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EVOLUTION - A PROVEN FACT?

By Joe Spears

"...there is about the fact of evolution no doubt at all. Evolution is a fact, as securely established as any in science,..."¹

Is this actually true? You may have read, or heard, such claims about evolution: that it is a fact, that it is proven beyond doubt, and perhaps even that anyone who questions the truth of evolution is either uneducated, ignorant, deluded, or perhaps just not that bright.

Yet, it seems there should be a place in science where it is OK to question accepted beliefs and, while not rejecting them "out-of-hand" with no reason, to subject them to the standard of proof. In other words, there ought not to be any "sacred cows" allowed in science. Facts ought to take precedence over theories. Ideally, this might be the case. In reality, at least in history, it seems to have not always been the case.

We are dealing here with the voice of an authority versus the unbiased search for truth and letting the evidence "speak" regardless of whether the evidence supports the leading theory or not. The former suppresses open discussion or suppresses the presentation of evidence contradicting some theory. To be clear, this is not to advocate allowing biased voices to speak in order to censor evidence, but rather to allow evidence to speak.

The Voice of Authority

First, let's look at one argument in favor of evolution or at least one that is used to argue in favor of evolution. This is simply the fact that it is accepted by many.

To deal with this, let us point out that in the past the majority scientific opinion has been wrong and quite often. Famous examples include the ideas that:

- the earth is flat
- doctors need not wash their hands between patients
- removing blood (via leeches, etc.) from a sick person helps them heal
- it is impossible for a rocket to leave earth orbit.

To sum up this point, we merely need to realize that scientific fact is not decided by a majority vote! If a law were voted in stating that 1 plus 1 is 7, then...if it takes 7 gallons of fuel to travel to a destination, and you put in 1 gallon, then put in 1 more —Aha!—you now have 1 + 1 gallon, and since the new law has been passed, you know that you now have 7 gallons of fuel and can therefore easily reach the destination! So, you hop in the car, and off you go! Will you arrive at the destination? Obviously not, unless you put more fuel into the car or use another mode of transportation. The 1 gallon plus the other 1 gallon did *not* put 7 gallons of fuel into the tank, regardless of whatever laws are passed; 1 plus 1 is still 2, not 7.

A somewhat humorous example of this is a case in which the Indiana state legislature actually had a bill before them which, among many statements, changed the value of the geometric constant, π (sometimes written *pi*), from 3.14159... to 3.2. It also contained "...statements which not only contradict elementary geometry, but also appear to contradict each other."² This bill was passed by one house of the state legislature in 1897, but not by the other due to the fortuitous presence in the capital of a math professor from Purdue University. According to the university's website,

The Indianapolis Journal had Senator Hubbell saying that "the Senate might as well try to legislate water to run up hill as to establish mathematical truth by law."

¹ Cosner L (2011 Aug 30) Dawkins calls Texas Governor a 'fool' for questioning the 'fact' of evolution <<http://creation.com/perry-questions-evolution>> Accessed 2011 Sep 19

² Indiana Pi <http://www.agecon.purdue.edu/crd/Localgov/Second%20Level%20pages/Indiana_Pi_Story.htm> Accessed 2011 Oct 16

That is the point: truth is not decided by a popularity contest, nor by a vote. So, we may call this the authority of popularity.

Another source of authority is the individual. Typical of this kind of authority are doctors, celebrities, scientists, ministers, politicians, and others. To be clear, if it is too time-consuming to research every detail of some issue, then the voice of authority could be useful *if* there is reason to believe the authority. For example, if the authority happens to be an expert who has looked at lots of evidence, we might trust this person's opinion. One other criterion could be the honesty of the person. Also, we might want to consider vested interests—what does this person stand to gain or lose for stating some opinion? Judges routinely recuse themselves from judging cases in which they have some conflict of interest. Another thing to consider in the voice of an authority is whether such an authoritative voice has a bias.

