



“Apologies”

Why is there ‘Something’ and not ‘Nothing’?

*Apologetics has been defined as the reasoned defense of the Christian Faith.
Are apologetics important? Why should we bother with them?
The place of apologetics in the Christian Church has not always been agreed upon.*

The modern, or rather post modern man, relies on Descartes “*I think therefore I am*”; Rousseau “whatever I feel to be right is right”; Hegel “syntheses” rather than thesis and antithesis and Sartre’s existentialism. Knowledge must be arrived at by starting with ourselves and finding things out without any recourse to the supernatural.

We will now look at how two world views answer the question of why there is something and not nothing.

This is of course the “creation versus evolution” debate. But before we start we will cover some important definitions; firstly “science”.

Science involves a process the, “scientific method”, which consists of the observation of natural phenomenon, formulating an hypothesis to explain the observation, and conducting experiments to test the hypothesis. This is called “falsification”, that is trying to test and disprove the hypothesis. If the hypothesis withstands rigorous testing it can then be accepted as a fact. This method was largely developed by Christian scientists and philosophers such as Frances Bacon.

Theory

A theory is defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* as “*a supposition, a system of ideas explaining something especially one based on general principles independent of facts*”. This is important because whereas an hypothesis can be tested and if it is not true then refuted, a theory is then something different altogether.

Science

In addition to being used to describe a system of discovery science is also a belief system based exclusively upon naturalistic explanations, to quote the national academy of science in America. “*The most basic characteristic of science is a reliance upon naturalistic explanation*”. To explain further we will quote Richard Dickerson, a member of the NAS “*science fundamentally is a game, it is a game with one overriding and defining rule: let us see how far and to what extent we can explain the behaviour of the physical and material universe in terms of purely physical and material causes without involving the supernatural*”.

To emphasize again, this view of science means that all explanations must not involve the supernatural.

Now in general this is a sensible approach. If a doctor was explaining to us how a new drug worked and showed us a diagram with point A and point B and an arrow in between with a label telling us that in between a miracle happens, we would not be impressed. In general, phenomenon should be explained by natural means. Miracles by definition are exceptional.

However, to deny the supernatural is even a possibility is to go too far, but for some such as Richard Dawkins “truth means scientific truth”, there is no recourse to the supernatural ever.

Evolution

Darwin had two theories, the first was a special theory which involved natural selection or survival of the fittest. One example that he used was of the shape of finches' beaks. The ones that were best suited for the environment in the Galapagos Islands prospered and became the dominant variant. The same sort of principal can be seen in breeding characteristics in certain types of domestic dogs. The second or general theory of evolution was to make the assumption that if a series of small changes was to continue over a longer time, one species would develop into a new species or a simple organism could become more complex. It is important to note that this is not just gradual change but change as a result of chance, quoting Jaques Monod the biologist "*Chance alone, chance blind and free*". Therefore for the naturalist scientist the answer to the question of why there is something rather than nothing equals Time plus Space plus Chance. There is no directing mind. To quote Dawkins again, "*Darwin made it possible for him to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist*". What used to be a somewhat radical view has now become the accepted view of society and certainly of the scientific establishment. Helena Curtis in the introduction to her text book "Biology" states that one of the reasons for writing the book was to demonstrate "*the fact that evolution has occurred*." I have had it said to me by a senior colleague "*I cannot understand how anyone can claim to be a scientist and not believe in evolution*."

But how does this fact stand up to testing by scientific criteria. We have already mentioned that a theory is a supposition and not, like a hypothesis, open to testing by experiment. We will consider now some of the evidence on which the theory of evolution is based.

Firstly the fossil record: This is often presented as if it provided conclusive proof of evolution. If that were the case then we should see gradual changes in the animals and plants preserved. There should be no jumps. For it is gradual change that the theory states should happen. However, there is a marked lack of intermediate forms in the fossils. This was a problem that troubled Darwin himself. Secondly, the nature of mutations. Mutations are small changes in the DNA which codes for the proteins and chemicals that make up the cells of living creatures. For the DNA to be functional it must make sense. If we use a simple sentence to illustrate DNA we can take he sat on the mat, now a mutation would be similar to taking one letter and changing it. We could change it she sat on the mat, a following mutation which would still make some sort of sense would be she sat on the hat but after this it becomes difficult and the sentence would soon not only read as nonsense but will not even contain real words. This is a problem for the cell, for if this starts happening it will not be able to make the necessary proteins and will die. This is borne out in our study of human disease, mutations lead to disease and cell death. But for the theory of evolution to work mutations need to lead to new and more successful organisms.

Thirdly, there is the problem of the complexity of living organisms, even "simple" single cell organisms are extremely complex. We are faced with irreducibly complex systems. To explain that such systems cannot exist in a less complex primitive form, biologist Michael Beahy uses the example of a mousetrap. A mousetrap is a very simple machine but to function it needs all its components, a base, spring and a mouse.

