

"I Need a Response to 'The God Delusion'"

My atheist friend is a tough atheist to talk to, because he's read so much philosophy and anti-God literature. He's really into *The God Delusion*. I wondered if you are familiar with it, and if you know a good response to its assertions.

We don't have an article on our website, but I can recommend several online responses to Richard Dawkins' book:

Is God a Delusion?

www.gotquestions.org/God-delusion.html

William Lane Craig's Q&A: "What do you think of Richard Dawkins' argument for atheism in *The God Delusion*?"

www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5493

Flew Speaks Out: Professor Antony Flew reviews *The God Delusion*

www.bethinking.org/science-christianity/flew-speaks-out-professor-antony-flew-reviews-the-god-delusion.htm

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf? Richard Dawkins' Failed Rebuttal of Natural Theology

www.arn.org/docs/williams/pw_goddelusionreview2.htm

(this one is long but thorough for a web-length article)

To treat someone like your friend with respect, this means familiarizing yourself with the responses to Dawkins' arguments so you can speak to him personally about specific issues in the book rather than handing him an article or a book. (I put myself in your friend's shoes: if a committed atheist wanted to disabuse me of my silly belief in God and the Bible and handed me *The God Delusion*, telling me to read it, I wouldn't do it. I have enough to do without reading something I'm not motivated to do. And in fact I have books on

my shelf still unread because that method doesn't work! But if this person met me for coffee and talked to me about specific issues, that would make a difference. I'd make sure to do my homework to be able to "give an answer for the hope that is within" me [1 Peter 3:]).

Hope you find this helpful. The Lord bless you and keep you today!

Sue Bohlin

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"I'm Doubting the Truth of the Bible and God's Existence"

I was wondering about some matters pertaining to truth, specifically the truth of the Bible and existence of God. I've grown up in Arkansas in the bible belt my entire life and of course of been surrounded by churches, christianity, and an unquestioning world view that God exists and the bible is the truth.

Recently, I've started questioning reality and my perception of the world. I know it is dangerous to get caught up in humanly philosophies and crap like that, but a lot of things don't make sense to me about God. I'm trying to look at truth from all perspectives so I've been reading this book called *The God Delusion*. I know you might say I'm crazy and I'm going to be completely disillusioned by some stupid science and philosophy, but some of what it says doesn't seem to be

completely crazy. Right now, specifically I'm struggling with contradictions that the Bible seems to present. I'm wondering whether all the Gospels are in agreement as to the birth of Jesus. I'm sure there are several other contradictions that atheists would point out also. If you could address some of those and give me another viewpoint.

Thanks for your letter. There's nothing wrong with wanting to think carefully about what you believe and why. There's also nothing wrong with reading Dawkins' book, *The God Delusion*—although many serious scholars don't think very highly of his arguments or condescending attitude. For a good critique of Dawkins' book, you may want to also read [The Dawkins Delusion](#) by Alister E. McGrath. It would offer an informed rebuttal of many of Dawkins' claims by a world-class scholar with doctoral degrees in both molecular biology and theology.

I deal with alleged contradictions in the infancy narratives in [my article on the virgin birth](#) here on the Probe Web site. A more in-depth article can be found here: www.tektonics.org/af/birthnarr.php.

Two other sites you should be familiar with are Bible.org and ReasonableFaith.org. The latter site is that of Christian philosopher/theologian William Lane Craig. I would highly recommend his articles on the existence of God, the historicity of Jesus, etc. Both sites have lots of great resources.

Wishing you all the best in your studies!

Michael Gleghorn

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Why Does the University Fear Phillip Johnson?

Who Is Phillip Johnson?

Best-selling author Phillip Johnson has become the leader of the Intelligent Design movement. His books *Darwin on Trial*, *Reason in the Balance*, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* and the recently released *Objections Sustained* have become rallying points for Christian scholars across the academic spectrum. Johnson has addressed university audiences around the country, sometimes on his own, often in debate with a leading proponent of evolution. He has even addressed in private session entire science, law, and philosophy departments at top universities. Well, just who is Phillip Johnson and how does he rate such attention?