Expert knowledge

Before assuming that scientists in general know all about evolution, please look at the facts below in the section on Evidence. Also, one evolutionist who once wrote textbooks teaching evolution later took advanced courses on evolution later and as a result became a creationist. This was Dr. Gary Parker. Here we have a scientist who had written books used in the classroom—books teaching evolution, who did not fully understand evolution's problems, and when he did, he then dropped his belief in the theory. The lesson is that not all scientists, even those writing and teaching about evolution, understand it well, nor do they have proof that it is true.

Evidence

Regardless of the qualifications for a voice of authority, the evidence takes precedence—does it not? This, in fact, is what evolutionists have argued in support of evolution: namely, that the evolutionary *evidence* should take precedence over the *authority* of the Bible. This concept (of evidence over authority) therefore is something evolutionists are familiar with and should accept as a valid operating principle in the search for the truth about origins (or evolution). So, let's see what evidence there is for evolution.

Problems with evolution, according to evolutionists

In this section, instead of looking at opinions of creationists who disbelieve evolution, we will look at the statements of evolutionists themselves, whose statements can not be said to suffer from the "anti-evolutionary bias" of a creationist. Here we will look for the evidence for evolution as stated by evolutionists. We will note, however, that you may be disappointed, for the evolutionists seem to have some problems finding any evidence at all to support their position. In fact, be-

low is a statement indicating a serious dearth of such evidence, from the evolutionist camp.

Evolutionist on evidence for new species

One famous evolutionist is Niles Eldredge, who, along with Stephen Jay Gould, is famous for the evolutionary theory of punctuated equilibrium.³ What does Niles Eldredge have to say about evidence for evolution? In a book by Lynn Margulis, the wife of Carl Sagan, Margulis quotes Niles Eldredge's response to her question as to whether there is any species that can be documented as having evolved into another species.

"...I once asked the eloquent and personable Niles Eldredge whether he knew of any case in which the formation of a new species had been documented. I told him I'd be satisfied if his example were drawn from the laboratory, from the field, or from observations from the fossil record. He could muster only one good example: Theodosius Dobzhansky's experiments with *Drosophila*, the fruit fly. In this fascinating experiment, populations of fruit flies, bred at progressively hotter temperatures, became genetically separated. After two years or so the hot-bred ones could no longer produce fertile offspring with their cold-breeding brethren. "But," Eldredge quickly added, "that turned out to have something to do with a parasite!" Indeed, it was later discovered that the hot-breeding flies lacked an intracellular symbiotic bacterium found in the cold breeders."⁴

Margulis goes on to argue that the parasite-infected version *was* a new species or the beginning of a new species.

So, according to an evolutionist, there isn't much evidence to prove evolution in the fossil record or in lab experiments either, it would seem.

Evolutionist on the likelihood of evolving a single cell

Well, let us now turn from the (missing) facts that (fail to) show evolution of species actually occurred, since their seems to be no such evidence, and look at the theoretical aspects of the theory of evolution.

What about calculations that show that mutations, natural selection, etc. could lead to evolution of new species? According to Dr. Michael Kinnaird, assuming the entire universe, including the space between the stars, is organic soup and also assuming the soup has been "cooking" for several billion years (the entire estimated

³ Punctuated Equilibrium <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/03/5/1_035_01.html> Accessed 2011 Oct 17

⁴ Margulis L (1998) *Symbiotic Planet*, Basic Books, New York, NY, 7-8

lifetime of the universe), the chances of even a single cell forming are less than one chance in a big number—bigger than the number of atoms in the universe.⁵ In fact, this number is larger than the estimated number of atoms in the universe by a factor of trillions. Kinnaird, a chemist, was using extremely generous assumptions. The calculation vastly increased the chances for evolution to work by allowing not just the earth's surface to be covered with organic soup but by increasing the expanse of the soup to include the entire universe. But still, the result was amazingly improbable.

