

FROM GOD OR FROM GOO: Is Evolution Fact or Theoretical Fiction?

Introduction

Two months ago we were treated to yet another sweeps month on television. Part of NBC's battle for supremacy this time 'round involved yet another "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" show, "Who wants to be a Super Millionaire?" One of the new lifelines created for the show was a team of three "wise guys and gals" you could ask for help. One of the questions that caught my attention was this one: "How long ago did life begin on earth?" Interestingly all three wise folks – and the contestant – got the answer wrong by a few million years. The "correct" answer was "3.8 billion years ago".

Whether you're reading National Geographic, watching the Discovery Channel or tuning in to National Public Radio, the answer you get for how we all got to be here is the same: 3.8 billion years ago, the inanimate, lifeless chemicals of the surface of the earth generated something brand new: the first living thing. This is not a theory, we are told. It is fact. To argue against evolution is to teach a flat earth, or refute the law of gravity. In fact Richard Dawkins, currently a professor at Oxford University in England, has said "It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid, or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that)." ¹

Before we truly begin, however, I'd like to point out that I was not raised a creationist or in a fundamentalist church. Far from it. At best, I grew up as a theistic evolutionist. My "conversion" experience, if you might call it that, to a more conservative Christian viewpoint came in part through my readings about evolution. I felt like Michael Behe, a tenured professor of biochemistry at LeHigh University, did when he started reading more about evolution. I'd like to quote you his words:

[There were] very difficult problems for Darwinian evolution which I had never thought about and which no one in all my studies leading to my Ph.D. had bothered to mention...I immediately recognized that they *were* difficult problems, and I became angry that nobody had brought these up. I felt like I was being led down the garden path to a conclusion that didn't really have the evidential support that I thought it had. ²

I would also like to point out that I'm a Lutheran pastor. Lutheranism has a longstanding belief in the separation of church and world. What the church believes is theological truth can't be proven rationally through the methods of the world. Lutherans will usually not quote Scripture when they disapprove of a government practice. So I will not be arguing for a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 tonight. Such an interpretation is outside the realm of science. That isn't to say I don't believe in a literal interpretation; it simply means that as a Lutheran Christian I don't expect that science will ever be able to "prove" Genesis to be true. I'm not even going to give an iron-clad "disproof" for evolution. What I will be doing is raising some

¹ Thomas Woodward, *Doubts About Darwin*, (BakerBooks: Grand Rapids, MI, 2003), 109.

² Woodward, 62.

serious doubts about what you might think you know about how life began. Apology to Dr. Dawkins of Oxford, but what you're in for is a half hour of ignorance, stupidity and insanity. I hope you'll enjoy it!

The Problem with Evolution

I would like to begin with a bold statement, made by Dr. Michael Denton, an avowed agnostic, medical doctor, and scientist, in his 1985 book, *Evolution: a Theory in Crisis*:

Macroevolution – continuous evolutionary development through the selection of random mutations – is not supported by findings in any area of biology. The theory is supported neither by empirical evidence nor by thought experiments, that is, by attempts at reconstructing plausible evolutionary pathways.³

I'd like to focus in on one word of that quote: *macroevolution*. What we'll be discussing tonight is not what Michael Denton calls *microevolution*: the small adaptive changes within a species of animal or plant that result in changes of form or behavior. *Microevolution* is a demonstrable fact in nature. Sometimes in history human beings have been taller, sometimes shorter, sometimes darker or lighter. What is in question is the belief that all species on earth – of plant and animal – came into being through purely mechanistic, natural processes. In order to guide us through the question I'd like to contrast the FACT of evolution with the possibility that it is a FICTION. In rather cheesy form, I know, I'm going to use the letters of the word FICTION to stand for the most important scientific challenges to the theory of macroevolution: F is for Fossils, IC is for Irreducible Complexity, T is for Tuned Universe, I is for Information, and ON stands for Only Natural.

F is for Fossils

If you were to ask almost anyone who knows basic biology for evidence that macroevolution is a well-attested theory, the answer you would probably get is the fossil record. We have fossils of all sorts of animals and plants, going back millions of years. We have fossils from a long time ago of small, simple plants and animals. Then, as we go through time, we have fossils of more and more complex animals. Theories of evolution predicted this to be true, there it is, voila. Evolution is a validated theory.

