



Published on NCSE (<https://ncse.com>)

[Home](#) > Dawkins reviews Behe in The New York Times

SHARE TWEET EMAIL [PRINT](#) [1]

[Steve Newton](#) [2]

07.02.2007

[Dawkins reviews Behe in The New York Times](#) [3]

Writing in *The New York Times* Sunday Book Review (July 1, 2007), Richard Dawkins [reviews](#) [4] *The Edge of Evolution* (The Free Press, 2007), the latest book from "intelligent design" proponent Michael Behe. Even in his opening paragraph, he pulls no punches: "I had expected to be as irritated by Michael Behe's second book as by his first. I had not expected to feel sorry for him." Alluding to Behe's testimony in *Kitzmiller v. Dover*, Dawkins writes, "After his humiliation in court, Behe -- the star witness for the creationist side -- might have wished to re-establish his scientific credentials and start over. Unfortunately, he had dug himself in too deep. He had to soldier on. *The Edge of Evolution* is the messy result, and it doesn't make for attractive reading.

Focusing on Behe's contention that there are not enough mutations to account for the history of life, Dawkins remonstrates, "If mutation, rather than selection, really limited evolutionary change, this should be true for artificial no less than natural selection. Domestic breeding relies upon exactly the same pool of mutational variation as natural selection," and notes that Behe's claim is thus already refuted by the results of artificial selection. "From Newfies to Yorkies, from Weimaraners to water spaniels, from Dalmatians to dachshunds, as I incredulously close this book I seem to hear mocking barks and deep, baying howls of derision from 500 breeds of dogs -- every one descended from a timber wolf within a time frame so short as to seem, by geological standards, instantaneous."

Dawkins concludes his review by castigating Behe for his hubris: "If correct, Behe's calculations would at a stroke confound generations of mathematical geneticists, who have repeatedly shown that evolutionary rates are not limited by mutation. Single-handedly, Behe is taking on Ronald Fisher, Sewall Wright, J. B. S. Haldane, Theodosius Dobzhansky, Richard Lewontin, John Maynard Smith and hundreds of their talented co-workers and intellectual descendants. Notwithstanding the inconvenient existence of dogs, cabbages and pouter pigeons, the entire corpus of mathematical genetics, from 1930 to today, is flat wrong.

Michael Behe, the disowned biochemist of Lehigh University, is the only one who has done his sums right. You think?" Dawkins holds the Charles Simonyi chair for the public understanding of science at Oxford University.

[Anti-Evolution](#) [5]

[2007](#) [6]

[National](#) [7]

[+ read](#) [3]

Source URL: <https://ncse.com/news/2007/07/dawkins-reviews-behe-new-york-times-001178#comment-0>

Links

[1] <https://ncse.com/printpdf/13128>

[2] <https://ncse.com/users/steve-newton>

[3] <https://ncse.com/news/2007/07/dawkins-reviews-behe-new-york-times-001178>

[4] <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/01/books/review/Dawkins-t.html>

[5] <https://ncse.com/news/anti-evolution>

[6] <https://ncse.com/news/2007>

[7] <https://ncse.com/news/national>