The Origin of Things

by Jared D. Edson

One of the greatest debates of the last hundred fifty years has been about the origin of life on this world. It has been debated during this time not because people don't believe in God, but because they don't want to believe in God. Advancing new theories of the past century and a half have drawn from the sciences of Geology and Biology to create the new science of Paleontology. The consequence of this new science has been to promote a new philosophy about the origin of life on this earth, a new philosophy called Evolution.

Of itself, the concept of evolution seems straightforward enough: life forms over countless generations experience changes - mutations - that result in improved survivability, ultimately leading to advances that have culminated in the world we now live in. As a concept it seems logical enough, but in reality the concept is deeply flawed because of the real natural forces that exist which make evolution towards a higher form of life extremely unlikely or impossible.

Charles Darwin was not the first person to suggest evolution as a progressive means for making more complicated organisms from lesser complicated ones. Anaximander of Miletus, a Greek philosopher who lived from 610 to 546 B.C. had previously suggested a form of evolution (with man descending from fish), which filtered down through the years to Aristotle and others, though there were disagreements (see Wikipedia, "History of evolutionary thought"). Aristotle in particular proposed that lower forms of animals such as worms, insects, etc., could spontaneously generate from basic elements like soil, water and air. More complex organisms, he added, must have originated as-is.(see Aristotle's teaching.)

Darwin's contribution to the principles of evolution related to both the amount of time and the degree of incremental steps over long time spans, as well as the newer element of "Natural Selection." This gave a certain foothold for scientists and philosophers to propose eliminating God from the natural world, whether as an intentional or unintentional consequence of the concept of evolution by means of natural selection.

In the case of both the ancient Greeks and Darwin, the proposed answer to the question of how life began is still missing. Indeed, Darwin's seminal work titled "On the Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection," never actually proposed the origin of the first life form; rather, he proposed a process that would describe the variety and success of modern animal and plant species after countless millennia of small changes from a fewer number of more simple life forms. They each proposed a

scenario without providing an originating cause, and their concepts likewise lacked any experimental measurements that could observe the process in action. To this day, evolution by means of natural selection has never been observed in the natural world.

The modern-day understanding of the physics, chemistry and biology of molecules - which are atoms bound together by electrical charges - has illustrated the difficulty of Darwin's proposal. The so-called molecule of life - DNA - is a highly complex family of molecules that is believed to contain the entire set of information in electro-chemical form necessary to describe each and every form of life, from the smallest bacteria or virus, to the largest mammals such as Elephants or Whales, including the other recognized "Kingdoms" of life - referring to the current understanding of the segregation of life form types (see Wikipiedia, "Kingdom (biology)":

1. Bacteria
2. Archaea
3. Protozoa
4. Chromista
5. Plantae
6. Fungi
7. Animalia

Each form of life on earth falls into one of these seven categories. Each of these seven major categories contains sub-categories that are subsequently more specific. Under each of these categories are the following, in order of increasing specificity: Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus and Species. For example, the seven-category description of cats is (see Wikipedia, "Cat"):

Kingdom:Animalia
-Phylum:Chordata
- -Class:Mammalia
- - -Order:Carnivora
- - - -Family:Feliformia
- - - - -Genus:Felinae
- - - - - -Species:Felis.catus.

While the structure of DNA does appear to have the necessary encoded information describing the means for producing proteins and other chemicals, DNA - Deoxyribo Nucleic Acid - as a storage medium for chemical information does not appear to actively perform any of the production work necessary to keep cells - or indeed any other collections of tissues, glands, organs or other body components - functioning. Rather, other chemical mechanisms in the cell appear to perform the actual work; the

number and diversity of these mechanisms is truly astonishing.

The first and biggest problem faced by evolutionary biologists is the problem of first life. While DNA itself may be complex, it cannot operate alone, nor has it ever been observed to do so in the laboratory. The problem of first life is essentially this:

1. Chemicals had to randomly and without any organizing intelligence configure into a form that we recognize as the familiar double-helix structure we now understand as DNA.
2. The DNA strand had to possess information about the construction of either itself or other useful chemicals.
3. The DNA strand had to be protected from the environment, otherwise it would be destroyed by other chemical interactions or environmental factors such as heat or light (including ultraviolet light and other forms of radiation, which breaks down DNA specifically)
4. Other chemicals capable of both transcribing the information coded in the individual helices of the DNA strand must exist; that is, a simultaneous cooperative arrangement had to exist between the DNA double-helix and other chemicals that can both read the individual chemical compounds in the DNA sequence, and either reproduce that sequence or carry that chemical information to another chemical structure that is capable of doing so.
5. The reproduced chemicals must serve a useful purpose either for maintenance, growth, or some other cooperative function that promotes the continuation of the overall process.

