

False Assumptions About Evolution—Part Three

Why Scientists Can Be Wrong

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The history of science reveals many instances where the majority of scientists have been convinced as to a particular theory and yet been wrong. Further, when it comes to the discussion of the creation/evolution issue, many scientists today simply seem to be closed minded. Why? Because modern science is committed to the ideology of evolution and any time a philosophical commitment to a particular ideology exists, there will probably be a reluctance to consider alternate viewpoints. Yet consider again the comments of Dr. A. E. Wilder-Smith, the deliverer of the Huxley Memorial Lecture at the Oxford Union, Oxford University, February 14, 1986:

May not a future generation well ask how any scientist, in full possession of his intellectual faculties and with adequate knowledge of information theory could ever execute the feat of cognitive acrobatics necessary to sincerely believe that a (supremely complex) machine system of information, storage and retrieval, servicing millions of cells, diagnosing defects and then repairing them in a teleonomic Von Newman machine manner, arose in randomness—the antipole of information?”³⁴

In other words, “How could any scientist in possession of the modern facts we now have logically continue to exercise faith in naturalistic evolution?” As molecular biologist Michael Denton observes of the created order of living things, “To common sense it does indeed appear absurd to propose that chance could have thrown together devices of such complexity and ingenuity that they appear to represent the very epitome of perfection.”³⁵

Nevertheless, there are many reasons explaining why scientists who accept evolution can be wrong. Among them we mention four.

A) A false belief can be accepted by mistakenly assuming there are no legitimate scientific theories to replace it.

Dr. Wilder-Smith observes that when the modern scientific establishment adheres to evolutionary belief, it is “certainly not because experimental evidence encourages the establishment to do so.”³⁶ He explains that a commitment to materialism is the problem. Thus,

There exists at present no other *purely scientific* alternative which postulates a purely scientific *materialistic* basis for biogenesis and biology. To repeat, there is at present no *purely scientific alternative to Darwin*. Creationism, being religious, is of little use to the materialistic thought of today. It is simply an irrelevant subject worthy only of ridicule.... Scientists whose upbringing and education are Darwinian and therefore naturalistic, have for this reason no real alternative to Darwinism. Here we have perhaps one of the main reasons for the victory of Darwinism even today, even though the accumulating evidence of science is steadily against the theory.³⁷

But what if there is a legitimate scientific option to evolution which is not materialistic? For example, as we will discuss later, Yale Law School graduate Wendell R. Bird fully documents that the theory of “abrupt appearance” is entirely scientific—and also that such a theory was capable of being advanced scientifically by scientists of an earlier era. Further, he shows that creation itself is not *necessarily* religious; it too can be fully scientific.³⁸

B) A false theory can be accepted because scientific facts can be misinterpreted or unnaturally forced to fit a dominant theory.

The facts of the natural world are in the possession of every scientist, creationist or evolutionist. The issue in debate is the interpretation of those facts. Yet scientific facts may not only *seem* to fit a false theory, but scientific facts themselves may become irrelevant because of the intrinsic appeal of a particular paradigm whose own preservation becomes paramount:

Yet no matter how convincing such disproofs [of evolution] might appear, no matter how contradictory and unreal much of the Darwinian framework might now seem to anyone not committed to its defense, as philosophers of science like Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend have pointed out, it is impossible to falsify theories *by reference to the facts* or indeed by any sort of rational or empirical argument. The history of science amply testifies to what Kuhn has termed ‘the priority of the paradigm’ and provides many fascinating examples of the *extraordinary lengths* to which members of the scientific community will go to defend a theory just as long as it holds sufficient intrinsic appeal.³⁹

For example, the geocentric theory of the sun orbiting the earth dominated science for several hundred years. Although a heliocentric alternative was considered as early as the Greek astronomers, the geocentric theory was, by the late middle ages, “a self-evident truth, the one and only sacred and unalterable picture of cosmological reality.”⁴⁰ But, as with all false theories, there were innumerable facts which got in the way. The response of scientists was to invent “explanations” to account for the irregularities. As more and more explanations were required to deal with more and more problems presented by undeniable facts—by the early 16th century the entire Ptolemaic system had become “a monstrosity” of fantastically involved explanations and counter-explanations.⁴¹ Nevertheless, “so ingrained was the idea that the earth was the center of the universe that hardly *anyone*, even those astronomers who were well aware of the growing unreality of the whole system, *ever bothered to consider an alternative theory.*”⁴²

The 18th century concept of phlogiston is also instructive. The theory of phlogiston “assumed that all combustible bodies, including metals, contained a common material, phlogiston, which escaped on combustion but could be readily transferred from one body to another.”⁴³ Scientific experiments with zinc and phosphorus appeared to prove the phlogiston theory.⁴⁴ The concept was fully accepted for a hundred years and debated for another hundred years before it was finally disproven. But in fact, “The theory was a total misrepresentation of reality. Phlogiston did not even exist, and yet its existence was firmly believed and the theory adhered to rigidly for nearly 100 years throughout the 18th century.”⁴⁵

As was true for the geocentric theory, awkward facts were cunningly assimilated, explained away or ignored. It was the false theory *itself* which determined how science dealt with facts. The facts themselves had to bow to the truth of phlogiston. Thus, as time progressed and more discoveries were made which made it increasingly difficult to believe in phlogiston, the theory was not rejected but “was modified by the insertion of more and more unwarranted and *ad hoc* assumptions about the nature of phlogiston.”⁴⁶

