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Robots and Humans

An article on the BBC News website (see <http://goo.gl/vyWzvO>) reported recently on the work of the Edinburgh Centre for Robotics, which has started working with a highly complex humanoid robot called Valkyrie.

Constructed by NASA-JSC in 2015 and delivered to the University of Edinburgh in spring 2016, Valkyrie is one of the most advanced humanoid robots in the world. It weighs 125kg, stands 1.8m tall and is intended to facilitate breakthroughs in humanoid control, motion planning and perception.

The Edinburgh team wants to push the boundaries of the ways that robots and humans can work together. A member of the team, Professor Sethu Vijayakumar, commented that "...for you and me, walking, balancing, it comes to us naturally, but getting a robot to do that takes a lot of effort." This effort has involved giving Valkyrie an array of sophisticated components, such as 44 moveable

joints to coordinate balance and motion, and sensors that include a scanning laser and stereo cameras to map its surroundings. The team hopes to get Valkyrie to emulate everyday activities which humans can do easily.

Clearly the design of Valkyrie has required an enormous amount of intelligent input, yet it still falls way below all the amazing capabilities of humans. How then did humans come to exist? By logical inference we cannot possibly have evolved by blind chance. We too must have been designed, but



The NASA Valkyrie robot. Image reproduced from <http://valkyrie.inf.ed.ac.uk/> under Fair Usage provisions.

by Someone far more intelligent than human beings.

Rational Belief?

The printed edition of *The Times* for 23rd May 2016 (part 2, pp. 2-3) featured an interesting article by Rachel Sylvester on an interview she had with atheist Richard Dawkins.

According to Sylvester, Dawkins insists that he is qualified to talk only about science. By his own admission, then, Dawkins is not qualified to talk about God, theology or philosophy. And yet he does. Volubly. "All my life I've felt I've been in a battle of ideas for rationality against superstition" he says.

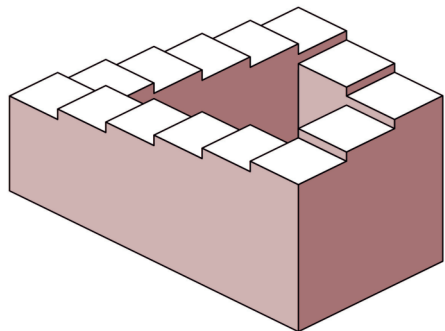
But why does Dawkins bother? If he is correct, that we are all the outcome of blind chance working on some original soup of chemicals over millions and millions of years, then you and I are just accidents - there is no purpose or direction to life. Why then shouldn't people believe just what they like? What does it matter if beliefs are rational or not? What does anything matter in such a pointless existence?

And here's the rub: if every living thing is the product of mere chance, then the workings of Dawkins' brain are also the product of mere random movements of atoms, molecules and charges. So what exactly does he mean by "rational"?

His belief that his thoughts are rational is subjective and entirely unprovable.

That's a very interesting word, belief. If Dawkins has a set of beliefs about the rationality of his position, then he has moved out of the realm of science and into the realm of philosophy - or, if you prefer, religion. So Dawkins actually has a religious position about his antithesis to religion!

But is Dawkins correct in his beliefs? There are some very well known scientific laws in the known physical universe, and one of these is the Second Law of Thermodynamics, sometimes called the Law of Entropy. There are no known exceptions to the areas in which this law operates. Yet Dawkins would have us believe that the Theory of Evolution - in which simple unicellular organisms supposedly become much more complex over very long periods of time - is somehow not subject to this law.



**Evolution: climbing
Mount Irrational**

This is surely wishful thinking at its most extreme. Clearly Dawkins is wrong on this ground alone, never mind the many other reasons why the Theory of Evolution is scientifically bankrupt.

Furthermore, why do scientific laws exist anyway? The existence of laws implies a lawgiver. Here at CSM we wish that Dawkins would come clean and admit it: the only truly rational position is creationism. The truly satisfactory explanation for the existence of the universe, its workings and the living organisms that dwell in it, is that they were designed.

We hope that Richard Dawkins will become reconciled with his Creator before it is too late. For chapter and verse, see Hebrews 9: 27.