Well, that's not quite true. In fact, there are serious and significant problems with the fossil record. The problems existed at the time of Darwin, and he recognizes that far from proving his theory, the fossil record didn't seem to help much at all. Looking at the fossils that were known in his time, Darwin asked:

Why, if species have descended from other species by insensibly fine gradations, do we not everywhere see innumerable transitional forms? Why is not all nature in confusion instead of the species being, as we see them, well defined?⁴

³ Woodward, 49.

⁴ Woodward, 121.

Here's the thinking. Evolution predicts that all the species on earth came from original simple lifeforms that mutated ever so slightly, over generations gradually giving birth to the many species we see today. If that is so, where are the fossil records of all the species that are not quite one species, and not quite another, but a little bit of both? If certain dinosaurs mutated a little bit over generations to eventually become birds, for example, where are all the animals that are not quite dinosaurs and not quite birds?

You may remember that National Geographic was sure that they'd found one of these birdosaurs back in 2000. They called it Archaeopteryx. It was a fossil of a dinosaur with feathers and a tail built for flight; an astonishing find. National Geographic reported that "This fossil is perhaps the best evidence since Archaeopteryx that birds did, in fact, evolve from certain types of carnivorous dinosaurs." Except that it turned out to be a fake. Xu Xing is a paleontologist with the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology. He was the one who reported the falsification to National Geographic in May of 2000, which National Geographic had to accept.⁵ The search continues. The problem is that no one ever remembers the retractions; they remember the splashy discoveries. Like Piltdown Man, an early human ancestor. Mistake. Or Nebraska Man, used to support the teaching of evolution during the Scopes trial of 1925. Mistake. Or Peking Man – well, in that case, the fossil has mysteriously disappeared. So what are we left with? Not much, even when it comes to even humanity's nearest fossilized ancestors.⁶

The problem gets more serious when you realize that almost all paleontologists – those who study fossils – recognize the problem for what it is. Professor J.Y.Chen, another Chinese paleontologist, and atheist to boot, has been working on one of the richest fossil beds in the world in China. He says the fossil record points to devolution – the sudden appearance of multiple species gradually reducing to the ones we see today – rather than the other way around. About Dr. Chen's discoveries, noted anti-evolutionist Philip Johnson wrote,

Darwinian theory predicts a "cone of increasing diversity," as the first living organism, or first animal species, gradually and continually diversified to create the higher levels of taxonomic order. The animal fossil record more resembles such a cone turned upside down, with the phyla present at the start and thereafter decreasing.⁷

The late Stephen Jay Gould, who wrote about evolution in many popular magazines including *Time*, knew about the fossil problem. He wrote,

The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches: the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils...I wish in no way to impugn the validity of gradualism. I wish only to point out that it was never 'seen' in the rocks.⁸

⁵ http://fpeng.peopledaily.com.cn/200005/11/eng20000511_40575.html, last accessed April 6, 2004.

⁶ Norman Geisler, *Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (BakerBooks: Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), 490.

⁷ http://www.darwinismrefuted.com/natural_history_1_02.html

⁸ Woodward, 40-41.

In fact Gould was so frustrated with the fossil problem that he and another scientist proposed a serious and major modification to evolutionary theory to account for it, called “punctuated equilibrium.” The theory postulates that transitions between species are so rapid that intermediate features are never preserved in the fossil record. In other words, evolution happens so fast that we can’t see it. Very convenient – and very, very difficult to disprove! What would a scientist say if I, as a Christian, told them that the resurrection of Jesus was a proven fact, despite the fact that I have no picture or video of the event. They’d laugh me out of the room! I could believe it if I wanted to, but they would need proof. Yet despite the complete lack of fossil evidence to absolutely confirm macroevolutionary theory, you will still read things like the following in high school textbooks:

The fossil record suggests that macroevolution is indeed gradual, paced at a rate that leads to the conclusion that it is based on hundreds or thousands of gene substitutions no different in kind from the ones examined in our case histories.⁹

