[37] Judith Gleason, 1971, *Orisha: The Gods of Yorubaland,* New York: Atheneum, 88
[38] AdewaleSomadhi FAMA Aina, 2006, *Sixteen Mythological Stories of Ifa,* U.S.A: Ilé Ọ̀rúnmìlà Communications, 111

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Tí a báwífúnni	When one is being instructed
Tí a bágbọ́	and one keeps to it
Ayé a má a yẹni	life becomes easy for one
Tí a bá sọ̀rọ̀fúnnití a bágbà	when one is being instructed and one keeps to it,
Ayé a má a yẹni	life, becomes easy for one
Àwí ìgbọ́,	lack of listening to instructions,
Àfọ̀ ìgbà	inability to accept instructions
Babaláwoọdẹ lóṣe'fáfọ́dẹ	*Ifa* priest of a hunter performed divination for a hunter.
Ọdẹnregbó jéèlùjù jé	The hunter was going to a distant forest (for hunting)
Wọ́n níkórúbọ	he was asked to offer sacrifice
Kóbá á le ríremúbọ̀	for him to be successful on his expedition.
Kí ó má mu ọtí	he was instructed not to drink wine
Kẹ́kẹ́lójúọmọòde Ẹ̀gbá	Kekeloju the daughter of Egbaland
Alábàjà lọ́rùnọmọòde Ẹ̀ṣá	Alabaja the daughter of Ijesaland
Pòrògúnmàtúyẹ̀rìọmọodò Olúwẹri	Porogunmatuyeri the daughter of Oluweri river
Oníjàyènreléìjàyè	owner of Ijaye is going to Ijaye
Orogúnilé́fàwọ̀ mi lọ̀mí	my rival showed me my skin

Such also was the case of *Ọ̀rúnsẹ̀*,[39] the deer woman of Ọ̀wọ̀, Ondo state of which *Igogo*festival is celebrated in her remembrance in Ọ̀wọ̀ till today. Some may also transform to animals for destructive purposes. They are either to destroy life or property as a result of an offence committed by such people or person that his or her property or life destroyed. .

V. Conclusion

With evidences shown above in the tradition and the religion of the Yoruba, we may conclude that human developed as the theory postulated. It is also possible that man did not develop as the theory suggests. Rather, it is safer to conclude that human can transform at will to suit the prevailing situation. Olódùmarè the creator endowed man with enormous power which man can use at will. One of such is the ability to transform to any suitable animals. This is not limited to Nigeria or the Yoruba alone; it is a general phenomenon in Africa. Furthermore, one may be tempted to ask some basic questions on the bases for the acceptance of the theory of evolution. If humans evolved through the course of history to the point where we are now, one might wonder and ask; has the evolution stopped? Would the future generation of humans boast of species superior to what we have now? Likely answers may be available, to suffice as tenable answers to these questions, using the example of new born babies. It is observed that babies born in the past take two or three days to open their eyes. This is no longer the case in recent years, as babies now open their eyes immediately they are born. Similarly, children born these days have some kind of superior intelligence which makes them savvy in the operations of electronic and other sophisticated gadgets, which the older generations sometimes seem to be struggling to understand. Is this change some kind of evolution? The answer may be affirmative and it may be not. However, a fact remains quite obvious; a human being that lived in the last century would certainly be totally lost if she/he is suddenly confronted with living in this age and generation. Things are moving, things are changing so fast; also life must move and change with the tide of time. Life cannot afford to remain constant.

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