Shocking News

One of the most extraordinary creatures in the world is the electric eel. It has long been known that this creature can paralyse its prey - generally smaller fishes - by emitting a sudden jolt of electricity. Atheists can only imagine how this incredible ability could have evolved gradually over millions of years - the key word, of course, being *imagine*.

Now an additional twist to the eel has been discovered. Dr Kenneth Catania, a researcher at Vanderbilt University in

Nashville, Tennessee, USA, has found that electric eels can remotely control their prey (see the BBC News website, <http://goo.gl/jytxQY>). The eel can emit a series of paired pulses that precisely target the prey's nervous system, controlling its muscles. For each pulse, the prey's muscles twitch. This involuntary movement gives away the prey's location even when the eel cannot directly see it.

Dr Catania commented, "People had known since the '70s that eels give off these pairs of pulses - or doublets - as they explore looking for food. Usually when they're excited and they know that food is around but can't find it. It actually turns out that this generates very rapid and strong [muscle] contraction. They can completely immobilise prey or they can make prey move, depending on what they would like to do."

Dr Catania considers that electric eels are "...just fascinating animals in their



An electric eel in an aquarium in the USA. Image: S. G. Johnson, Wikimedia, <https://goo.gl/yi2Hx8>, under CCA-Share Alike 3.0 Unported licence.

own right. It's amazing in the first place that they can give off electricity. To use that to control their prey's nervous system is incredible." Indeed. Perhaps the electric eel was designed by an incredible God.

Plants can Count

A study published in *Current Biology* (<http://goo.gl/KIAvCN>) earlier this year has announced the surprising discovery that plants can count. A team of German scientists has shown that the Venus Flytrap, a carnivorous plant, reacts according to the number of times its sensitive hairs are touched by prey it has captured in its jaw-like leaves.

The research team recorded the impulses generated by these hairs and measured various changes within the plant. They found that two touches triggered a hormone increase, and five brought on the production of digestive enzymes. Earlier research had already shown that it takes two touches of the

trigger hairs, within a 15-20 second period, to cause the trap to shut. The new study reveals how the flytrap responds to subsequent touches, increasing its digestive processes once a catch is confirmed and boosting them further if the prey seems to be a large one.

An article about these discoveries on the BBC News website (<http://goo.gl/hdxL3a>) quotes Rebecca Hilgenhof, a horticulturalist who looks after carnivorous plants for Kew Gardens in London. She comments, "For me, the interesting thing is that there needs to be something that tells the plant... to do certain things [after] a certain amount of touching, and a certain amount of time."

CSM noted this same issue, but in a different guise, two years ago (*Creation* vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 3-4) in relation to the ability of salmon to navigate. It is one thing for an organism to receive sensory perceptions; it is quite another thing for it to comprehend the significance of these perceptions and to respond appropriately. In the case of the salmon, the information it receives is compared to an innate map; whereas in the Venus Flytrap the stimuli must be compared to a "look-up chart" of appropriate responses. But who provided the map or the chart? Who provided these values? Such innate things are clear evidence for a Designer.



The jaw-like leaves of a Venus Flytrap with a captured shield-bug. Image courtesy of N. C. G. Ribeiro Nathy, www.pixabay.com.

Sailing spiders

On a fine breezy day you may feel something brush lightly over your face, and realize that it is a thread of silk. The culprit is likely to be a small spider that has been transporting itself through the air in a behaviour known as "ballooning". In this way spiders can travel large distances quickly and disperse to new habitats.

But ballooning on its own is subject to high risks - what if the spider lands on water? After all, about three-quarters of the surface of the globe is watery rather than dry land. A spider landing on such an unsuitable medium is likely to die - or is it?