IC is for Irreducible Complexity

If F is for fossils, then the IC in fiction stands for irreducible complexity. Here we come closer to home, in this sense. The professor that really put forward this problem with macroevolution is a tenured professor of biochemistry at LeHigh University just north of Philadelphia. Dr. Behe defined an irreducibly complex system as:

A single system of well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning...if a biological system cannot be produced gradually it would have to arise an integrated unit, in one fell swoop, for natural selection to have anything to act upon.¹⁰

What, you may ask, is an “irreducibly complex” system? Let me use a simple example that Behe himself uses: a mousetrap. A mousetrap has a catch, a hammer, a spring, a platform, and a holding bar. Take away any one part, and the mousetrap ceases to perform its function. Darwin himself recognized that if an irreducibly complex system was ever found in the biological kingdom, it would be a huge blow to his own theory. He himself wrote: “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely breakdown.”¹¹

Do such systems exist? Behe says yes, without a doubt. He himself notes two human examples: the biochemical mechanism for blood clotting and the eye. But let’s just look at the eye as one example. In 2001 PBS produced a special called “Evolution” which purported to show the steps needed for the evolution of the eye. First, you start with a light sensitive flat patch on an animal’s face. Then the patch curves in, making sight more focused. Then a lens develops, then finally a complete eyeball. Voila! An eye has evolved from a light sensitive patch to a fully

⁹ Woodward, 123.

¹⁰ Michael Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box*, (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1996), 39.

¹¹ Woodward, 26.

functional eyeball. There's just one problem, says Behe. The light sensitive patch! This is the problem! The light sensitive patch itself that is the irreducibly complex machine. The biochemical steps involved in converting the light hitting the "patch" into vision are staggering. If any one of the biochemical steps involved in the process does not occur, then neither does vision. The shape of the eyeball is an insignificant problem in comparison. Philip Johnson has this to say about the challenge of irreducible complexity to macroevolution:

The eye and the wing are the most common illustrations, but it would be misleading to give the impression that either is a special case; human and animal bodies are literally packed with similar marvels. How can such things be built up by "infinitesimally small inherited variations, each profitable to the preserved being"? The first step toward a new function – such as vision or the ability to fly – would not necessarily provide any advantage unless the other parts required for the function appeared at the same time. As an analogy, imagine a medieval alchemist producing by chance a silicon chip; in the absence of a supporting computer technology the prodigious invention would be useless, and he would throw it away.¹²

T is for Tuned Universe

Third, after fossils and irreducible complexity, we consider the tuning of the universe. I used to think this was the weakest argument against evolution. I think now it's one of the stronger ones. Not because it necessarily disproves evolution, but because it reveals how a particular bias of evolutionists that makes their science particularly weak. More on that later when we discuss "O" and "N".

The late astrophysicist Fred Hoyle, who came up with the term "Big Bang" to discuss how his group of scientists thought the universe came about, is described as an "intransigent atheist." Even so, when he looked at the universe and the earth's place in it, he was forced to admit, "A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature."¹³ What Hoyle meant is this: that the particular way our universe is set up happens to also be ideal for life, but it didn't have to be that way. In fact, it could have been set up in almost an infinite number of other ways. But it isn't, and that seems like a lot of fortuitous coincidences.

We, and all creatures on earth, are made up of two essential elements: carbon and water. In order to have life, we need a molecule stable enough that it can with stand a lot of stress, but still be able to react with other chemicals. "Carbon excels in this regard...other elements aren't even in the race."¹⁴ We also need a liquid that can transport molecules around a large living body. That liquid has to be able to dissolve almost anything, yet preserve the chemicals it has dissolved intact during transport. Water, the most abundant chemical compound in the universe, happens to be ideally suited to this purpose. In fact the unique characteristics of water are itself a marvel

¹² Woodward, 118.

¹³ Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay W. Richards, *The Privileged Planet*, (Regnery Publishing Inc, Washington DC, 2003), 263.