In living organisms such irreducible complexity can be seen in the interactions that control the way the blood clots. Blood must stay fluid to flow through the blood vessels but needs to be able to clot rapidly to stop bleeding should an injury occur. This clotting mechanism must also be tightly regulated so that once a clot has formed its size is limited to only the area of damage. A complex interplay of pro-coagulant factors maintains a delicate balance. A defect in a single gene coding for one of these factors can cause a severe bleeding disorder such as haemophilia.

Another example of irreducible complexity is the copying and reading of the genetic code in a cell's DNA as it synthesises proteins. The DNA is first copied to a similar chemical called RNA, then the message coded by the RNA is read by complex structure called a ribosome. The ribosome assembles proteins from building blocks called amino acids according to the information contained in RNA code. The ribosome itself is made of RNA and proteins. Therefore in order to make a ribosome the cell must have functioning ribosomes to read the DNA code. If you can picture the message of the DNA being like a message on a cassette tape, then for evolution by chance alone to be true, it would be like finding a cassette which by chance contains the information needed to

make a cassette player falling into a cassette player which has assembled itself (by chance) and allowing the instructions to be heard by someone who could understand then and make a new tape machine. One is left wondering where the initial coded message came from and how the tape player appeared! If this microscopic system is hard to conceptualize an arger example would be the metamorphosis of insect lava into the adult form. Think of a caterpillar crawling along, at some point in its development it will make for itself a chrysalis or cocoon, within that chrysalis it undergoes complex process where its body effectively liquefies and then reorganize itself into the mature butterfly that will break out of the chrysalis and fly away. This process only makes sense if it happens to completion. There is no logical way that it would have developed step by step. Imagine a caterpillar that by chance evolves to the point where it could spin a cocoon, it spins a cocoon, enters a cocoon but what next? Perhaps it goes further? A caterpillar that spins a cocoon and gets as far as breaking its body down into a more liquid form. Again it does not take this process any further; it is no more than easy food for the birds to eat. It is only when the process is completed and a mature insect emerges at the other end that it makes any sense at all.

A further objection to Darwinians thinking is regards to a view to society. It evolves around us including ourselves is merely the sum of time plus space plus chance then there is no real meaning of good and evil, no real meaning of fairness or justice. It is merely a social construct and that social construct which is often based on Biblical teaching which, if you are a thoroughgoing Darwinian, is therefore wrong. However, even the most staunch Darwinians such as Richard Dawkins still like to borrow the traditional views of fairness and morality even though they detach them from their religious routes. To quote Dawkins in the first chapter of the *Selfish Gene* "*I am not advocating morality based on evolution*", he goes on to say, "*let us try to teach generosity and altruism because we are born selfish*". Perhaps more honest is Peter Singer, Professor of Philosophy at Monash University Melbourne. He uses a more thoroughgoing Darwinian approach favoring abortion and euthanasia. He is the philosopher who provided the intellectual basis for the animal liberation movement argues that to view human beings as special is "speciesism". He even goes as far as advocating a period of 28 days after the birth of a handicapped child before it might be accepted as having the same right to life as any other. As he puts it "*It would allow a couple time to decide that it is better not to continue with the life that it has begun very badly*".

If society moves further and further away from the biblical bases of our current accepted morality then this is increasingly what we shall find.

In conclusion we return to the idea that Darwinian evolution is a theory, a presupposition – and this presupposition will influence how any evidence is viewed.

For example researchers have been tracing the genetics of mitochondrial DNA. (That is DNA carried in small structures outside the nucleus of the cells, passed down each generation from the mother.) They described their findings that having analysed samples of mitochondrial DNA from women across the world that it all pointed back to a single female ancestor who would have been based somewhere in North Africa or the Middle East. Those with a Biblical world view, this sounds awfully like the evidence points to Eve. For those with a more Darwinian bent this merely confirms an early hominid ancestor in Africa.

Another example; for many years it was assumed that by the atheistic naturalists that the universe had existed in a so called steady state and that the idea of a Biblical sudden start to the universe was criticized. Everyone's scientific theory changed and the "big bang" was proposed even though this fitted in more with the Biblical account, a purely naturalistic interpretation is put on the data. What we have, is not a clash of facts but a clash of worldviews. The Bible states in Psalm 19 that "*the Heavens declare the Glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*" However, Psalm 14 reminds us that "*the fool says in his heart, there is no God*" and the Apostle Paul writing in Romans states, "*since the creation of the world, Gods invisible qualities is eternal power and define nature being clearly seen. Being understood from what has been made so that men are without excuse*".

Michael Trimble

©2017

www.christianstudylibrary.org