An article in *The Guardian* online (<https://goo.gl/Cmka87>) reports on



Water-repellent tips to its legs enable a spider to scuttle across the surface of water. Image: A. van Leen, www.rgbstock.com.

recent studies by Japanese research fellow Morito Hayashi and his colleagues in the "SpiderLab" at the University of Nottingham. The team has found that spiders are competent sailors even in salty and turbulent conditions. If the spiders land on water they will often adopt a posture that enables them to sail across the surface. The tips of their legs are water repellent. Standing on six of these, the spider may hold its remaining two legs up high and close together, effectively forming a sail. It is then just a matter of letting the prevailing breeze blow the spider effortlessly along until it makes landfall. Some other spiders adopt a slightly different posture, "head down" with their abdomen held up high, likewise forming a sail. Still other spiders take a more pragmatic approach: they simply run quickly across the surface of the water.

One wonders how all this clever behaviour arose in the first place. In an evolutionist's world, the habit of ballooning would surely have more risks than advantages, seeing that the great majority of the Earth's surface is liquid, so one would have expected it to be selected against. It is only successful because the spider has water-repellent tips to its legs and has strategies to employ to take advantage of the prevailing wind. Hence these would have needed to be in place already before "ballooning" could develop successfully. But why would they be in place if the spider wasn't already utilising the water surface? Most

spiders would only need to utilise them if they were in the habit of ballooning... Catch 22. And a further point: if the spider's abilities on water are so successful, why aren't there many more spiders that spend their whole lives on water, seeking out other surface-living prey? It looks suspiciously like something is badly wrong with the evolutionist's world. Maybe it doesn't exist.

Cuttings & Comments from New Scientist

by Dr David Rosevear

19 March p.18 – DNA find shakes up human origins

A pit of bones in Spain has yielded the oldest human DNA so far sequenced. Dated at 430,000 BP, the bones are similar to those of *H. Neanderthal*, thought to have evolved much later. Neanderthals were fully human, and probably lived in caves in Europe during the ice age that followed the flood, some 4,300 years ago.

19 March p.30 – Desperately seeking

...

"Gravitational waves are finally in the bag, after a century of searching. But that's just one item ticked off a long list. From spawning eels to a black hole's event horizon, here are 11 more things that must be out there somewhere – if only we could find them."

Of course, with a Creation model, many of the anomalies disappear. The subjects listed are black holes, initial Darwinian ancestor, the Oort cloud, seat of consciousness, glueballs, magneto-receptors, primordial gravitational waves, whale 52, spawning eels, the chimp-human missing link and infinity. We will comment on just four of those pertinent to Creation.

"1. Black holes. At the heart of the Milky Way lurks an object so extreme it defies description. For good reason – no one can see it.

"Black holes throw up glaring paradoxes between general relativity and quantum theory, the two bedrocks on which our understanding of physical reality perches. Models indicate that black holes must slowly evaporate to nothing over time, bleeding out an emission known as Hawking radiation. But what happens to the matter and light they swallow, and particularly any information encoded in it? 'There doesn't seem to be a fully consistent story of how they can do that without modifying some of our most basic physical principles,' says Giddings."

"2. Initial Darwinian ancestor. In the beginning was Ida, the Initial Darwinian Ancestor – the first material on Earth to transform from inert to, well, ert. Ida begat Luca, the last universal common ancestor, a molecule that stored information as genetic code, and gave rise to all life on Earth. Ida and Luca live on

within us. Our cells all use the same genetic code embodied in DNA, suggesting Luca was itself made of DNA. Except it isn't that simple. All life uses proteins to make DNA and execute its code – but proteins themselves are made from DNA templates. Which came first?

“4 billion years ago, IDA became the first thing to make the transition into life. We don't know what it was made of but scientists are piecing together the story.” There follows the usual diagram of a Darwinian tree of life with algae, plants, fungi, animals and man at the ends of the branches. We could suggest a better acronym, NONSUCH, the Novel Original Naturally Selected Common Human, (or should we say none such?)

For any life form, however basic, to function and reproduce itself (minimum needs) it must possess all the indispensable machinery found in today's forms. This is so complicated that it could not spring into existence ready-made. A Designer is obviously essential.

“3. The Oort cloud: You'll find it in every astronomy textbook: the spherical cloud of a trillion lumps of rock and ice, most a few kilometres across, that forms the solar system's outermost boundary.

“Yet the textbook Oort cloud denizen is far too small for us to observe, and exists in almost total darkness... The only, rather circumstantial, evidence we have for its existence is the occasional passage of a 'long period' comet – presumed to be an Oort

cloud object knocked in our direction by the gravitational perturbation of other stars.”

