

Evolutionists retreating from the arena of science

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Testability is the defining criterion distinguishing scientific theories from pseudoscience or metaphysics, as the philosopher of science Karl Popper famously stated. The history of evolution reveals a withdrawal (largely begun in the middle of the twentieth century) from the early days of empirical research and straightforward interpretation of the evidence to unobservable and untestable science. Examples abound of Darwinists retreating to unfalsifiable positions in each of the key scientific fields that impact on the origins debate: cosmology, geology, paleontology, biology and genetics.

This year, the bicentenary of Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of his famous book's publication, has seen a lot of reflection on the history of evolutionary theory. Indeed, it is difficult for a 21st century creationist to appreciate the giddy optimism that surrounded the evolutionism of a century and more ago. Direct scientific observations from the field had been formed into a cohesive argument for naturalistic origins over against supernatural creationism. This began with Charles Lyell traveling extensively in Europe and North America to gather geological "facts" in favor of his theories of uniformitarian gradualism. Charles Darwin's insights came from his field work on his now famous voyage and observations as a naturalist. Within a few decades of Darwin's writings a series of hominid fossil discoveries (like the Neandertals, Java Man and Piltdown Man) appeared to confirm key predictions about human evolution. Haeckel's embryology arguments were prominently presented. Huxley offered up *Bathylbius*, the slime dredged from the ocean floor, as the link between nonliving chemicals and simplistic life. Creationists, on the other hand, were divided and unable to marshal an effective rebuttal.

During the early 20th century some difficulties emerged in evolutionary theory, caused by biologist's increased specialization and the concern that burgeoning genetic research would be difficult to reconcile with gradual evolution and the mechanism of natural selection. Through the decade from 1936 to 1947 the Darwinian Synthesis reconciled ideas from several branches of biology that had become separated, particularly genetics, systematics, morphology and paleontology. In some ways, this time period was the scientific highpoint for evolutionism. The Darwinian Synthesis became the unquestioned reigning paradigm of the scientific community.

Today, the Darwinian scientific consensus persists within almost every large university and governmental institution. But around the middle of the 20th century an interesting new trend emerged and has since become increasingly established. Evolutionary theorists have been forced, step by step, to steadily retreat from the evidence in the field. Some of the evidences mentioned earlier in this article were demonstrated to be frauds and hoaxes. Other discoveries have been a blow to the straightforward expectations and

predictions of evolutionists. Increasingly, they have been forced to tack *ad hoc* mechanisms onto Darwin's theory to accommodate the evidence. Their retreat to unfalsifiable positions is now evident in every arena where they once triumphed. Let us examine how Darwinian theorists have moved from concrete predictions and scientifically observable supporting evidences to metaphysical positions in several key fields of research.

Cosmology

The reigning paradigm in cosmology is the big bang. Despite promising initial observations of an expanding universe and microwave background radiation, the idea of an explosive origin guided by no intelligent hand is increasingly proving problematic. In recent years it has become quite clear that there are many properties of our universe which, if they were slightly different, would make life impossible. In addition, it seems that even our place in the galaxy is purposeful.¹

The odds of a happenstance big bang producing such a universe are incredibly small. Evolutionary cosmologists have responded by speculating about other universes unlike our universe ("multi-verse" theory), to improve the odds of such an ideal universe existing by chance.

"Short of invoking a benevolent creator, many physicists see only one possible explanation: Our universe may be but one of perhaps infinitely many universes in an inconceivably vast multiverse. Most of those universes are barren, but some, like ours, have conditions suitable for life."²

Of course, all these other universes are forever beyond our detection. They are a metaphysical construction, a position of pure blind faith. Prominent in multi-verse models is "string theory", a branch of theoretical physics that despite two decades of work has yet to produce any experimental confirmation. All the observable evidence indicates that our universe was purposefully designed.

Big-bang theory has run into other problems. The universe is far too lumpy. It doesn't make sense that there would be vast empty spaces between galaxies with billions of stars. Scientists have postulated the existence of cold

dark matter to solve this problem. There is no clear evidence for this matter; it is a construct introduced to solve certain observational puzzles and simultaneously salvage the big bang. Moreover, the experimental evidence shows that the present universe has very a low geometrical curvature in its spacetime (it is nearly flat). Theoretical arguments that are well established suggest that this is a very unlikely result of the evolution of the universe from a big bang, unless the initial curvature is confined to an incredibly narrow range of possibilities. While this is not impossible, it does not seem very natural. Theorists have postulated “inflation” at the beginning of the big bang, but this is another *ad hoc* addition to try and solve the problems.

