

The Evolution/Creation Debate

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Evolution/Creation Debate

Introduction

The debate between an “evolution” and “creation” account of the origin of life is of critical importance to our society and culture. The scientific community treats evolution as a fact. This is reflected in scientific textbooks, museum displays and in what is taught in public schools. The religious community is split on how evolution is to be treated. Christian fundamentalists view evolution as contrary to Biblical truth and hence to be dismissed. Liberals have no problem reconciling evolution of life with creation by God, provided God was somewhat involved in the process. Some argue that “science” and “faith” should be separated and that one can hold naturalistic views of science without compromising ones faith. Others see this as a fatal mistake, leading to the ultimate irrelevance (death) of God. The implications for our understanding of knowledge and truth are immense, so it is a debate that is of vital importance in the academic and public arena.

“Evolution”

One of the critical issues in the debate is understanding what is meant by “evolution”. The term can be used to mean a variety of very different things. It can be used, for example, to explain minor variations in the color of moths when subjected to changes in environmental conditions such as drought, or finch beak length variations (micro-evolution) or it can mean the change of one species into another implying descent from a common ancestor for all living things (macro-evolution). Participants in the debate often jump from one meaning to another causing confusion. To engage in the debate, one must ensure understanding of exactly what is meant. For example, the 1995 official position of the American National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) is that

“the diversity of life on earth is the outcome of evolution: an unsupervised, impersonal, unpredictable and natural process of temporal descent with genetic modification that is affected by natural selection, chance, historical contingencies and changing environments”¹

While the words “unsupervised” and “impersonal” were subsequently dropped, the implication is clear: Life is the result of purely naturalistic processes. However, even this definition, uses words such as “descent with modification” (which no one disagrees with), to imply that the same mechanism that causes

¹ Defeating Darwinism p.15

descendants to vary in features from their parents created the enormous diversity of life on earth. Evolutionists often resort to “definition swap” to make criticism of evolution seem foolish.

Philosophical Naturalism (Materialism)

Foundational to the Darwinian evolution is its uncompromising philosophy of naturalism or materialism which believes that matter is all that there is. “In the beginning were the particles”. No supernatural force or being is allowed, making it clearly atheistic. Darwinists often play down this aspect, so as not to offend those who believe in God, however, it is fundamental to their position. In fact, they often go one step further, defining science as the study of matter, making anything outside of materialism, non scientific. Anyone who suggests a Creator becomes “non scientific” and hence irrational. This jump is clearly unwarranted, as the word science means “knowledge” and there are different types of knowledge, of which knowledge of matter is one. To achieve a fully materialistic theory, Darwin had to explain how every complex characteristic and organism came into being by purely natural forces. This led him to the theory of Natural Selection in which change occurred in a great many of tiny steps which over a long period of time created all the complex life we now see.

Natural Selection

Darwin’s classic book *Origin of the Species* argued that new species appeared on earth by a process he called ‘descent with modification’². Secondly, he argued that this process could account for all the diversity of life on earth because all living beings descended from a few common ancestors and ultimately one common microbe. Thirdly, he believed that this process was guided by natural selection in which only the fittest organisms survived and passed onto their descendants those characteristics which helped them survive. The critical issue is not whether natural selection and descent with modification occurs (obviously it does to some extent as we all differ from our ancestors), but whether this process is capable of producing new and different organs, organisms, species and the vast diversity of life that we see today. Darwin’s belief was that random mutations from generation to generation were capitalized on by natural selection much like a dog breeder capitalizes on variations to produce the characteristics desired by selective breeding. However, this analogy is spurious because dog breeding requires an intelligent mind to do the selecting. Natural selection essentially means death with those with evolving characteristics simply leaving more offspring, and those without dying off. Left to natural selection, dogs would not degenerate

² Darwin On Trial p. 16

to common mutts, not produce new characteristics. Dawkins, a modern Darwinist, makes the same mistake when he shows how random generation of letters by a computer can produce a phrase, if we wait around long enough for the right letters to come up. But, to decide what the "right letters" are requires forethought by an intelligent being, not a purposeless process.

In addition, natural selection had to work in such a way that each tiny step was immediately beneficial to the organism causing it to better survive than those organisms which did not possess it. "Survival of the Fittest" was the explanation. However, this is a tautology. Darwinists define the fittest as those that survive. Nothing else can matter. So survival of the fittest means "Survival of those that survive" So this is given as the answer for how a snake can become a man. Yet, for Darwin to remain fully naturalist, something like "Natural Selection" just had to be true. Nature is all that there is, so evolution must have occurred and natural selection must be true. Because of their *a priori* commitment to naturalism, only evidence supporting their view is accepted, and opposing evidence dismissed.