“But a constant influx of new comets such as comet ISON, which broke up in December 2013 as it came too close to the sun, is good enough for most astronomers. ‘We can be quite confident the Oort cloud exists even though we have never actually imaged an object,’ says Scott Sheppard of the Carnegie Institute of Science in Washington DC.”

Short period comets like Halley's orbit round and round our sun every few decades. They lose material as a tail by evaporation, especially as they pass by the sun, so they cannot have been here for billions of years. Therefore, it is argued, they have hung out in this cloud for eons before being nudged by gravity in our direction. The problem vanishes if you accept God's Word that all things were created and made only thousands of years ago.

“10. The chimp-human missing link Astonishing fossils are found every year, but we still haven't dug up the original ‘missing link’. Where is this last common ancestor of humans and chimps? ... It would help if we knew precisely what we are looking for.”

Neither fossil bones nor genomes hold out any hope of finding this imaginary pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

It is not a good survival technique to throw off a warm hairy coat, dispose of a great deal of your musculature and leave the safety of the trees to walk among carnivores. And no amount of wishful thinking can produce bigger

and better brains and the built-in ability to pick up your mother tongue. The most important difference, of course, is that man is made in the image of his Creator.

26 March p.5 – Long live evolution, with

p.34 - Intelligent without design

Both the editorial and the article are about the cover story, **Intelligent Evolution**, an oxymoron if ever I heard one.

Although Darwin's masterpiece is said to be sufficient in itself, it is thought that it might be good to try to incorporate the new insights of epigenetics (see pamphlet 395) into the theory to explain changes. However, since the switching on and off of genes does not affect the DNA sequence, there can be no evolution.

“The theory of evolution is a splendid thing: an eloquent and utterly logical explanation for how natural selection solves the problem of survival and creates the enormous diversity of life we see in the world around us.”

But natural selection cannot provide any new genetic information.

“So eloquent, in fact, that its outputs are still taken by many as those of an intelligent designer. The Pew Research Foundation recently found that a third of American adults reject evolution entirely, believing that humans and other life forms have existed just as they are now since the beginning of time. Many more believe it is not the whole story

and that it must be guided by a god. Only a small minority can be said to really grasp the theory.

It is not surprising, then, that evolution is so frequently contested by those who either know no better, or who pretend for their own reasons that it is a matter of opinion rather than fact.” It seems that the editor imagines that more than half of American adults fall into these categories. The CSM, formed as the Evolution Protest Movement in 1932, is proud to be the world's oldest organisation to promote this fight against the theory of evolution. Facts that counter Darwinism are constantly coming to light, as this journal can attest. Kate Douglas reports on p.34 that evolution's random workings have a lot in common with that most eloquent problem solver, the human brain. She rates the feather as being fantastically designed for flight, and the mammalian eye as a marvel of complex design, **“And these are just the tip of the iceberg of evolution's incredible prowess as a designer.”** Incredible indeed! Her contention is that added together, evolution's simple processes form an intricate learning machine that draws lessons from past successes to improve future performance. This suggests that evolution can have a goal in view to aim for. With our brains we learn from experience not to repeat mistakes, but a supposed evolutionary process using random mutations is heading for extinction of the individual. The article mentions that natural selection picks out the best gene

variant to fit a changing environment. This is true, but has nothing to do with evolution of new genes. These alleles are already present in the created kind. The epigenome can add or remove methyl groups to switch off or on a set of genes, but this does not alter the DNA sequence. This is variation within a kind, a rapid process that allows minor changes back and forth about a mean position.

Creationists are quite happy with the idea of natural selection, but reject the Darwinian idea that it leads to changes in the DNA sequence, beneficial or otherwise. Mutations, however, vary between neutral and lethal in their effects. This is because there is a complex interaction of sets of genes within the genome that leaves little room for any but trivial changes. The whole is much more than the sum of its parts.

The evolution–brain analogy is ‘confirmed’ by using computer models, where the researchers can change one ‘gene’ at a time to work towards a known goal. That doesn’t seem quite random, does it?