Johnson was raised in a nominally Christian family, but he grew to become a convinced skeptic of the faith. This process was greatly aided by his education, first as an undergraduate at Harvard and then at the University of Chicago Law School where he graduated first in his class. Johnson became convinced that people were basically good, education would solve whatever problems you had, the stuff of Sunday school was okay but mythology, and he could achieve success by thinking for himself and absorbing the culture around him.

This is the enticing picture the academic community paints for students and Johnson bought it. But things began to unravel in his mid-thirties. He had achieved his goals. He served as law clerk for Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren and held a distinguished professorship of law at UC Berkeley, but he lacked fulfillment. He was publishing papers nobody read, or ought to read. His marriage to a beauty queen fell apart and he was single parenting for awhile. The writings of C. S.

Lewis had impacted him greatly, but he thought, "Too bad we can't believe in that anymore." Eventually he heard the gospel preached in a way that seemed plausible and attractive. Johnson envied the speaker's combination of commitment and fulfillment. "Do I have something so wonderful?" he questioned. Johnson said, "They believed it, I could too."

Johnson put his faith in Christ, but faced a dilemma. If the gospel is true, why are all the "intelligent" people agnostic? He prayed for insight. Beginning with a sabbatical at University College in London in 1987-88, Johnson embarked on an intellectual journey. This journey has developed into a project that has seen him publish four books, deliver hundreds of lectures on college campuses, and become the leader of the fledgling Intelligent Design movement over the last ten years. Primarily through his study of evolution, Johnson learned that the academic community's primary intellectual commitment is to the philosophy of naturalism. If the "facts" contradict materialistic conclusions, then the "facts" are either explained away, ignored, or just plain wrong.

Therefore, evolutionists like Richard Dawkins can say things like "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose," and actually say it with a straight face. The appearance of design is an illusion, you see, because we "know" that organisms evolved and the primary reason we "know" this is because naturalistic philosophy demands it.

Johnson's primary task seems to be continually provoking the scientific community into facing the reality of its naturalistic presuppositions. In earlier years, the scientific establishment was able to dismiss creationists and not officially respond. But when a tenured law professor from Berkeley starts messing with your head, people start answering back. The National Academy of Sciences has issued two publications in the last two years trying to stem the tide.[\[1\]](#) The cracks in Darwinian evolution are beginning to show.

What Could a Law Professor Say About Evolution?

What could a legal scholar possibly have to say about evolution? Many in the academic community have raised the same question as Phillip Johnson has visited their university. In his own words Johnson states: "I approach the creation-evolution dispute not as a scientist but as a professor of law, which means among other things that I know something about the ways that words are used in arguments."[\[2\]](#)

Specifically what Johnson noticed was that both the rules of debate about the issue as well as the word *evolution* itself were defined in such a way as to rule out objections from the start. Science is only about discovering naturalistic causes of phenomena, therefore arguing against the sufficiency of natural causes is not science! Also the "fact of evolution" is determined not by the usual definition of fact such as collected data or something like space travel which has been done, but as something arrived by majority vote! Steven J. Gould said, "In science, fact can only mean 'confirmed to such a degree that it would be perverse to withhold provisional assent.'"[\[3\]](#)

In the early chapters of *Darwin on Trial*, Johnson does an excellent job of summarizing the evidence that has been around for decades calling Darwinian evolution into question. These include problems with the mechanism of mutation and natural selection, problems with finding transitional fossils between major groups when they should be numerous, problems with the molecular evidence for common descent, and severe problems with any scenario for the origin of life.

In a chapter titled "The Rules of Science" Johnson excels in illuminating the clever web evolutionists have drawn to insulate evolution from criticism.[\[4\]](#) In order to limit discussion to naturalistic causes, science is defined in

purely naturalistic terms. In the Arkansas creation law decision, Judge Overton said science was defined as being guided and explained by natural law, testable, tentative, and falsifiable. Overton got this from the so-called expert testimony of scientists collected for the trial by the ACLU. These criteria were used against creation on the one hand to say that a creator is not falsifiable, and also that the tenets of creation science were demonstrably false. How can something be non-falsifiable and false at the same time?