The Evidence

Mutations

How could complex organs such as eyes and wings evolve via natural selection? Specifically, how could these be built up by many infinitesimal small inherited variations, each of which had to be immediately beneficial to the animal? It is like trying to design a microchip by many tiny changes, each of which has no "memory" of what the final result needs to look like. In addition, this "eye" must work in conjunction with a brain that must develop simultaneously to use the benefit and each tiny step must be so immediately advantageous to account for a predominance of its offspring. Darwinists have offered all sorts of explanations involving micro and macro mutations, but none are plausible. Yet, natural selection must have occurred because of their commitment to evolution as a "fact".

Fossils

Examination of the fossil evidence clearly shows that each of the divisions of the biological realm (classes, orders, kingdoms) conform to basic structural plan with very few intermediate types. There is no evidence of the massive transitional forms that would be required to support evolution. The exact opposite is true. What shows up in the record is *stasis*, forms staying the same for millions of years, with minor variations, zig zags, sudden appearances and extinction, but no transitional forms at all. Darwinists answer that the fossil record is incomplete, and that transitional forms occurred, but were never fossilized. In other words, evolution was always occurring somewhere else, only to appear in the record after the transformation was

complete. This has led to the emergence of the theory of “punctuated equilibrium” in which organisms were separated from the main group for a period of time, evolved into a new species, and returned, thus leaving us with a discontinuous fossil record. However, evolution cannot always be going on “somewhere else”. At some point some evidence must emerge. Yet despite the intense search, none ever does. Could it be that it never occurred?

Search for Ancestors

Implicit in Darwinian evolution is the need for common ancestors. The Darwinian story is that fish evolved to reptiles, reptiles to mammals, reptiles to birds and apes to humans. However, the reality is that no ancestral transitional forms exist in the fossil records, nor do we see any today. The evidence shows rather that these forms stay the same for long periods of time. Anthropologists committed to Darwinism disagree about which ancestors are the right ones and no consensus seems to be emerging. Despite this, a great deal of effort goes into maintaining the evolutionary story in education, scientific exhibits in museums, etc. This is after, the secular “creation story” of our time and must be sustained at all costs. The scientific “priesthood” has a vested interest in maintaining the public’s acceptance of evolutionary naturalism.

Molecular and Prebiological Issues

On the molecular front, Darwinists point to the fact that there is very little DNA difference between chimpanzees and humans and that they are 99% the same. However, this in no way proves common ancestry, just as the classifications of taxonomists simply show that two organisms are more similar to each other than to a third. This says nothing about common ancestry because the mechanism has not been shown to occur. In the same way, no evidence exists to show that complex molecules with a certain set of DNA have the wherewithal to change into another type of molecule. Like still begets like and molecular evolution is just not observed. However, molecular issues to raise the topic of where does the complex *information* required to produce a molecule come from. Even the smallest molecule is incredibly complex and contains more information than all the volumes of an encyclopedia. Geneticists talk about how genetic information is stored in languages of proteins and acids and is translated to other forms. They are using the language of intelligent design yet always revert to materialist stance when pressed. A naturalistic explanation of all this is about as satisfying as using the properties of paper and ink to account for the one of Shakespeare’s plays. The information transcends the material and clearly points to creative intelligence. The information for life is irreducibly complex because none of the information can be left out without the life ceasing to be life. This clearly points to intelligent design for a purpose.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to Darwinists is to account for how life got started in the first place. Evolution presupposes that life occurred that was capable of reproducing so that natural selection could work. But how did this life start. The naturalist explanation is that the first molecule of living matter emerged by chance from chemical soup. Yet no one has demonstrated how this could occur.

It is truly amazing that Darwinists persistently stick to their views, when the overwhelming evidence with respect to life is that it has been intelligently designed for a purpose. Yet Darwinists persist in defining life as matter evolving by natural selection and insist that only this position is scientific and rational. This commitment to metaphysical naturalism is at the heart of the Darwinian claims. In effect it is a religion of their own, but they refuse to acknowledge it as such.

Knowledge and Science

The 1981 challenge to an Arkansas law that required balance treatment for creation science in the classroom, was a victory for naturalists in getting their definition of science accepted. Judge Overton provided a definition of science based on the testimony of expert witnesses presented by a coalition of groups eager to defend naturalism and religious liberalism. This definition required that anything that was science be guided by and be explanatory by a reference to natural law, be testable against the empirical world, have tentative conclusions, and be falsifiable. Creation science did not meet these criteria, because it appeals to the supernatural and is not testable, falsifiable or explanatory with reference to natural law. The judge was persuaded that “creation” in the general sense is consistent with “evolution” in the scientific sense, but in this he was clearly misled. Evolution as defined by the scientific community does not allow a “divine foot in the door” and any agreement between Theistic evolutionists and naturalists is for political expediency only. There can be no acceptance of a Creator (of any sort) by naturalists. Interestingly enough, many of evolution’s claims themselves do not pass Overton’s scientific test. Natural selection is not testable against the empirical world. Those who cling to it are certainly not tentative in their view, and they act as though it were unfalsifiable.

