

Evolution Cannot Account for Origin of Life:

A response to Ray Rogers

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Editor:

Ray Rogers, in his 7/16/97 letter, takes issue with one of my frequent claims, namely, that the atheist belief a living organism can arise spontaneously, via natural law, from nonliving chemicals is, from a scientific standpoint, utter nonsense. He draws from a News and Views article in the 12 June 1997 issue of Nature that reports on an origin of life meeting held in Sweden in April.

Taking a cue from the Nature article, Rogers points to the work of Bolli et al. who, starting from a dilute solution of tetranucleotide cyclophosphate, have assembled oligomers of up to 36 nucleotides in length that display right- or left-handedness (Rogers mistakenly calls these 'proteins'), and he asserts these are 'life-like molecules'.

But two questions are appropriate here. First, where in the universe (except in a living cell or in a biochemist's lab) can one reasonably expect to find a dilute solution of tetranucleotide cyclophosphate? And second, in what fundamental sense are short homochiral oligomers 'life-like'?

The answer to the first question, to a high degree of confidence, is nowhere. The answer to the second is almost none. This is because the paramount aspect of nucleic acid molecules in living systems is the coded information they convey. While their structure is ideally suited to a language based on four symbols, the molecules themselves serve merely as the material template for conveying the information. Without the crucial magic information, such molecules have no purpose. Without the information, life as it appears on earth would not exist. Although their structure is indeed significant, the set of magic codes that provide the keys to protein design is what really bestows any 'life-like' quality to these molecules. The truly relevant question is where does this coded information come from?

To dispute my position using such arguments implies to me Mr. Rogers is having difficulty reasoning clearly. The observation that cows jump does not automatically justify an assertion that cows jump over the moon. The observation that one can assemble a few organic compounds in the laboratory does not justify an assertion that the most complex systems known to man spontaneously self-assemble. Indeed many are not aware that so-called origin of life research is focusing on secondary questions and blindly evading most the central issues. Mr. Rogers seems to be missing this awareness as he reads the Nature report.

The proteins in living systems (not to mention the systems themselves) are incredibly special. Ray Rogers asks for numbers (on just how special), and in previous letters I have provided them. The numbers argue convincingly from a scientific standpoint that living systems can never arise spontaneously via natural processes. Mr. Rogers seems to have great difficulty coping with this reality. While he claims his views are not an attack on religion, to me they actually are an attack on God. To maintain that the realm of nature, with all of its amazing complexity and evidence for design, can be understood apart from the Creator seems an undeniable affront to the Creator. Yet in place of our failure, confusion, and guilt, I have found God offers mercy, forgiveness, hope, peace, restoration, and spiritual benefits beyond enumeration. It just takes some humility on our part.

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