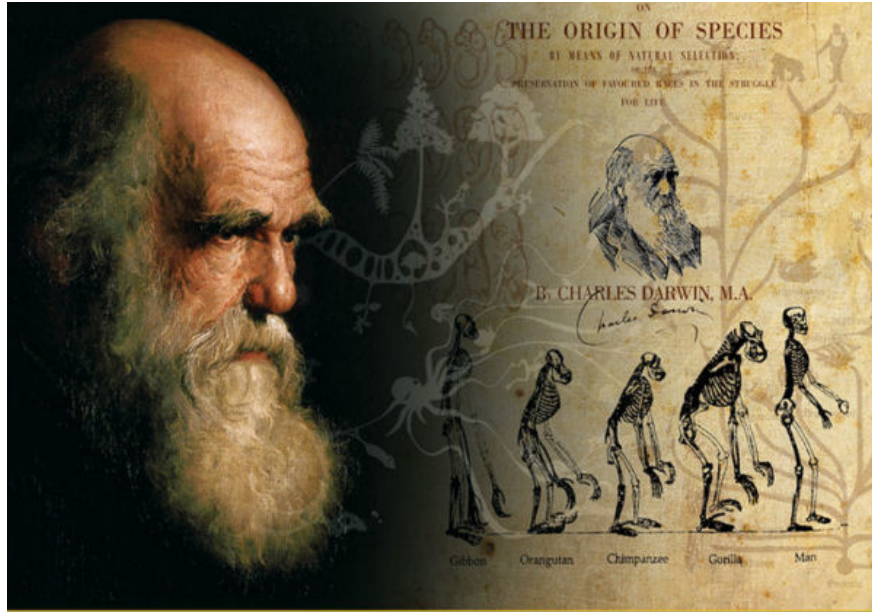


# Overcoming Darwinism

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Darwin's theory has had a decisive influence on Modernity and continues to be present in our imagination. It affirms that "there must in every case be a struggle for existence"[1]. It has thus spread a mentality that contradicts the Christian vision of the human being and of the world. The current ecological crisis is no stranger to it. Considering that the struggle is inevitable, "Human beings and material objects no longer extend a friendly hand to one another"[2].

### **A dialectic of permanent conflict**

Ignoring the natural ties that bind us to all creatures, modern culture has accentuated the separation and conflictive antagonism. Man has been defined as a wolf (*homo homini lupus*), a being internally divided (ontological dualism) and clearly detached from all other creatures (ontic dualism). The other is seen as a dangerous competitor, who must be defeated or outwitted (social Darwinism) because, as Hobbes said, "your death is my life." Nature has been considered a battlefield ("eat or be eaten"), where only the strongest and most gifted survive.

Therefore, a dialectic of perennial conflict has been justified at all levels, together with the despotic anthropocentrism, and the throwaway culture. For instance, it has been asserted that, in economics, a war of interests is the most effective way to foster progress ("business is business"). In politics, a perpetual arms race is supposed to secure peace ("*Si vis pacem para bellum*"). In medicine, holistic medical treatments are left aside to promote a direct fight against pathogens. At the communication level, fake news are used as weapons to hurt and nullify opponents. At the socio-cultural level, homogenization is forced to get rid of any uncomfortable diversity. The elimination of the diverse, at any level, would be a necessary pruning for the social tree to revitalize and grow.

Regarding nature, priority has been given to the "the aspect of the conquest and exploitation of resources," ignoring the "capacity to accept the environment." In this way, "the environment as <<resource>> risks threatening the environment as <<home>>"[3].

### **In nature, cooperation is more important than conflict**

Contradicting this conflictual vision that has prevailed in the Western world, many scientific data show that, in nature, cooperation prevails over struggle and "unity is greater than conflict"[4]. Lynn Magulis, for example, questions the Darwinian concept of evolution and affirms that collaboration has been more decisive than aggressive competition: "Life did not take over the globe by combat, but by networking. Life forms multiplied and

complexified by co-opting others, not just by killing them”[5]. The numerous forms of symbiosis and dependence among different organisms are a good example of this collaboration that has made evolution possible.

Even inside the human body, the bacterial flora helps us to digest and protects us from other harmful microorganisms. Furthermore, there are many examples of cooperative and bidirectional interaction between different species.

Interdependence also occurs between creatures and the environment in which they live. C. Darwin insisted that the environment modifies organisms, causing natural selection. Other studies have shown that organisms also modify the environment[6]. In fact, “everything is related” and everything is interdependent.

## Conclusion

To restore the harmonious and respectful relationship with nature, we must change our way of seeing ourselves, of seeing reality, and of relating to it. Indeed, “there can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself” (LS 118), for the ecological crisis is an anthropological and ethical crisis.

The Church reminds us that nature is a network of relationships and that everything in it is related. Therefore, “greed and selfishness – both individual and collective – are contrary to the order of creation, an order which is characterized by mutual interdependence” (WDP 1990, 8).

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[1] Darwin C., *On the origin of Species*, Broadview, Peterborough 2003, 134.

[2] LS 106. These paragraphs and a more extensive exposition of this subject can be found in our book: Carbajo-Núñez Martín, *Everything is Connected. Integral ecology and communication in the Digital Age*, TAU Publishing, Phoenix (AZ) 2021.

[3] John Paul II, «Address to conference on environment and health» (March 24, 1997), in *InsGP2*, XX, 1 (1997) 522, n. 2.

[4] LS 198; EG 228.

[5] Margulis L. – Sagan D., *Microcosmos: four billion years of evolution from our microbial ancestors*, Univ. California, Berkeley 1997, 29. “The story strongly demonstrates the inevitability of some kind of cooperation among organisms”. *Ib.* 121

[6] "Phenotypic plasticity enables organisms to develop functional phenotypes despite variation and environmental change via phenotypic accommodation" without genetic change. West-Eberhard M.J., *Developmental Plasticity and Evolution*, Oxford UP, Oxford (UK) 2003, 51.