An example of learning held up here is that crocodiles can produce male or female offspring depending on the temperature at which the egg is incubated. But this arrangement is programmed into the reproductive system, and only results in baby crocs. The article concludes: **“The observation that evolutionary adaptations look like the product of intelligence isn’t evidence against**

Darwinian evolution – it’s exactly what you should expect.”

So, are all these American adults cited wrong? I am reminded of the soldier’s mother watching the military parade. ‘Look at our Jim. He’s the only one is step.’

2 April p.3 – Bare necessities, with p.6 – Smallest ever genome comes to life & p.7 – Tiny but mighty

These articles recount the making of the tiniest genome that can live and reproduce by the J. Craig Venter Institute in California. That team had produced the first complete human genome, from JCV’s own tissue.

The new strain, JVCIsyn3.0, was made from a bacterium with a small genome. To discover which genes were not essential to the life of the bug under laboratory conditions in a nutrient-rich culture, the team switched off each gene in turn. If the bacterium continued to live, grow and divide, that gene was dumped from the genome. If when a gene was removed, the bug died, then that gene was kept as essential. Put together on a computer and then assembled by DNA sequencers, this genome of 473 genes has 50 fewer than the smallest naturally occurring bacterium (that can survive in less than ideal conditions).

The team placed the new genome into another bacterium from which its own native genome had been removed. The new, artificial cell had all of the cell’s intricate apparatus for translating the information of the new genome into proteins, checking the fidelity of the

reproducing genes, and turning nutrients into energy. **“So the ability to create life from scratch without nature’s help is still way beyond our capabilities.”**(For nature, read the Creator.)

The work uses genes already present – no one could make a complex gene from scratch with its coded information. Moreover, the team has no idea what a third of these vital genes do, or how they function.

Richard Kitney, a professor of bio-medicine at Imperial College, London says: **“No, it tells us nothing about how life started naturally.”** Asked whether this takes us closer towards creating living organisms from scratch, he added, **“This is not really a step forward in that sense.”**

16 April p.8 – Health depends on dad’s sperm

“Sperm pass on more than just their DNA. Chemical switches attached to the genomes of sperm – known as epigenetic tags – have been shown to alter the next generation for the first time...”

“Cambridge and his colleagues have shown for the first time that sperm epigenetic tags do change gene expression in embryos – and that these tags are essential for healthy development...”

“By removing different combinations of tags [in frog sperm], they discovered that those normally retained in the sperm are important for embryonic development. Removing them leads to abnormal

gene expression in the embryo, followed by developmental problems.”

This does look rather like a designed system. Tags are emplaced when a father smokes, breaths in lots of diesel fumes, and has other experiences. ‘The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children...’

Since the sequence of nucleotides in the genes is left unaltered, no evolution has taken place.

16 April p.38 – The unscientific method

Here is yet another article on the unreliability of over half of all published scientific results. This is blamed on unconscious bias, the drive by authors to publish lots of papers in order to further their careers, and the desire of the publishing journals to show strong positive relationships – between a particular medical treatment and improved health, for example. Bias affects the interpretation of data, with some data being omitted if it doesn’t fit preconceived ideas. Sometimes the ‘data is tortured until it confesses’!

Peer reviewers work anonymously and are unpaid, so there is little incentive to check papers meticulously. It is mentioned that **“dodgy statistics are rife in the biological sciences”**. After all, they know that evolution is true.

23 April p.9 – Cow’s milk carb boosts a baby’s good bacteria

One of the ingredients of cow’s milk seems to encourage the growth of a healthy set of gut bugs, much as human

breast milk does. But new-borns cannot cope with cow's milk.

“Breast milk is a wonder drink for newborns. It contains a host of beneficial components, such as antibodies that protect the baby from disease, and the proteins, vitamins and fat needed for development. It also contains oligosaccharides – carbohydrates that act as prebiotics and encourage the growth of the right gut bacteria... Allowing the wrong ones to dominate can put a person at risk of developing all sorts of disorders, including obesity and even Parkinson's disease.”

This would seem to be a well-designed interaction between mother and baby that needed to be fully developed from the start.

