The Real Issue is Macroevolution

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Editor:

David Thomas, in his June 1 letter, completely avoids the foundational issue of how a first living cell could possibly have arisen spontaneously from nonliving chemicals, on which I called his bluff in my 5/9/97 letter. He likewise dodges entirely the equally crucial question of how macroevolutionary innovation takes place, that is, how an entirely new gene can appear. Why does Mr. Thomas not have the integrity to admit that neither he nor any evolutionist has even the faintest clue as to a mechanism?

Instead, Mr. Thomas reverts to the standard evolutionist strategy of discussing microevolution and speciation, folding his hands, and pretending the debate is settled. As I have pointed out on many previous occasions, the real issue is macroevolution, that is, how one gets feathers from scales and a bat from a mouse. Microevolution or speciation simply does not accomplish such miracles.

Let me try again to make the issue clear. Living organisms at a molecular level are comprised of a dizzying collection of complex widgets which in many ways perform as tiny machines with very specific functions. To go from a bacterium, built from about 1,000 different kinds of widgets, to a mammal, built from about 100,000 different kinds of widgets, somewhere in an evolutionary path some new widgets surely need to be added. How does this happen? Where do the blueprints for new widgets come from?

Research indicates that a given protein widget can be made in many flavors and still retain its basic functionality. In the case of such a widget with 200 parts (amino acid sites), on the average only about 100, or half, the sites must have exactly the right part. The other 100 sites, on average, can be random. With 20 different kinds of parts, this means there are 20 to the 100th power, or 10 to the 130th power, varieties of this widget that offer some semblance of the widget functionality.

But if we are assembling new widgets randomly (but for sake of argument testing them intelligently), how many do we need to assemble (and test) before we have a reasonable chance of finding one that works? There are 20 to the 200th power, or 10 to the 260th power possibilities. The chance of finding just one from the set of functional widgets is only one in 10 to the 130th power! As I have pointed our before, if one assembles and tests a full widget every 100 picoseconds simultaneously for each atom in the universe for a period of 30 billion years, one falls 22 orders of magnitude short of having a plausible chance of hitting one of the lucky combinations. Who would be willing to bet money with such odds?

These, however, appear to be the sort of odds involved in getting a new gene or new widget in a living organism within a strictly atheist/materialist philosophical framework, that is, when a superintelligent Agent is excluded. Mr. Thomas objects, saying, "You need heredity, selection, and a little time as well." Well, I've thrown in instantaneous intelligent selection gratis in my calculation. If he wants to substitute natural selection and many generations to identify which of the widgets are functional, he merely worsens the odds by a few dozen additional orders of magnitude.

Why is Mr. Thomas committed to such irrationality? When has the world witnessed a more dramatic example of intellectual fraud? Is evolution not making utter mockery of the scientific enterprise? How can otherwise intelligent people be so gullible?

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