For many years creationists have argued that the existence of comets in our solar system is an indication of a young earth.³ If the earth were billions of years old, all of the comets should have burned up long ago. Evolutionists responded by proposing a swarm of comet nuclei at the periphery of our solar system (the Oort Cloud) conveniently beyond our observation. This Oort Cloud is again an untestable hypothesis with no empirical support.

While critical of the supernatural (and scientifically unobservable) origin presented in Genesis 1, the evolutionists have, in the end, fallen back on metaphysical positions themselves. Paul Davies declares that the big bang “represents the instantaneous suspension of physical laws, the sudden abrupt flash of lawlessness that allowed something to come out of nothing. It represents a true miracle ...”⁴

Geology

Evolutionary geologists have largely abandoned the classical uniformitarianism espoused by Lyell almost two centuries ago. They now concede that the earth’s large deposits were laid down catastrophically. Carlton Brett, of the University of Cincinnati, stated:

“The accumulation of the permanent stratigraphic record in many cases involves processes that have not been, or cannot be observed in the modern environments ... there are the extreme events ... with magnitudes so large and devastating that they have not, and probably could not, be observed scientifically.”⁵

Consider the comments of David Raup from the University of Chicago:

“... contemporary geologists and paleontologists now generally accept catastrophe as a ‘way of life’ although they may avoid the word catastrophe The periods of relative quiet contribute only a small part of the record. The days are almost gone when a geologist looks at such a sequence, measures its thickness, estimates the total amount of elapsed time, and then divides one by the other to compute the rate of deposition in centimeters per thousand years.”⁶

Though now committed to neo-catastrophism, these evolutionists still seek to protect the standard geologic column with its great eons in which evolution can occur. They argue that multiple catastrophes made up the

geological column; however, these were separated by long periods of geological calm. As Ager wryly,

“The hurricane, the flood or tsunami may do more in an hour or a day than the ordinary processes of nature have achieved in a thousand years In other words, the history of any one part of the earth, like the life of a soldier, consists of long periods of boredom and short periods of terror.”⁷

But there is little empirical evidence for the “long periods of boredom” since most geological layers are conforming and show no evidence of erosion or bioturbation. John Morris succinctly states the case:

“The evidence for time is the *lack* of physical evidence. Virtually all of the actual evidence in the rocks points toward catastrophic flood processes lasting only a short period of time.”⁸

Paleontology

The greatest perceived difficulty for Darwinism a century ago was the lack of confirming transitional forms documenting the proposed gradual transformation from a common ancestor. Darwin wrote,

“Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely-graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and serious objection which can be urged against the theory. The explanation lies, as I believe, in the extreme imperfection of the geological record.”⁹

Stephen Gould of Harvard University concluded,

“The fossil record had caused Darwin more grief than joy. Nothing distressed him more than the Cambrian explosion, the coincident appearance of almost all complex organic designs ...”¹⁰

It was Darwin’s sincere hope that later fossil discoveries would resolve this “serious objection” against his theory. Leading evolutionists have admitted that this hope must now be abandoned.

“Darwin himself ... prophesied that future generations of paleontologists would fill in these gaps by diligent search One hundred and twenty years of paleontological research later, it has become abundantly clear that the fossil record will not confirm this part of Darwin’s predictions. Nor is the problem a miserably poor record. The fossil record simply shows that this prediction is wrong.”¹¹

Four non-Darwinian characteristics are abundant in the fossil record: abrupt appearance, stasis after that appearance, systematic gaps between lifeforms, and lack of identifiable phylogeny (evolutionary ancestors and descendents). Stephen Gould summed it up in his magnum opus *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*,

“[T]he tale itself illustrates the central fact of the fossil record so well—geologically abrupt origin and subsequent extended stasis of most species Anatomy may fluctuate through time, but the last remnants of a species look pretty much like the first representatives.”¹²

But rather than concede that the fossil record provides no compelling evidence for gradual evolution and that the Cambrian Explosion looks a lot like creation, some leading evolutionists postulated that all of the evolution happened in sudden bursts, too quickly to be recorded in the fossil record (Punctuated Equilibrium):