23 April p.20 – The clap trap

This article (sorry about the title, gentle reader) assures us that polygamy is the default human mating system, so wonders why monogamy eventually took hold. Bible readers could tell the author that ‘at the beginning’ the Lord God made them male and female and said the man should cleave to his wife and the two become one flesh. Here it is pointed out that monogamy leads to a father's close involvement in the raising of the child. It is also much healthier, avoiding STIs.

23 April p.38 – Genes of the undead

It is claimed that the variation in genetic alleles in humans is due to inter-breeding between various types

of early people such as Neanderthals, a very rare breed labelled Denisovans, early Homo sapiens and other races as yet undiscovered. Biblical history, of course, tells us of the first man Adam and his wife Eve, the mother of us all. This article says that pale skin, freckles, red hair and a tolerance to cold were acquired from Neanderthals who lived in northern climes during the ice age. The Denisovan version of one gene helped some folk survive in low oxygen environments up mountains. We may apparently owe our immune system genes to the interaction between these various ancient peoples, where they encountered new diseases. The immunity genes in some fossil men are remarkably similar to those found in many humans today.

It does not seem unreasonable to think that our first parents were endowed with a large variety of alleles, genes that have similar functions but vary in their suitability for surviving in different environments. This alternative theory about interbreeding of different lines of ancestors leads to racism, where different ethnic groups are thought to be less evolved.

30 April p.34 – Morality tale

“The rise of moralising religions like Christianity can be explained by evolution – and so can their eventual downfall, says evolutionary psychologist Nicholas Baumard.

“Christianity's success is often attributed to its supposedly unique message. Unlike earlier religions, it exhorted people to be good and

promised to reward them for their goodness in the afterlife.” This is a common but erroneous view. It is by God’s grace that fallen man is offered salvation. Christ came as a man to shed His blood in order to pay the penalty for our sin, satisfying the wrath of a holy God. Salvation is not of works [Eph 2:8-9].

Our psychologist points out that the Christian who turns the other cheek is at a disadvantage against a vengeful foe.

“Christianity and other moralising religions could eventually vanish.”

However, I’ve read the Book, and it says the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

21 May p. 15 – Life’s origin not so tough if you can build bits of RNA in the lab

Evolutionist claim that, since science cannot cope with a Creator, life must have come about by chance. That in itself is illogical. These things are spiritually discerned (I Cor. 2:14).

RNA is thought to be a forerunner of the over-complex DNA molecule - protein system, since it not only carries information, but has some catalytic properties. Hitherto one stumbling block has been that two vital components of RNA, adenosine and guanosine (A & G), two of the four bases with T & U that carry the code, could not be made without a chemist’s skill and intelligence.

“Making these subunits separately and linking them together step by step generally led to a useless mess in

which most of the molecules were the wrong shape.”

Now a team have produced these two in the laboratory from simpler precursors such as formic acid, HCOOH.

“The next step is to link the components into a full length RNA strand.”

However randomly placed A, G, T & U would neither carry a code nor be a catalyst. RNA strands can be hundreds of bases in length so the statistical probability of a useful code forming is sensibly zero. Moreover, the link between phosphate and ribose in the RNA backbone is required to be at a particular position across the sugar, and each and every ribose must be a dextro-rotatory stereoisomer. Further, RNA is just a small part of the machinery of the living cell.

Give up?

21 May p.15 – Spiders’ sticky silk has a dual identity

A team in Paris has studied the sticky ‘capture’ silk in the spiral orbs of a spider’s web. They found that when it is stretched, it extends like a spring. When it is compressed, however, it remains taut, rather than sagging in the middle like a thread. This solid-liquid dual nature stems from the silk being made of a filament wrapped in glue droplets.

Who made the machinery that allowed the humble spider to achieve this remarkable feat?

28 May p.15 – Fish hippies relax sex rules at tropical island retreats

This Just So story about **“hotbeds of interspecies sex”** is an example of two species of surgeonfish hybridising. Fish lay their eggs and the males fertilise them.

The blue surgeonfish (*Acanthurus leucosternon*) abound in the Indian Ocean, while whitecheek surgeonfish (*Acanthurus nigricans*) are found in the Pacific.