Without each of the above-listed steps, the existence of DNA would serve no purpose. In other words, all of the above named capabilities would have to be present at the initial origin point of the first cell, or none of it would work and “life” would not have been able to have its start.

To say that a living cell is a marvelous thing is a vast understatement. None of these discoveries had taken place in the lifetime of Charles Darwin, so perhaps he can be forgiven for simply not knowing any better: he was working with limited information. However, the twentieth century was a time of major scientific discoveries, specifically in the realms of physics, chemistry and biology as pertaining to the structure of the atom, the nature of molecules, and the physical structure of DNA and the cell.

With the discoveries of the last hundred years, however, evolutionary biology is a field of inquiry that should have become a dead-end, for the same reason that alchemy is no longer a practiced “science.” When the basis for a field of study never produces a reliable or consistent result, it is generally regarded within the scientific method as

reason enough to alter the field of study or to abandon it. The only discovery supportive of evolution is that mutations occur, but none of these discoveries has advanced a particular life form beyond its recognized species.

The science of paleontology has introduced new questions about the history of life on earth. The discovery of the fossilized remains of animals not currently found in living form has served to promote the concept of biological evolution. Fossilized remains, however, do not tell a story, nor do they give a linear report of history. Fossils are presumed to be the remains of animals, plants, or other members of the "Kingdom" (see above) set of life that lived thousands or millions of years ago whose organic (carbon-based) components were gradually replaced by inorganic minerals. The process of fossilization is believed to take place in situations where the specimen is buried in a location where water can serve as a medium for the evacuation of the biological organic components and their subsequent replacement by naturally occuring minerals. The most commonly discovered fossils consist of bones, which due to their composition are more likely to survive for the long periods of time necessary for fossilization to occur than are the softer tissues like the heart, stomach, or other body specific components.

Regardless of the means by which they formed, discoveries of the fossils of animals and plants not present upon the earth today, and the form those fossils reveal has led many to the conclusion that these are lost steps in the evolutionary ladder, representing hundreds of millions of years of the planetary history of life. More specifically, these are often described as not just lost steps of evolution, but proof of the evolutionary process in the development of life. Included in this description are the now-famous dinosaurs, but also pre and post dinosaur era fossils of creatures that lived in the sea, on the land, and in the air. The variety is considerable, numbering in the thousands.

The appearance of fossils has bolstered the evolution hypothesis considerably. Rather than prove evolution, however, each fossil can only represent a snapshot of time. While many snapshots taken together could form a type of movie history of life, the problem lies in the missing snapshots. A single fossil may represent a single moment in time. A thousand snapshots, or even ten thousand snapshots may make for interesting discussion, but for every snapshot that does exist, there are a hundred thousand or more that are missing. In mathematics, it is frequently noted that you can draw a lot of lines through a single point, and that appears to be what evolutionary biologists and paleontologists have done with fossils in connecting the rungs of their ladders of evolution.

Much of the science of paleontology is based on analyzing the body forms of

discovered fossils. Scientists studying these fossil forms often attempt to reconstruct (in a conceptual sense) the life and environment of the creature or plant in question, very often utilizing clues from geological rock layers (strata) and the types of materials discovered in the nearby regions where the fossil was discovered. These popularized retellings then place a human perspective on creatures that were anything but human. With the collected information about the region and the fossils found in it, paleontologists have garnered a wealth of knowledge about the forms of life and the changes to the environment, much of which is still conjecture and speculation. History by means of reconstructive conjecture does not reveal itself with the veracity of observational truth, and because it cannot be found in such plain terms as to make them immutable facts of life or its processes paleontologists and evolutionary biologists are left to continue speculation without proof.

There can be little doubt that fossils do represent forms of life from a bygone era. Fossils do exist, and in many cases show the unmistakable indicators of being part of living creatures or plants that existed many years ago. The nature of paleontology as a branch of geology and evolutionary biology, however, must be considered carefully. It is not the "smoking gun" of the proof of evolution that many scientists believe it to be, and for a lot of reasons. Fossils, for one, do not describe a process. They represent a moment of time in the death of a form of life, the circumstances of which may not be understood well at all. For another, the description of evolution as a slow process occuring over hundreds or thousands of generations cannot be found. A hundred or a thousand fossils of several similar creatures, for example, does not necessarily represent a step forward or a step backward in the success or failure of a given series of genetic mutations: the timeframe is simply too uncertain to describe in terms of increments as small as a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or even a hundred thousand years. The means used for establishing the time of death of the fossilized creature or plant does not permit such fine resolution.