In his *Origins of Modern Science*, Professor H. Butterfield observes how the phlogiston theory actually led to scientists being intellectually incapacitated to deal with the evidence: “...the last two decades of the 18th century give one of the most spectacular proofs in history of the fact that able men who had the truth under their very noses, and possessed all the ingredients for the solution of the problem—the very men who had actually made the

strategic discoveries—were incapacitated by the phlogiston theory from realizing the implications of their own work.”⁴⁷

In a similar fashion Denton comments, “It is not hard to find inversions of common sense in modern evolutionary thought which are strikingly reminiscent of the mental gymnastics of the phlogiston chemists or the medieval astronomers.... The Darwinist, instead of questioning the orthodox framework as common sense would seem to dictate, attempts of justifying his position by *ad hoc* proposals, ...which to the skeptic are self-apparent rationalizations to neutralize what is, on the face of it, hostile evidence.”⁴⁸

Thus, the great many intractable scientific problems with modern evolutionary belief do *not* constitute a disproof of Darwinian claims but rather situations which require adjustment to the belief in order that the belief be preserved at all costs.

C) A false belief can be accepted because scientists assume the belief to be true only because of broad general support among scientists.

In the case of evolution, no one questions the basic idea because everyone accepts the basic idea:

The fact that every journal, academic debate and popular discussion assumes the truth of Darwinian theory tends to reinforce its credibility enormously. This is bound to be so because, as sociologists of knowledge are at pains to point out, it is by conversation in the broadest sense of the word that our views and conceptions of reality are maintained and therefore the plausibility of any theory or world view is largely dependent upon the social support it receives rather than its empirical content or rational consistency. Thus all the pervasive affirmation of the validity of Darwinian theory has had the inevitable effect of raising its status to an impregnable axiom which could not even conceivably be wrong.”⁴⁹

Hence the constant refrain that evolution is an “undisputed scientific fact.” As Richard Dawkins asserts in *The Selfish Gene*: “The theory is about as much in doubt as the earth goes around the sun.”⁵⁰ Once the scientific community elevates a theory, in this case evolution, to a self-evident truth, defending it becomes irrelevant and there is “no longer any point in having to establish its validity by reference to empirical facts.”⁵¹ Further, all disagreement with the current view becomes irrational by definition. As P. Feyerabend argues in his article “Problems of Empiricism” in *Beyond the Edge of Certainty*: “The myth is therefore of no objective relevance, it continues to exist solely as the result of the effort of the community of believers and of their leaders, be these now priests or Nobel Prize winners. Its ‘success’ is entirely manmade.”⁵²

D) A false belief can be accepted by scientists because they prefer its philosophical implications.

For example, there are many materialistic scientists who are also atheists and therefore more than happy to accept the atheistic implications of naturalistic evolution. Here, as we indicate below, the very purpose of evolution is to explain things without recourse to God. Again, scientists are only men, and if the unregenerate bent of the human heart underscores the attempt to escape God, then naturalistic evolution is certainly an appealing idea. If there is no God, there are no necessary moral standards and one may happily discover justification for any conceivable belief or lifestyle.

Many modern scientists have pointed out with seeming satisfaction that, given evolution, there is no need to consider God. This tends to make one suspect that some of these scientists may have ulterior motives for wanting evolution to be true.⁵³ For example, in his

Heredity, Race and Society, Theodosius Dobzhansky observes, “Most people, however, greeted the scientific proof of this view [i.e., evolution] as a great *liberation from spiritual bondage*, and saw in it the promise of a better future.”⁵⁴ As noted novelist Aldous Huxley, grandson of “Darwin’s bulldog,” Thomas Henry Huxley, once confessed in his *Ends and Means*:

“I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption.... Most ignorance is invincible ignorance. We don’t know because we don’t want to know.” And “The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics; he is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do, or why his friends should not seize political power and govern in the way they find most advantageous to themselves.... For myself, as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation.”⁵⁵

Huxley proceeds to identify this liberation as being political, economic and sexual and, no doubt, like many other modern materialists, found evolutionary belief quite satisfying.

Footnotes:

34. A. E. Wilder-Smith, *The Scientific Alternative to Neo-Darwinian Evolutionary Theory: Information, Sources and Structures* (Costa Mesa, CA: TWFP Publishers, 1987), p. III.
35. Denton, p. 326.
36. Wilder-Smith, *The Scientific Alternative*, p. iv.
37. *Ibid.*, second emphasis added.
38. Bird, Vols. 1 and 2; cf., Vol. 1, p. 45.
39. Denton, p. 348, emphasis added.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, p. 349.
42. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Wilder-Smith, *The Scientific Alternative*, p. I.
45. Denton, p. 358.
46. *Ibid.*
47. H. Butterfield, *Origins of Modern Science*, 1957, p. 199 cited in Denton, p. 351.
48. Denton, pp. 351-352.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
50. In *ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
52. P. Feyerabend, *Beyond the Edge of Certainty*, 1965, p. 176 as cited in Denton, p. 77.
53. Morris, *The Long War*, pp. 109-120.
54. Wysong, *The Creation/Evolution Controversy*, p. 40 citing Dobzhansky, *Heredity, Race and Society*, 1952, p. 63, emphasis added.
55. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946), pp. 270, 273.