The conflict enters in when one realizes that creation by Darwinist evolution is as un-observable as creation by a supernatural creator. No one has ever observed any lineage changing into another and the few fossil transitions that exist are fragmentary and disputable. "As an explanation for modifications in populations, Darwinism is an empirical doctrine. As an explanation for how complex organisms came into existence in the first place, it is pure philosophy." [\[5\]](#)

In a chapter titled "Darwinist Religion" Johnson points out that despite the claims of scientists that evolution is secular, it is loaded with religious and philosophical implications. Most definitions of evolution emphasize its lack of purpose or goal. This makes evolution decidedly non-purposive in contrast to a theistic, purposive interpretation of nature. If it is the philosophic opposite of theism, evolution must be religious itself. Darwin himself constantly argued the superiority of descent with modification over creation. If scientific arguments can be made against theism, why can't scientific arguments be made for theism?

Darwin on Trial continues to sell, to be read, and to influence those open to consider the evidence. Since Johnson is not a scientist his book is highly readable to the educated layman. If you have never picked it up, you owe it to yourself to read what has become a classic in the creation/evolution controversy.

Johnson Extends His Case against Evolution into Law and Education.

Over the years of speaking on the creation/evolution issue I have been asked many times why people get so upset over this issue. If it is just a question of scientific accuracy, why does it produce such emotional extremes? The answer, of course, is that the creation/evolution debate involves much more than science. At question is which worldview should hold sway in making public decisions.

In Phil Johnson's second book, *Reason in the Balance*, he makes this very point when he says, "What has really happened is that a new established religious philosophy has replaced the old one. Like the old philosophy, the new one is tolerant only up to a point, specifically, the point where its own right to rule the public square is threatened." [\[6\]](#)

The old philosophy Johnson speaks of is the theistic or Judeo-Christian worldview and the new philosophy is the materialist or naturalistic worldview. Johnson has referred to *Reason in the Balance* as his most significant and important work. That is because it is here that he lays the all important philosophical groundwork for the scientific, legal, and educational battleground of which the creation/evolution controversy is only a part.

That we no longer live in a country dominated by Judeo-Christian principles should be inherently obvious to most. But what many have missed is the concerted effort by the intellectual, naturalistic community to eliminate any possibility of debate of the worthiness of their position. On page 45 Johnson says,

"Modernist discourse accordingly incorporates semantic devices—such as the labeling of theism as religion and naturalism as science—that work to prevent a dangerous debate over fundamental assumptions from breaking out in the open."

As the preceding chapter showed, however, these devices become transparent under the close inspection that an open debate tends to encourage. The best defense for modernist naturalism is to make sure the debate does not occur."[\[7\]](#)

Johnson is quick to point out that there is not some giant conspiracy, but simply a way of thinking that dominates the culture, even the thinking of many Christians.

Therefore, in the realm of science when considering the important question of the existence of a human mind, only the biochemical workings of the brain can be considered. Not because an immaterial reality has been disproved, but because it is outside the realm of materialistic science and therefore not worth discussing. Allowing the discussion in the first place lays bare a discussion of fundamental assumptions, the very thing that is to be avoided.

In education, "The goal is to produce self-defining adults who choose their own values and lifestyles from among a host of alternatives, rather than obedient children who follow a particular course laid down for them by their elders."[\[8\]](#) The reason, of course, is if God is outside the scientific discussion of origins, then how we should live must also exclude any absolute code of ethics. This also precludes the underlying assumptions from being discussed.

In law, naturalism has become the established constitutional philosophy. Rather than freedom *of* religion, the courts are moving to a freedom *from* religion. The major justification is that "religion" is irrational when it enters the domain of science or a violation of the first amendment in public education. "Under current conditions, excluding theistic opinions means giving a monopoly to naturalistic opinions on subjects like whether humans are created by God and whether sexual intercourse should be reserved for marriage."[\[9\]](#) What then are the strategies for breaking the monopoly?

Can Darwinism Be Defeated?