Sir Fred Hoyle, who wrote the book *Mathematics of Evolution*, put the number for the probability of a single cell forming at one chance in an even larger number than that calculated by Kinnaird!⁶ And Fred Hoyle was not a creationist.

Some have argued that Hoyle's number should be lower, since the non-randomness of the chemical reactions would increase the probabilities.

“Firstly, the formation of biological polymers from monomers is a function of the laws of chemistry and biochemistry, and these are decidedly not random.”⁷

Kinnaird was also aware of the chemistry involved. He pointed out that in an organic soup, which would be mostly water, proteins have a natural chemical tendency to break down into their constituents rather than for the constituents to gather together and form proteins. So, the inclusion of thermodynamics in the calculation might actually make evolution even less likely than Hoyle calculated.

The non-randomness of biochemistry is the result of complex systems that exist only in complex cells (which we can't use here since this would make a result of cell formation a prerequisite for cell formation) and chemical systems that depend on enzymes, which are proteins (again, complex proteins would be used to form the first simple proteins). This assumes the evolutionary idea that cells had to evolve before cells would exist, which few would disagree with, and that proteins need to exist before there can be cells. In living human beings, proteins are kept from “falling apart” in their water environment only by virtue of systems which themselves are complex and which require that proteins have already been formed. The point is that to get proteins,

you need nucleic acids (RNA and DNA), and to get nucleic acids, you need proteins. This is circular reasoning and invalidates all “proofs” which use it.

Other atheistic, non-creationists have even found Darwin's model of natural selection to be questionable,⁸ but I will have to discuss those problems at another time.

Summary

To be fair, there are some evolutionists who, while maintaining their faith—without evidence, what else could you call it except faith—in evolution, admit the existence of problems with Darwinian natural selection to account for evolution.⁹ My impression is they seem to think that someday, they will be able to account for evolution; in the meantime, they will believe in it, with or without evidence for it. Unfortunately, this has not always been what the average non-scientist, and even many scientists, have learned about evolution. Instead, evolution too often has been presented as a proven fact. Those evolutionists claiming that evolution is true, seem to hold to the theories that other evolutionists themselves have criticized.

The fact seems to be that while evolutionists are promoting the natural selection of Darwin—at least Richard Dawkins is¹⁰—as the evolution that has been “proven,” other scientists (including evolutionists) say that natural selection could not possibly have worked, due to the improbability of it's happening.

Do you see something here? Evolutionists are trying to get more facts, to get more evidence, in order to support a theory suffering from lack of evidence? What about putting facts and evidence first and then deciding on a theory *after* looking at the evidence, not before?☹

⁸ Fodor J, Piattelli-Palmarini M (2010) *What Darwin got Wrong*, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, NY

⁹ Denton M (1986) *Evolution: Theory in Crisis*, 3rd edition, Adler and Adler, Bethesda, MD

¹⁰ Dawkins R (2007 Jul 1) Inferior design <[http://select.nytimes.com/preview/2007/07/01/books/1154680128921.html?em...>](http://select.nytimes.com/preview/2007/07/01/books/1154680128921.html?em...) Accessed 2011 Oct 24 , Dawkins said, “Natural selection is arguably the most momentous idea ever to occur to a human mind, because it—alone as far as we know—explains the elegant illusion of design that pervades the living kingdoms and explains, in passing, us.”

⁵ Kinnaird M, Personal communication

⁶ Hoyle F (1999) *Mathematics of Evolution*, Acorn Enterprises, Memphis, TN

⁷ Musgrave I (1998 Dec 21) Lies, damned lies, statistics, and probability of abiogenesis calculations <<http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/abioprob/abioprob.html>> Accessed 2011 Oct 24

COMING EVENTS

Thursday, November 10, 7:00 P.M., Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh, Room 631

Has evolution been proven? Claims that evolution is a proven fact will be examined with regard to whether this is really the case.

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