“Some 600,000 years ago [read; ca. 4500 years ago, at the onset of the ice age following the flood], **a sea-level drop separated the two oceans, and fish on either side of the land barrier began to evolve** [read; adapt through selecting different alleles by epigenetic switches] **into distinct species...The seas rose again about 6,000 years ago** [closer!], **allowing the two reef fish to meet at islands near the Indo-Pacific border, including Christmas Island and the Cocos Islands.”** Hybrid (mongrel) fish are fitter, having a variety of alleles (genes).

4 June p.7 – Moth classic in action

“It is a textbook example of evolution: the rise of industrial cities led to the darkening of the peppered moth – an adaptive response to pollution and bird predation. Now two studies have independently picked up a single gene behind this trait.”

This old chestnut has nothing to do with Darwinian evolution. Before the industrial revolution there were two varieties of peppered moth, dark and light. After the clean air act there were

still the same two varieties. Natural selection meant that the relative populations shifted back and forth as light or dark forms became more visible to birds against polluted or clean tree bark. The DNA of both forms is the same so there is no evolution. A gene is simply switched off or on by epigenetic methyl groups. This ‘textbook example of evolution’ underlines the fact that there is no evidence for Darwin’s theory.

4 June p.10 – Building blocks of life spotted around comet

“A frosty comet could have delivered the ingredients for life on Earth. The European Space Agency’s Rosetta spacecraft has spotted an amino acid on the comet it orbits – confirming that a ball of ice and dust can hold one of life’s major building blocks.”

What has actually been found? The amino acid is the simplest of the 20 found in proteins, glycine – $\text{NH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{COOH}$ – the only one not to exist as a stereoisomer. It is a product of simple organic chemicals interacting spontaneously. The catalytic activity of proteins is derived from the sequence of hundreds of left-handed amino acids. It is statistically impossible that such a sequence could arrive spontaneously. In all cases except glycine, amino acids made in the laboratory exist as a 50:50 mixture of left- and right-handed isomers, and therefore of no biological significance.

“The probe also picked up phosphorus, a component of DNA.” There is no lack of phosphorus compounds

(phosphates) in the Earth's rocks, but using these compounds to make DNA with its coded sequence of bases is beyond the ability of the most skilled chemists. Chance formation? – no chance!

The gas cloud around the comet also contained traces of alcohols and sugars – the result of simple organic chemistry probably energised by solar radiation. It was famously said that the Creator is a mathematician of a high order. He is also a chemist whose work with complex biomolecules cannot be duplicated.

11 June p.7 – Star tern

“An Arctic tern has claimed the record for the longest ever migration, with a 96,000 kilometre trip [60,000 miles] from the UK to Antarctica and back. The 100 gram bird wore a 0.7 g tracking device on its leg so its route could be followed.”

It spends 9 months of the year feeding around the Southern Ocean but returns to breed in the Farne Islands off Northumbria.

The tracking device was designed by intelligent minds. The tern is much more complex than this device.

11 June p.8 –The cosmic expansion crisis

“We must be missing something. The universe is expanding 9 per cent faster than it should be. Either our best measurements are wrong, or a glimmer of new physics is peeking through the cracks of modern cosmology.”

Measurements of how the universe expanded **“some 13.7 billion years ago”** are based on **“dimples in the cosmic microwave background, a glow left behind by the hot, soupy universe ... after the big bang.”**

These calculations are useless if the universe was created some six thousand years ago, as Genesis and history tell us. The present expansion is measured by how quickly distant galaxies are receding from us, though how such distances are found isn't said. This recession led to the 'discovery' of dark energy, a mysterious outward pressure pushing the universe apart.

The big bang theory is propped up by *ad hoc* adjustments such as the inventions of dark energy and dark matter, neither of which can be detected. Cosmologists have long been saying that the theory needs to be replaced, but their problem is that the only alternative to a spontaneous beginning is a designed one.

This present discrepancy is the latest difficulty that must be patched up.

“The easiest solution, says Riess, is dark radiation: small unknown particles similar to neutrinos, moving close to the speed of light around the beginning of time.” These neutrinos **“are part of some hidden sector – some world which exists right under our noses but interacts with our world extremely weakly.”**

Curiouser and curiouser said Alice!