“The record now reveals that species typically survive for a hundred thousand generations, or even a million or more, without evolving very much. We seem forced to conclude that most evolution takes place rapidly ... a punctuational model of evolution ... operated by a natural mechanism whose major effects are wrought exactly where we are least able to study them—in small, localized, transitory populations ... The point here is that if the transition was typically rapid and the population small and localized, fossil evidence of the event would never be found.”¹³

These bursts are preceded and followed by long periods of stasis. Once again evolution is said to be happening behind the curtain where it cannot be observed, Stephen immune from falsification. Gould admitted,

“Paleontologists have paid an enormous price for Darwin’s argument. We fancy ourselves as the only true students of life’s history, yet to preserve our favored account of evolution by natural selection we view our data as so bad that we almost never see the very process we profess to study ...”¹⁴

It is a clear retreat to an unempirical, metaphysical position all over again!

Biology

Classical scientists as recently as two hundred years ago believed in vitalism, the idea that non-living material like dirt, damp hay, or decaying meat had innate vitality such that “simple” life would spontaneously arise from it. Only a few short years after Darwin published his seminal work, Louis Pasteur conducted the famous scientific disproof of spontaneous generation in which he sterilized and sealed jars of nutrients, demonstrating that only life begets life—the law of biogenesis. Undeterred, Thomas Huxley (figure 1) gamely pursued a naturalistic origin-of-life scenario, coining the term *abiogenesis*. In an essay he wrote,

“Carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen are all lifeless bodies. Of these, carbon and oxygen unite in certain proportions and under certain



Figure 1. Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895) coined the term abiogenesis.

Sketch from <www.wikipedia.org>

conditions, to give rise to carbonic acid; hydrogen and oxygen produce water; nitrogen and other elements give rise to nitrogenous salts. These new compounds, like the elementary bodies of which they are composed, are lifeless. But when they are brought together, under certain conditions, they give rise to the still more complex body, protoplasm, and this protoplasm exhibits the phenomena of life. I see no break in this series of steps in molecular complication ...”¹⁵

Untold millions of dollars and countless hours have been spent in the lab trying to work out a mechanism for the synthesis of life. But the more that is learned

about the structure of the cell, the greater the chasm appears between raw chemistry and the simplest imaginable self-replicating life-form. Hoyle took his fellow scientists to task for their belief in abiogenesis:

“They advocate the belief that tucked away in nature, outside of normal physics, there is a law which performs miracles (provided the miracles are in the aid of biology). This curious situation sits oddly on a profession that for long has been dedicated to coming up with logical explanations of biblical miracles.”¹⁶

The response of many evolutionists has been to postulate and pontificate about unknown laws of chemical predestination. Paul Davies imagined that,

“... some sort of self-organizing physical processes could raise a physical system above a certain threshold of complexity at which point these new-style ‘complexity laws’ would start to manifest themselves, bestowing upon the system an unexpected effectiveness to self-organize and self-complexity. ... Under the bidding of such laws, the system might be rapidly directed towards life.”¹⁷

ReMine points out that “It merely replaces the old unknown mystical forces with new unknown ‘naturalistic’ forces. Either way it is not science.”¹⁸

At the heart of evolutionary biology is the idea of natural selection. But natural selection has been formulated in various ways to give the evolutionary theorists maximum advantage. When confronted with the circular reasoning inherent in “survival of the fittest”, evolutionary apologists often retreat to simplistic special scenarios or show how unfit monsters are clearly weeded out by natural selection. Kitcher’s argumentation follows this line: “The example

of cryptic coloring in moths provides an especially good demonstration of how claims about the grounds of fitness can be independently evaluated.”¹⁹ But even if this were true, it has no explanatory power as a general theory.

In the end, the only broad explanatory power comes from a metaphysical formulation that is completely untestable. This is the tack taken by Dobzhansky:

“[No biologist] can judge reliably which characters are neutral, useful, or harmful in a given species.”²⁰ Darwinists seem to prefer equivocation and an amorphous smorgasbord of *ad hoc* theories (like the Red Queen Hypothesis, Stationery Hypothesis, Shifting Balance Hypothesis, and other “just so” stories) to admitting that scientific natural selection is limited to being a simple conservation mechanism (as creationists have argued all along).