¹⁴ Gonzalez, 32.

to chemists and physicists. In the words of planetary scientist John Lewis from the University of Arizona, “Despite our best efforts...to seek out other solvents and structural chemistries for life, we are forced to conclude that water is the best of all possible solvents, and carbon compounds are...the best of all possible carriers of complex information.”¹⁵

Our solar system itself contains many elements that seem almost mandatory for a life-sustaining planet. A life-bearing planet needs a moon just our size to keep the planet from wobbling about its axis too much. Our planet wobbles a few degrees every few million years, but Mars wobbles so much that life on that planet couldn’t exist for very long. The planet also needs an outer Gas Giant or two about where Jupiter is to sweep the solar system of debris that could otherwise destroy it. An inner, terrestrial planet like Mars also helps to tidy up the edges of the asteroid belt. The planet needs to be close, but not too close, to a stable sun like ours. In fact, a sun like ours turns out to be quite rare in the Galaxy. So we need a good orbit, a nice sized moon, a good distance from a fairly rare Sun, and nicely positioned and sized planetary neighbors. Our place in the galaxy itself is fortunate: too close to the center, or to a spiral arm, or to the plane of the galaxy would all make life incredibly difficult because of life and radiation.¹⁶

Also important for life are the so-called “cosmological constants”. The speed of light, the ratio of the force of gravity to electromagnetism, the rate of expansion of space, all of these are set to exactly the values needed to sustain complex life and create a meaningful universe. This fine-tuning is so stunning that it has forced physicists to assume the existence of multiple universes, of which ours is just one. In other words, our universe is too special to have happened by one role of the die. Therefore there must have been millions of roles, and we happen to be living in one. We can’t see the other universes. We don’t know where they are. But they HAVE to be there. As two scientists have written,

The seeming coincidence that the universe has the requisite special properties that allow for life suddenly seems much less miraculous if we adopt the point of view that our universe, the region of space-time that we are connected to, is but one of countless universes. In other words, our universe is but one small part of a *multiverse*, a large ensemble of universes, each with its own variations of physical law.¹⁷

I is for Information

So F is for fossils, IC is for irreducible complexity, and T is for tuning of the universe. I, then, stands for information. What is information? It is neither matter, nor energy, but a third element in the universe. German scientist Werner Gitt came up with five things necessary for information.¹⁸ It must use a set of symbols, like an alphabet; there must be a specific way of arranging the alphabet, like grammar; the language must be able to convey a message, and that message must be meaningful to sender and receiver. To look for information, we look first for a language and then learn to understand that language.

¹⁵ Gonzalez, 35.

¹⁶ Gonzalez, 152.

¹⁷ Gonzalez, 269.

¹⁸ Werner Gitt, *In The Beginning Was Information*, (CLV, Bielefeld, Germany, 1997), 47.

Before the 1950s, life had no code. It had no alphabet or grammar, and therefore no one thought of putting information theory to bear on the problem of life. Until the discovery of DNA: Deoxyribonucleic Acid. Suddenly we had discovered the language of life. A DNA strand is the medium of information storage for all living beings. The code consists of four letters: Adenine, Thymine, Cytosine and Guanine. These chemical “letters” combine to spell out 1 to 6 three letter words that make up the 20 amino acids. These acids then, in turn, combine to spell out all the proteins required for life. The library of information stored in one cell is the equivalent of 1,000 regular library books, and it takes 20-80 minutes for a healthy cell to copy a new library and create a new cellular home for that information.¹⁹ The amount of information contained in a human cell is around the capacity of a compact disk.²⁰ In other words, the information contained in one human cell would fill a whole CD.

This is a huge problem. Suddenly evolutionary theory has to account not only for the rise of complex information in life, but the evolution of the means to store that information. For example, every evolutionist loves to talk about the thousand monkeys typing in a room for a thousand years who might eventually produce Shakespeare’s Hamlet by chance. The odds are against it, but given enough time, it could happen. But the given in this example is paper and typewriters – storage mediums. If the monkeys represent random mutations, then the typewriter represents a DNA molecule, the keys on the typewriter the different amino acids. For evolution to work, the storage medium would have had to have developed independent of the actual information to be stored: the chances of both occurring by chance become unbelievably astronomical – you then enter the realm of FAITH that it had to have happened that way.²¹