The main thing Christian parents and teachers can do is to teach young thinkers to understand the techniques of good thinking and help them tune up their baloney detectors so they aren't fooled by the stock answers the authorities give to the tough questions.[{10}](#)

So says Phillip Johnson in his recent book, *Defeating Darwinism*. (For a fuller review see Rick Wade's article, [Defeating Darwinism: Phil Johnson Steals the Microphone](#).) Johnson is at his best here, relaying the many semantic and argumentative tricks used to cover up the inadequacies of Darwinism. In the chapter "Tuning Up Your Baloney Detector," Johnson introduces the reader to examples of the use of selective evidence, appeals to authority, ad hominem arguments, straw man arguments, begging the question, and lack of testability. This chapter will give you a good grasp of logical reasoning and investigative procedure.

Johnson also explains the big picture of his strategy to weaken the stranglehold of Darwinism on the intellectual community. He calls it *the wedge*. Darwinism is compared to a log that seems impenetrable. Upon close investigation, a small crack is discovered. "The widening crack is the important but seldom recognized difference between the facts revealed by scientific investigation and the materialist philosophy that dominates the scientific culture."[{11}](#) In order to split the log, the crack needs to be widened. Inserting a triangular shaped wedge and driving the pointed end further into the log can do this. As the wedge is driven further into the log, the wider portions of the wedge begin widening the crack.

Johnson sees his own books as the pointed end of the wedge, finding the crack and exposing its weaknesses. Other books in these initial efforts would certainly include the pioneering works of Henry Morris,[{12}](#) Duane Gish,[{13}](#) Charles Thaxton,[{14}](#) and even the agnostic Michael Denton.[{15}](#)

Following close behind and fulfilling the role of further widening the crack are the works of J. P. Moreland,[{16}](#) Michael Behe,[{17}](#) and William Dembski.[{18}](#) What is needed now to widen the crack further and eventually split the log are larger numbers of theistic scientists, philosophers, and social scientists to fill in the ever widening portions of the wedge exposing the weaknesses of naturalistic assumptions across the spectrum of academic disciplines.

Here Johnson's strategy meshes nicely with Probe Ministries. Much of our energy is spent educating young people in a Christian worldview through Mind Games Conferences, the ProbeCenter in Austin, Texas, and our website (www.probe.org). We share with Johnson the joy of encouraging and opening doors for young people in the academic community. Johnson says,

"If you know a gifted young person, help him or her to see the vision. Those who are called to it won't need any further encouragement. Once they have seen their calling, you had better step out of the way because you won't be able to stop them even if you try."[{19}](#)

There is also an inherent risk in all this. Teaching young Christians to think critically and have the courage to join this exciting and meaningful cultural battle means they will also begin to examine their own faith critically. Some may even go through a period of doubt and deep questioning. While this may sound threatening, we shouldn't shy away. If Jesus truly is the way, the truth, and the light then any "truth" exposed to the light will endure. Our children will be stronger having put their faith to the test. The reward of possibly making a directional change in our downward spiraling culture is worth the risk.

Johnson Responds to the Intellectual

Elite

One of the reasons that Phillip Johnson has become a leader in the Intelligent Design movement is the combined effect of his tenured position on the law faculty of the prestigious University of California at Berkeley and his deftness and sheer enjoyment in taking on the power brokers within the established halls of academia. Johnson has traveled extensively in the U.S. and abroad. He has also lectured and debated before university audiences and faculties. His knowledge of debate, concise prose, and his likeable demeanor allows him to bring the issues to the table skillfully. Many are able to think clearly about these issues for perhaps the first time.

Another avenue Johnson has pursued with great success has been to write articles and review books for some of the leading magazines and newspapers in the country. Johnson's fourth book, *Objections Sustained: Subversive Essays on Evolution, Law & Culture*, [\[20\]](#) is a collection of his essays since the publication of *Darwin on Trial* in 1991. While most of the essays in the book were originally published in either the journal *First Things* or the paper *Books and Culture*, Johnson's pen has also been found in the pages of *The Atlantic*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Times*, *The New Criterion*, and many other national and local magazines and newspapers. He has openly challenged some of the leading spokesmen for naturalistic evolution such as Stephen J. Gould and Richard Lewontin of Harvard, Richard Dawkins of Oxford University, and Daniel Dennet from Tufts University.