Genetics

Claude Shannon first formulated a definition of information in his 1948 book *A Mathematical Theory of Communications*. Shannon’s

“... theory of information is suitable for describing the statistical aspects of information, e.g. those quantitative properties of languages which depend on frequencies. Nothing can be said about the meaningfulness or not of any given sequence of symbols. The question of grammatical correctness is also completely excluded at this level.”²¹

Creationists like Werner Gitt have led the charge in developing modern information theory and applying it to genetics and the origins debate.²² Information theory predicts that just as useful computer routines will not randomly arise, so increases in DNA information to code for biological functions will not be likely to happen without intelligent intervention.

Some evolutionists acknowledge the problem.

“Communication theory—or information theory, as it is known today—says that noise destroys information, and that the reverse process, the creation of information by noise, would seem to be a miracle. A message emerging on its own from radio static would be as surprising as the tide making footprints on the beach. We are back with the same old problem: the second law of thermodynamics insists that information can no more spring into being spontaneously than heat can flow from cold to hot.”²³

But most Darwinists prefer to cloud the issue using the simplistic and imprecise definitions of information like the one Shannon developed.²⁴ Not only does this obfuscation work in their favour, but it places information analysis into a realm where quantification and hard analysis become extremely difficult, if not impossible.

METAPHYSICAL: OF OR RELATING TO THE TRANSCENDENT OR TO A REALITY BEYOND WHAT IS PERCEPTIBLE TO THE SENSES (WEBSTER’S DICTIONARY)

Evolutionists have shown little interest in precise population genetics modelling. Creationists have developed a remarkable computer program called Mendel to assist in such modelling.²⁵ The response from the Darwinists has been underwhelming. Population genetics in general, and Haldane’s Dilemma in particular, have been challenging to evolutionary scenarios. Haldane

demonstrated that there were severe limits on how fast evolution could happen based upon the rarity of beneficial mutations and realistic reproduction rates.²⁶ Evolutionists have sought to bury the issue and allow confusion to reign rather than embracing testable science.

One of the favorite debate tactics of evolutionists has become obscuring these issues with nebulous probability arguments. Whether faced with the challenges of origin of life, biological complexity or population genetics arguments, the Darwinists are inclined to retreat to the comfort of Deep Time to allow for the impossible biological feats.

“Time is in fact the hero of the plot ... given so much time the ‘impossible’ becomes possible, the possible probable and the probable virtually certain. One has only to wait: time itself performs miracles.”²⁷

Conclusion

Unfortunately, the retreat from scientifically testable positions has been accompanied in general by even greater arrogance and intolerance on the part of evolutionists. Instead of debating the issues, their preference has been to demean the opposition and pompously declare evolutionary theory beyond any need of verification. This began in the middle of the twentieth century and continues today with political correctness in academia and the denial of scientific opportunities for creationists and intelligent design theorists.²⁸

Teilhard historic statement exemplifies de Chardin’s such arrogance:

“[Evolution] is above all verification, as well as being immune from any subsequent contradiction by experience Is evolution a theory, a system or a hypothesis? It is much more: it is a general condition to which all theories, all systems, all hypotheses must bow and which they must satisfy henceforward if they are to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light illuminating all facts, a curve that all lines of thought must follow.”²⁹

Perhaps no better confirmation of the shift towards metaphysicalism in evolution can be provided than the “about face” executed by the leading evolutionist philosopher Michael Ruse. Dr. Ruse was the expert witness regarding philosophy of science at the historic Supreme Court case *Edwards vs Aguillard*. His public position at

that time was clear: “Evolution is a fact, fact, FACT!”³⁰ While remaining an evolutionist, in recent years Ruse has clearly acknowledged the metaphysical nature of modern evolutionary theory, even calling it a religion.

“In particular, I argue that in both evolution and creation we have rival religious responses to a crisis of faith—rival stories of origins, rival judgments about the meaning of human life, rival sets of moral dictates, and above all what theologians call rival eschatologies—pictures of the future and of what lies ahead for humankind.”³¹

The evolutionist’s shift to metaphysical theories and untestable models is leaving design advocates standing alone in the ring of the scientific origins debate! Thus our job as creationists of the 21st century has changed somewhat. While it remains important to do field work and research to accumulate further evidence supporting creation, the increasing challenge is to unify the confirming evidence we have into a cohesive model. Moreover creationists must get out the word, must wrestle the microphone and podium away from the evolutionists who seek to dominate the national dialogue about origins. In that regard it is quite useful during this historic year to publicize the steady retreat on the part of our evolutionary opponents away from the arena of testable science.

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