11 June p.18 – A virtual certainty?

Are you ready for some more science fiction, dear reader?

“Are we, and the universe we are in, a simulation? SpaceX chief Elon Musk thinks there is a tiny billions-to-one chance that we actually exist physically, and it is much more likely that we are data swirling around on someone’s supercomputer.

“There are some intriguing properties of the universe that make us ponder this possibility, in particular the masses of fundamental particles, such as electrons and quarks, and the strengths of forces that dictate their interactions.

“Growing evidence tells us that if the universe had been born with masses and forces only slightly different to the ones we have, the results would have been catastrophic, with a dead and sterile cosmos. Perhaps we are only here because some higher dimensional programmer ‘fine-tuned’ our fundamental laws.”

The fact that we have free will and are responsible for our actions shows that we are real people, created rather than programmed, in a universe beautifully designed for us. Musk’s outlandish idea smells like an excuse to dodge his responsibility to worship and serve the Lord his God.

18 June p.7 – Not such a bird brain

“Some birds behave far more intelligently than we would expect from their tiny brains. Now we know why – by densely cramming as many neurons into their brains as some primates. The macaw, for example, has more neurons in its forebrain

than a macaque, despite its brain being walnut-sized.”

Of course, it wasn’t the birds that did the cramming.

18 June p.8 – LIGO sees second black hole merger

In 3 months at the end of 2015, scientists claim to have twice detected minute gravity waves due to the merging of pairs of black holes.

If the universe were some 13 billion years old, it’s surprising that there could be any black holes left at this rate.

18 June p. 28 – Out of the shadows

Some cosmologists are now seriously questioning the reality of the standard model that is supported by the two fudge factors of dark matter and dark energy.

Here are a couple of quotes:

“Dark energy’s power, the insurgents claim, is a mere illusion created by the machinery of the standard model itself.”

“But like dark energy, dark matter might be an illusion born of false assumptions about the universe, says Thomas Buchert of the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon, France.”

25 June p.10 – Civilisation, the enemy of bacteria

Evolutionists claim to deal with things that changed in the distant past, when nobody was there to witness it. This must lead to Just So stories, as here, where it is claimed that the bacteria that

live in the human gut are less diverse than in the past.

“Gillings suggests that the micro-organisms living inside us began to get less diverse 350,000 years ago, when we learned to use fire. Cooking unlocked more calories from our food, allowing us to evolve smaller digestive tracts, with less space for microbes to grow. Bacterial diversity probably declined further around 10,000 years ago, when the invention of agriculture narrowed our diets and pushed sheep, pigs, cattle and poultry to eventually become the most common vertebrates on Earth.”

Perhaps using calculating machines rather than learning our tables would allow us to evolve smaller brains.

The things that add or subtract from our gut biome are disease and the use of antibiotics.

From the Postbag

“We as a family are so grateful for all the hard work that you have put into this ministry, which has blessed us enormously. We have a son who is finishing his GCSEs and then moving into an engineering apprenticeship. The literature that CSM provides has helped to equip our children as they move on; thank you so much in aiding us to provide good sound Bible / Science knowledge to our family and

others we meet.” Yours in Christ, *WB*

And from Canada -

“Thank you so, so much for your continued work for CSM. A. and I keep the literature in our kitchen and read it every day with our lunch ('Daily Bread' in both senses). It builds us up each and every time, and has provided us so often with a ready 'nugget' to pass on to one of our grownup(ish!) children when they are struggling for an answer to a difficult question from a fellow student.”

Quotes

The Problem with the Naturalistic Worldview...

"The whole picture professes to depend on inferences from observed facts. Unless inference is valid, the whole picture disappears.... Unless Reason is an absolute, all is in ruins. Yet those who ask me to believe this world picture also ask me to believe that Reason is simply the unforeseen and unintended by-product of mindless matter at one stage of its endless and aimless becoming. Here is flat contradiction. They ask me at the same moment to accept a conclusion and to discredit the only testimony on which that conclusion can be based."

C. S. Lewis

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