With all of the conjecture concerning how these life forms came to exist, how they developed, how they lived and died, there is no certain way to make the audacious claim that these forms of life developed through the random chemical mutations of DNA that are specified in the evolution hypothesis.

We return, then, to the question of, "How, in fact, did these things come into existence?"

The criticism of the biblical account of creation is often based on the presumption that the first two chapters of Genesis describe the creation of the entire universe, and of the formation of the solar system, the planets, and of course life itself. The six days described in Genesis chapter one are often presumed to mean the formation of all

things that can be found on earth, including the creatures that now exist only in fossil form. This is a most flawed assumption, however.

The text of the bible is specific. It marks “the beginning” in terms of history that matters to humans. Besides this, there is indication within the text that not all things present in the earth, fossils or their living counterparts, were created during those six days. Rather, it is specific about the boundary conditions described by that particular description of history:

Genesis 1:1-2 (King James Version)
1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

These two verses are often taken out of context by both believers and non-believers. Verse one describes what God did overall as an explanation of what God is about to describe, and verse two begins to describe the order in which these things were done. Verse two indicates that “the earth was without form, and void,” which indicates two things: 1.)The earth existed already and therefore was not “formed” at this time and, 2.)The lack of form is indicated and further supported by the existence of “the deep” meaning that it had no solid surface. Rather, it was covered entirely by water.

Verse two also illustrates a second element of interest: that “darkness was upon the face of the deep.” This describes a global ocean, but just as importantly, it is ***not*** saying that there was no light shining upon the earth. It simply means that at the surface of the “deep” it was dark. There can be a perfectly reasonable description for why this may be the case.

Suppose we consider ourselves to be standing at the position of the boundary interface between the “face of the waters” and the layer of air just above it. The perspective provided is that of God’s spirit being at this position. In such an environment in which the earth is entirely a global ocean, it may very well be that there was a dense fog layer above the water that extended up to where clouds might normally be found. This is well-observed in places even today: fog and clouds can mean the surface is kept in darkness.

If that is the case in Genesis chapter one verse two, the next verses make much more sense. They are given from the perspective of God’s spirit detailing with certain precision what anyone else at this position would have observed if they were present with him at this time.

Genesis 1:3-10
3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.
5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.
6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.
9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.
10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

These verses, then, describe the process by which this fog and cloud layer either dissipated or separated, allowing light to reach the surface. In the process it appears that the water then separated from the solid components of the earth to form dry land. This description does not explain "how" God performed these actions, only that he did these actions using means at his disposal, and that his description of the process is both accurate and to the point. This passage was not intended to describe the operation of geology (rocks, seismic or volcanic activity, etc.) and meteorology (weather events or patterns), but the high-level description of what took place. To provide more detail would have detracted from the message being provided.

We are also provided a glossary of definitions so that we can understand what verse one meant by the terms "heaven" and "earth." Verse six explains the fog/cloud layer described in verse two, thus validating that understanding. Furthermore, however, it explains that the term "heaven" in the context of this creative process is neither a spiritual dimension or otherworldly existence. It is simply the place between the waters above and the waters below: what it describes as "the firmament." It is the breathable air that exists between the surface of the earth and the bottom of the clouds.

The first description of darkness being present upon the earth is interesting particularly because of verse three, which describes light. As most people today can attest, it is often possible even on the most overcast day to discern whether it is day or night. It may not be possible to discern the shape of the sun or moon, but it can be observed to be daytime because of the ambiant scattered light caused by water droplets in clouds and fog. The darkness can become light if or when this layer of fog

and clouds begins to dissipate. With this process in place, the natural day/night cycle becomes readily observable, whereas prior to this the fog/cloud layer was so thick there could only be darkness. Thus in verse five he describes day and night. This is, again, from the perspective of being at the surface of the waters.

With the separation of dry land from the waters, the next stage set in place is to introduce grass and other plant life. This was not an evolution process: it was a creative process. There are some that have attempted to meld evolution into the first six days described in Genesis, making it describe each day as a thousand years, or simply as six different eras of natural processes, but this requires extraordinary re-imagining of the text. In other words, melding evolution into the narrative is an effort to eliminate God from the creative process described in the text. God is as much a creative force as a living being, and to deny the "force" element of God's nature strips him of who and what he is.