The point of all this is to draw the Darwinists out into the open where the debate can be seen and heard by all who are interested. Previously, creation was routinely dismissed as religion, but Johnson is not so easily swept aside since he has been able to expose the house of cards behind the bluster of Darwinism. The debate has crept more and more out in the

open.

Two examples come to mind. First, the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) was caught with its hand in the cookie jar. In 1995, they released a statement about evolution describing it as, among other things, unsupervised and impersonal. Such theological/philosophical concepts should have no place in a “scientific” statement. A storm of controversy sparked both within and outside the teachers’ ranks culminated in a reconsideration of the statement by the NABT board. At first the board voted unanimously to uphold the statement, and then a few days later, voted to remove the offending words. The *New York Times* remarked that “This surprising change in creed for the nation’s biology teachers is only one of many signs that the proponents of creationism, long stereotyped as anti-intellectual Bible-thumpers, have new allies and the hope of new credibility.”[\[21\]](#)

Second, the prestigious National Academy of Sciences has published two official publications attacking creationism[\[22\]](#) and supporting the teaching of evolution.[\[23\]](#) Rather than taking its critics head-on, these two books timidly revert to old and tattered evidences and appeals to authority. For instance, the National Academy boldly asserts that “there is no debate within the scientific community over whether evolution occurred, and there is no evidence that evolution has not occurred.”[\[24\]](#)

Science and Creationism says on the one hand, “Scientists can never be sure that a given explanation is complete and final.”[\[25\]](#) But evolution cannot really be questioned because “Nothing in biology makes sense in biology except in the light of evolution.”[\[26\]](#) Such obfuscation is now officially in the open arena—precisely where Johnson has been trying to force it to appear. The next ten to fifteen years promise to be exciting. I hope you continue to read Phillip Johnson and observe the ever broadening wedge drive deeper into the chinks of the Darwinian armor.

Notes

1. National Academy of Sciences, *Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science* (Washington, D. C.: National Academy Press, 1998), 140. Available online at <http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/creationism/>.

National Academy of Sciences, *Science and Creationism: A View from the National Academy of Sciences* (Washington D. C.: National Academy Press, 1999), 35. Available online at <http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/evolution98>.

2. Phillip Johnson, *Darwin On Trial* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 8.

3. Stephen J. Gould, "Evolution as Fact and Theory" in *Hen's Teeth and Horse's Toes* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), 255.

4. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 111-122.

5. Ibid., 115.

6. Phillip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law and Education* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 37.

7. Ibid., 45.

8. Ibid., 157.

9. Ibid., 29.

10. Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 116.

11. Ibid., 92.

12. Henry Morris, *Scientific Creationism* (San Diego: Creation-Life Publishers, 1974).

13. Duane Gish, *Evolution: The Fossils Say No!* (San Diego: Creation-Life Publishers, 1972).

14. Charles B. Thaxton, Walter L. Bradley, and Roger L. Olsen, *The Mystery of Life's Origin* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1984).
15. Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Bethesda, MD: Adler and Adler, 1986).
16. J. P. Moreland, ed., *The Creation Hypothesis: Scientific Evidence for an Intelligent Designer* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994).
17. Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).
18. William A. Dembski, *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance through Small Probabilities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.) And, William A. Dembski, ed., *Mere Creation: Science, Faith and Intelligent Design* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).
19. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism*, 96.
20. Johnson, *Objections Sustained: Subversive Essays on Evolution, Law & Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).
21. Quoted in Johnson, *Objections Sustained*, p. 88.
22. *Science and Creationism*, see note 1.
23. *Teaching about Evolution and the Nature of Science*, see note 1.
24. *Ibid.*, 4.
25. *Science and Creationism*, 1.
26. *Ibid.*, ix.

A Darwinian View of Life

Probe's Dr. Ray Bohlin reviews Richard Dawkins' anti-theistic book, A River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life, showing the holes in Dawkins' arguments.

A River of DNA

A River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life by Richard Dawkins is the fourth in a series being published by Basic Books entitled "The Science Masters Series." This series is said to be "a global publishing venture consisting of original science books written by leading scientists. "Purposing to "present cutting-edge ideas in a format that will enable a broad audience to attain scientific literacy," this series is aimed at the non-specialist.