Even Francis Crick, an absolute atheist and one of the discoverers of DNA realized this. He wrote, “An *honest* man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a *miracle*, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.”²² In his book, *Life Itself*, Crick proposed that the seeds of life – DNA – must have come from outer space, probably by some advanced civilization that seeded the earth.²³

Another prominent scientist, Manfred Eigen, stated that information was the central problem facing origins-of-life research: “Our task is to find an algorithm, a natural law that leads to the origin of information.”²⁴ So far, though, no one has disproved a central theorem of Information Theory, that “there is no known natural law through which matter can give rise to information, neither is any physical process or material phenomenon known that can do this.”²⁵

ON is for Only Natural

The last two letters of our talk tonight are “O” and “N”, which I suggest stand for “Only Natural.” This is the most important point of our discussion tonight. You might well ask; if all

¹⁹ Gitt, 90.

²⁰ Gitt, 188.

²¹ William Dembski, *Intelligent Design*, (Baker Books, 2000), 166.

²² *Panspermia*, <www.creationdefense.org/68.htm>, 9 March 2003

²³ Francis Crick, *Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature*, (1981)

²⁴ Dembski, 153.

²⁵ Gitt, 79.

of what I've said is true, and there are serious scientific challenges to evolution, why would Richard Dawkins call those scientists "ignorant, stupid, or insane"? Because evolution is not simply a scientific theory: it is a philosophical presupposition. In other words, evolution is also a *belief*.

Richard Dawkins wrote that "atheism might have been logically tenable before Darwin, [but] Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist."²⁶ This is what the debate is really about: the fear that if these problems with evolution were ever get out in the open, the possibility of a god might rear its ugly head. And as everyone knows, every good scientist must leave their faith at the door if they are to be credible.

Philip Johnson explains it this way: "Because science cannot study a cosmic purpose, the cosmos must have no purpose; because science cannot make value judgments, values must be purely subjective; because science cannot study God, only purposeless material forces can have been involved in biological creation..."²⁷ Darwinistic evolution, for many scientists and people, is no longer a scientific theory – it is religion, with high priests who protect the faith from outsiders, temples excluded to unbelievers, and a demand for unquestioning belief, no matter what evidence is produced to the contrary. In other words, "A scientist has said it, I believe it, that settles it."

This has not been the first time science has run into this problem. About 70 years ago a few scientists proposed that the universe did not always exist, but began as a big bang. One scientist explaining this new theory to Walther Nernst, a chemist, in 1938, wrote this about their conversation: "[Nerst] said, the view that there might be an age to the universe was not science...He explained that an infinite duration of time was a basic element of all scientific thought, and to deny this would mean to betray the very foundations of science...we could not form a scientific hypothesis which contradicted the very foundations of science. He was just angry..."²⁸ In other words, the Big Bang theory was rejected by many scientists not for scientific reasons, but because it might suggest that in the beginning was god.

Even hardened evolutionists are starting to realize their theory is more belief than science. After debating certain Intelligent Design folks, evolutionist Michael Ruse told the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1993 that "evolution, akin to religion, involves making certain *a priori* or metaphysical assumptions, which at some level cannot be proven empirically...And I think that the way to deal with creationism, but the way to deal with evolution also, is not to deny these facts, but to recognize them..."²⁹

Conclusion

I hope these arguments have opened your mind to the possibility that what we – and scientists – think we know may not in fact be so. Interestingly, many evolutionists have stopped arguing against the scientific points I've written about above. Instead, they've started to dismiss the points by asking what kind of god would have created the universe we see around us? In other

²⁶ Woodward, 70.

²⁷ Woodward, 140.

²⁸ Gonzalez, 171.

²⁹ Woodward, 147.

words, if the arguments presented above turn out to overturn evolution, what kind of god created this world? You know what: that's a *theological* argument! To answer that kind of argument, we would need to see if what Christianity, for example, has to say about god is compatible with this creation, stinging wasps, cancer, and all. And that's a topic for the next few weeks. I hope you'll join us. I close with a quote from Scientist Robert Jastrow: "Science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. As the scientist scales the final peak, he meets a band of theologians who've been sitting there for centuries."