In verses fourteen through nineteen we discover - again reading from the perspective of an observer at the surface of the earth - that the process of thinning the cloud layer has made the sun and moon visible, along with the stars. In other words the sky was now entirely visible for the first time since verse one.

Genesis 1:14-19
14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:
15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.
16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.
17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,
18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.
19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

The "firmament of the heaven" has been extended upward now so that it is not just a boundary layer of clear air between the surface and some low-lying clouds. The sky is now clear to the point of being able to discern stars at night. The day/night cycle of the rotation of the earth was not just made at this time; rather, it was made apparent. This was a process of making them visible to an observer at the surface of the earth.

But one may ask, "What about the fossils of dinosaurs and other things?" It is a fair question, but the answer may not be what even most believers might accept: the earth was without form and void at the beginning of Genesis, but it nonetheless existed. Did

God create it? Undoubtedly, but the prior history of the earth - the history of the earth's existence prior to Genesis chapter one is never declared, nor revealed or explained. That the earth was covered with a global ocean is specified, but what took place before the Genesis narrative is not given, nor was it necessary.

The discovery of fossils of both creatures and plants only serves to illustrate that the earth is actually very old. It may even be on the order of the 4.5 billion years old that many geologists and astronomers believe it to be. The key thing to keep in mind from the scriptures is that God is an eternal being: his existence has neither beginning nor end, and our perspective on the existence of this earth is only just a minor scratch in the historical record of the universe.

Did God create the dinosaurs along with the other animals and plants in previous eras? Most certainly. If it exists, God created it. There may have been hundreds or thousands of cycles of life that God created on this earth prior to our inheritance of it. Nothing in the scriptures indicates we are the sole proprietors that have ever existed upon this earth. The fact that these prior eras of life existed is not to suggest that it was a learning process for God in how to create life. Far from it. Rather, it simply indicates that during those prior eras of life and of the earth, God chose to create creatures and plants that he wanted to, and for his own purposes. We have certainly reaped the benefits: coal, oil and natural gas are the presumed leftover remnants of those former eras of life, and we have been permitted to use them for our own purposes, either for good or for evil. We could even speculate that perhaps that was the reason for those older eons of life, if it suited us to think so.

It would be very limiting to an infinite being, and perhaps a bit of hubris for ourselves, to believe that God is limited to performing his creative works of life on this world alone, making us the pinnacle of all of God's creations. While we certainly were created in his image, it does not guarantee that we are the sole residents of the universe at-large. Why the scriptures do not reveal these other creations is probably for the same reason that the beginning of Genesis starts with this verse:

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Had it been important to say that "In the beginning of ***all things wherever they exist in the entire universe*** God created the heaven and the earth," perhaps we might be inclined to believe that the bible tells us about all things that God has ever done. Doing so, however, leads us to the question, "Does it serve a useful purpose in the salvation of man to know about other worlds, other creations, or other existences?" The intent of the creation of our current era of life seems to be to prepare for another that is yet to come, one which will perhaps allow us to converse much more openly

about the greater expanse of the universe with the being that created it all. The intent of the scriptures, however, seems to be for the purpose of bringing a knowledge of those matters concerning the salvation of man to our understanding, and not to be a textbook concerning other creations.

The problem inherent with the idea of the bible as a description of the creation of the universe is that doing so is an attempt to discredit the scriptures by claiming its description as "bad science." It is a presumption too often accepted by Christians today, and it causes them to doubt the veracity of the claims in the bible. It is unhealthy and unwise to use the presumptions of one's opponents as the basis for a counter-argument. What people accept today about the bible is often fed by intentional mis-interpretation by those that refute the bible or that prefer not to believe in God.

If we may learn anything from the discoveries in biology, chemistry, physics, and other reputable sciences, it is that there is a diversity, a complexity, and sometimes even a simplicity that establishes the infinite wisdom, creative genius and controlled power of the God described in the scriptures. The most delicate of components of life that exist in cells, from DNA to mitochondria, from the endoplasmic reticulum to the cellular membrane, it all describes a creative intelligence vast beyond our understanding. From the formed structures of canyons and cliffs to fault zones and fissures, to the immense vastness of space and the structures of galaxies we find a being of immeasurable power. Yet in each of these we see the same God caring for man, whom he created in his own image and likeness because he wanted to do it.

That, it seems, is the lesson we learn from both the scriptures and from the sciences. No amount of frail speculation can detract from that truth.

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