The first three releases were *The Last Three Minutes: Conjectures about the Ultimate End of the Universe* by Paul Davies, *The Origin of Humankind* by Richard Leakey, and *The Origin of the Universe* by John D. Barrow. These were followed by the contribution from Dawkins. A look at these books, and at future contributors like Daniel Dennett, Jared Diamond, Stephen Jay Gould, Murray Gell-Mann, Lynn Margulis, and George C. Williams, makes the endeavor look less like a scientific literacy series and more like an indoctrination in philosophical naturalism.

The exposition of a Darwinian view of life by Dawkins in *River Out of Eden* certainly fits into the overt anti-theism category. His "River Out of Eden" is a river of DNA that is the true source of life and the one molecule that must be understood if life is to be understood.

This river of DNA originally flowed as one river (one species)

which eventually branched into two, three, four, and eventually millions of rivers. Each river is distinct from the others and no longer exchanges water with the others, just as species are isolated reproductively from other species. This metaphor allows Dawkins to explain both the common ancestry of all life along with the necessity of gradualism in the evolutionary process.

Dawkins refers to this river of DNA as a digital river. That is, the information contained in the DNA river is completely analogous to the digital information of languages and computers.

Surprisingly, Dawkins gives away the store in this first chapter. In pressing home the digital analogy, Dawkins first uses probability to indicate that the code arose only once and that we are all, therefore, descended from a common ancestor:

The odds of arriving at the same 64:21 (64 codons: 21 amino acids) mapping twice by chance are less than one in a million million million million. Yet the genetic code is in fact identical in all animals, plants and bacteria that have ever been looked at. All earthly living things are certainly descended from a single ancestor.(p. 12)

So it is reasonable to use probability to indicate that the code could not have arisen twice, but there is no discussion of the probability of the code arising by chance even once. A curious omission! If one tried to counter with such a question, Dawkins would predictably fall back on the assumption of naturalism that since we know only natural processes are available for the origin of anything, the genetic code must have somehow beaten the odds.

African Eve

Chapter 2 attempts to tell the story of the now famous "African Eve." African Eve embodies the idea that we are all

descended from a single female, probably from Africa, about 200,000 to 100,000 years ago. This conclusion originates from sequence data of the DNA contained in mitochondria.

Mitochondria are tiny little powerhouses that produce energy in each and every cell of your body. Just as your body contains many organs that perform different functions, the cell contains many organelles that also perform specific functions. The mitochondrion is an organelle whose task is to produce energy molecules the cell can use to accomplish its tasks.

However, mitochondria are also the only organelle to contain their own DNA. Certain proteins necessary to the function of mitochondria are coded for by the mitochondrial DNA and not by the nuclear DNA like every other protein in the cell. One other unique aspect of mitochondria is their maternal inheritance. That is, all the mitochondria in your body are descended from the ones you initially inherited from your mother. The sperm injects only its DNA into the egg cell, not its mitochondria. Therefore, an analysis of mitochondrial DNA reveals maternal history only, uncluttered by the mixture of paternal DNA like nuclear DNA. That's why these studies only revealed an African Eve, though other recent studies claim to have followed DNA from the Y chromosome to indicate an ancient "Adam."

Now these scientists don't actually think they have uncovered proof of a real Adam and Eve. They only use the names as metaphors. But this action does reveal a shift in some evolutionists minds that there is a single universal ancestor rather than a population of ancestors. This at least is closer to a biblical view rather than farther away.

Finally, Dawkins makes his case for the reliability of these molecular phylogenies in general. Here he glosses over weaknesses in the theory and actually misrepresents the data. On page 43 he says, "On the whole, the number of cytochrome c

letter changes separating pairs of creatures is pretty much what we'd expect from previous ideas of the branching pattern of the evolutionary tree." In other words, Dawkins thinks that the trees obtained from molecular sequences nearly matches the evolutionary trees we already had. Later on page 44, when speaking of all molecular phylogenies performed on various sequences, he says, "They all yield pretty much the same family tree which by the way, is rather good evidence, if evidence were needed, that the theory of evolution is true."