This narrow definition of science is one of the main issues in this debate. The word “science” originally meant knowledge and there are different kinds of knowledge. Knowledge of physical phenomenon that is gained by observation, the testing of hypothesis and observation of results is what most people think of as science. Metaphysical naturalism insists that this is all there is. But knowing in the sense of relationships is a different matter. When I say that “I know my mother loves me” I am stating a personal truth of which I am convinced. When, we say we know the lessons of a historical event, we are referring

to a type of knowledge which is observable yet not provable. However, such knowledge allows for reliable prediction and the gaining of additional truth. The creation story is designed to give us knowledge of God and His relationship to man. While this may not be provable in the empirical sense, it does allow for a rational view of reality and for prediction. Because man is created by a rational being in His own image, he can understand universal truths. He can also predict that no animal will ever have the capacity that man has to know his Creator. We can predict the results of sin and of moral obedience on a personal level and a cultural level. We can observe history and see the hand of God. But we cannot do any of these unless, as Newbigin points out, we first believe in order to understand. In this sense, ultimate reality is personal, as it is for the boy who says: "I know my mother loves me". The Christian faith calls for a faith response to the call to "follow me". As Newbigin³ points out

"The affirmation that the One by whom all creation exists is to be identified with a man who was crucified and rose bodily from the dead cannot possibly be accommodated within any plausibility structure except one of which it is the cornerstone."

Only when reality is experienced in a new way can we see that all reality reflects the glory of God. To the materialist, this sounds like foolishness, but to the believer, it is his life.

This concept of faith preceding knowledge also occurs in science. Polanyi⁴ points out that even scientist make discoveries rely on an intuitive theory that they believe in and seek to verify by testing and attempts to disprove the theory. The intuitive element almost always precedes any significant discovery long before it is proven.

Unfortunately, only those tuned into spiritual truth can see this. A material naturalist calls it rubbish and something that is in the realm of superstition. This leads directly to "cultural war" type of dialog between Christian Theists and Naturalists. Each group tends to marginalize the other. What is needed is a debate on the basic underlying issues and assumptions that each group comes to the table with. This is exactly what Philip Johnson is trying to do.

³ Newbigin p. 93

⁴ Newbigin p. 43

The Debate Within the Community of Faith

The Christian Community is divided as to how to respond to the Darwinian challenge. The Roman Catholic Church has conceded that science may claim knowledge of the descent of the physical body, but the church makes claims for the soul. This is the dichotomous view that science and religion inhabit different worlds, as one is of science and reason and the other of faith. This is a fatal mistake as it gives away the realm of reason to the naturalists. It implies that all faith is irrational and in the same category as superstition and spiritism. Yet, properly understood, God is the source of reason, and the reason (*logos*) is preeminent. (*In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. John 1:1*) Our ability to understand and reason comes from being created by a rational being who created us in His Image and the world as a reflection of His glory. It is not irrational to know personal realities such as “knowing that my mother loves me”.

Fundamentalists who are biblical literalists, insist that God’s word requires a young earth view and fly these views in the face of scientific community which mocks them. It becomes quickly clear that trying to defend biblical literalism quickly leads to indefensible positions because the Bible was not meant to tell us everything about everything. When it is used to depart from its prime purpose of revealing God to man and explaining the nature of their relationship, only ridicule can follow. This is not to say that miracles are not literally true, but their purpose is to show how God has acted in “his-story” as He has chosen to reveal it. Problems of biblical interpretation will always remain, until the day when we see “face to face”.

The accommodationist position is perhaps the hardest to sustain and the most damaging. Theistic evolutionists want to have their cake and eat it too. Metaphysical Naturalism makes sense to the secular world and is a view that has academic status. To accommodationists, faith in God must be liberated from fundamentalist views and brought into the light of critical thinking. God could have chosen to create through purely materialistic forces, and this is not inconsistent with belief in God. And so, these are the first to discount the miraculous and supernatural. Eventually naturalism prevails and God is relegated to someone who never did anything, never does anything, never leaves any impression nor evidence. Who needs a God like that? Before long Christ no longer is God. Eventually, God becomes philosophy and social action and things that seem good to do in the context of the culture that we are in.

Accommodationists are like the children of Israel who made a treaty with Egypt in order to make peace a reality. The alliance is unholy, the position untenable. They will eventually become Egyptians and lose faith. No wonder that when Theistic Realists go in and drop a bomb in Egypt, they cannot stand it. After all, once you’ve made a treaty with Egypt, why would you condone dropping a bomb there?

Keep those bombs coming.

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