Well, besides implying that evidence is not really needed to prove evolution, Dawkins stumbles in trying to display confidence in the molecular data. What exactly does "pretty much" mean anyway? Inherent in that statement are the numerous contradictions that don't fit the predictions or the ambiguous holes in the general theory. But then, evidence isn't really needed anyway is it?

While this chapter contained the usual degree of arrogance from Dawkins, particularly in his disdain for the original account of Adam and Eve, it was somewhat less compelling or persuasive than is his usual style. He hedged his bet frequently and simply waived his hand at controversy. Unfortunately, this may not be picked up by the unwary reader.

Scoffing at Design

In Chapter 3 Dawkins launches a full-scale assault on the argument from design. After presumably debunking arguments from the apparent design of mimicry (not perfect design, you know, just good enough), Dawkins states, "Never say, and never take seriously anybody who says, 'I cannot believe so-and-so could have evolved by gradual selection.' I have dubbed this fallacy 'the Argument from Personal Incredulity.'"

To some degree I'm afraid that many creationists have given Dawkins and others an easy target. Such a statement, "I cannot believe...", has been used many times by well-meaning

creationists but is really not very defensible. It is not helpful to simply state that you can't believe something; we must elaborate the reasons why. First, Dawkins levels the charge that much of what exists in nature is far from perfectly designed and is only good enough. This he claims is to be expected of natural selection rather than a designer. This is because a designer would design it right while natural selection has to bumble and fumble its way to a solution. To begin with, the lack of perfection in no way argues for or against a designer.

I have always marveled at some evolutionists who imply that if it isn't perfect, then Nature did it. Just what is perfection? And how are we to be sure that our idea of a perfect design wasn't rejected by the Creator because of some flaw we cannot perceive? It is a classic case of creating God in our own image.

The evolutionists are the ones guilty of erecting the straw man argument in this instance. In addition, Dawkins fully admits that these features work perfectly well for the task at hand. The Creator only commanded His creatures to be fruitful and multiply, not necessarily to be perfectly designed (humanly speaking) wonders. Romans 1:18-20 indicates that the evidence is sufficient if you investigate thoroughly.

Dawkins further closes off criticism by declaring that "there will be times when it is hard to think of what the gradual intermediates may have been. These will be challenges to our ingenuity, but if our ingenuity fails, so much the worse for our ingenuity." So if explanations fail us, the fault is not with the evolutionary process, just our limited thinking. How convenient that the evolutionary process is so unfalsifiable in this crucial area. But after all, he implies, this is science and intelligent design is not!

Dawkins concludes the chapter with a discussion on the evolution of the honeybee waggle dance. It is filled with

probabilistic statements like “The suggestion is that... Perhaps the dance is a kind of... It is not difficult to imagine... Nobody knows why this happens, but it does... It probably provided the necessary...” Yet at the end, Dawkins proclaims,

We have found a plausible series of graded intermediates by which the modern bee dance could have been evolved from simpler beginnings. The story as I have told it...may not be the right one. But something a bit like it surely did happen.

Again, “it happened” only because any other explanation has been disallowed by definition and not by the evidence.

God’s Utility Function

Dawkins concludes his attack on design in his book *River Out of Eden*, with a more philosophical discussion in Chapter 4, God’s Utility Function. He begins with a discussion of the ubiquitous presence of “cruelty” in nature, even mentioning Darwin’s loss of faith in the face of this reality. Of course, his answer is that nature is neither cruel nor kind, but indifferent. That’s just the way nature is.

But a curious admission ensues from his discussion. And that is, “We humans have purpose on the brain.” Dawkins just drops that in to help him put down his fellow man in his usual arrogant style. But I immediately asked myself, “Where does this ‘purpose on the brain’ stuff come from?”

The rest of nature certainly seems indifferent. Why is it that man, within an evolutionary worldview, has “purpose on the brain”? In his attempt to be cute, Dawkins has asked an important question: Why is man unique in this respect?

As Christians, we recognize God as a purposeful being; therefore if we are made in His image, we will also be purposeful beings. It is natural for us to ask “Why?”

questions. No doubt if pressed, someone will dream up some selective or adaptive advantage for this trait. But this, as usual, would only be hindsight, based on the assumption of an evolutionary worldview. There would be no data to back it up.

At the chapter's end Dawkins returns to his initial topic. "So long as DNA is passed on, it does not matter who or what gets hurt in the process... But Nature is neither kind nor unkind... Nature is not interested one way or another in suffering, unless it affects the survival of DNA." Even Dawkins admits that this is not a recipe for happiness. The problem of evil returns. Dawkins's simple answer is that there is no problem of evil. Nature just is.

He recounts a story from the British papers of a school bus crash with numerous fatalities and reports a Catholic priest's inadequate response to the inevitable "Why" question. The priest indicates that we really don't know why God would allow such things but that these events at least confirm that we live in a world of real values: real positive and negative. "If the universe were just electrons, there would be no problem of evil or suffering." Dawkins retorts that meaningless tragedies like this are just what we expect from a universe of just electrons and selfish genes.

However, it is also what we expect in a fallen world. Evolutionary writers never recognize this clear biblical theme. This is not the way God intended His world to be. What is unexpected in an evolutionary world are people shaped by uncaring natural selection who care about evil and suffering at all. Why are we not as indifferent as natural selection?

In making his point, Dawkins says that the amount of suffering in the natural world is beyond all "decent" contemplation. Where does decency come from? He calls the bus crash a "terrible" story. Why is this so terrible if it is truly meaningless? Clearly, Dawkins cannot live within the boundaries of his own worldview. We see purpose and we fret

over suffering and evil because we are created in the image of a God who has the same characteristics. There are aspects of our humanity that are not explainable by mutation and natural selection. Dawkins must try to explain it, however, because his naturalistic worldview leaves him no choice.

Are We Alone?

Dawkins closes his book with a final chapter on the origin of life and a discussion on the possibilities of life elsewhere in the universe. This chapter is a bit of a disappointment because there is really very little to say. To be sure, it is filled with the usual Dawkins arrogance and leaps of naturalistic logic, but there is no real conclusion just the possibility of contacting whatever other life may be out there.

Dawkins begins with a definition of life as a replication bomb. Just as some stars eventually explode in supernovas, so some stars explode with information in the form of life that may eventually send radio messages or actual life forms out into space. Dawkins admits that ours is the only example of a replication bomb we know, so it is difficult to generalize as to the overall sequence of events that must follow from when life first appears to the sending of information out into space, but he does it anyway.

While we can clearly distinguish between random and intelligent radio messages, Dawkins is unable to even ask the question about the origin of the information-rich DNA code. I suppose his answer is contained on page 138 when he says, "We do not know exactly what the original critical event, the initiation of self-replication, looked like, but we can infer what kind of an event it must have been. It began as a chemical event."

This inference is drawn not from chemical, geological, or biological data, because the real data contradicts such a

notion. Dawkins takes a few pages to evoke wonder from the reader by documenting the difficult barriers that had to be crossed. His conclusion that it was a chemical event is rather an implication that is derived from his naturalistic worldview. It is a chemical event because that is all that is allowed. Creation is excluded by definition, not by evidence. While chemical evolution may be difficult, we are assured that it happened!

The book closes with a discussion of the Ten Thresholds that must be crossed for a civilization of our type to exist. Along the way, Dawkins continues to overreach the evidence and make assumptions based on naturalism without the slightest thought that his scenario may be false or at least very wide of the mark.

All along the way Dawkins tries to amaze us with both the necessity and complexity of each threshold but fails miserably to explain how each jump is to be accomplished. He depends totally on the explanatory power of natural selection to accomplish whatever transition is needed. It is just a matter of time.

But, of course, this begs the question. Dawkins perfects this art for 161 pages. Despite the smoke and mirrors, Richard Dawkins is still trying to sail upstream without a paddle. It just won't work. While many of his explanations and ruminations should make careful reading for creationists (he is not stupid and writes well), I have tried to point out a few of his inconsistencies, assumptions, and poor logic.

What bothers me most is that this is meant to be a popular book. His wit and dogmatism will convince and influence many. For these reasons I found it a frustrating and sometimes maddening book to read. Unfortunately, few will think their way through these pages and ask tough questions of the author along the way. This is where the real danger lies. We must not only show others where he is wrong but help them how to

discover these errors on their own. We must help people to think, not just react.

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