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- 1 Challenging "All Life is Descended from a Common Ancestor"

Mind Games Survival Course Manual



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Creation / Evolution

What can we really know about origins of the universe and life?

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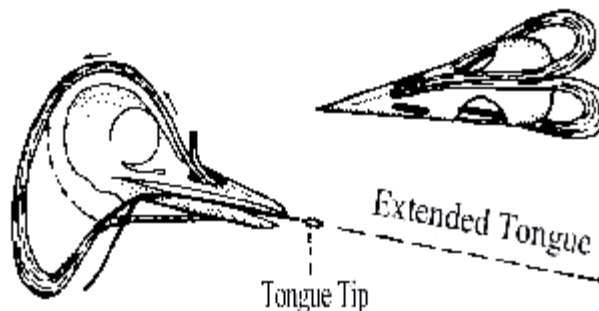
IV. The complexity, uniqueness, and diversity of life forms provide difficult challenges to the Darwinian view that all life is descended from a common ancestor.

If artificial selection can make such major changes in so short a period of time, what must natural selection, working over billions of years, be capable of? The answer is all the beauty and diversity of the biological world. Evolution is a fact, not a theory (Carl Sagan).{26}

A. *The living world is full of amazing adaptive strategies that defy evolutionary explanations.*

1. Woodpeckers possess numerous adaptations to accommodate them to their unique life history.

The most incredible of these adaptations is the tongue. In the woodpecker, the tongue loops down into the throat, under the skull, around the back of the skull, beneath the skin, and over the top between the eyes, terminating just below the eye socket. In some species the tongue extends into the right nostril.{27}



2. The elaborate display of the peacock's tail feathers has always held a certain fascination. While the display is beautiful, it also attracts predators and can make escape difficult. Evolutionists explain it by pointing out its ability to attract a mate. But one has to wonder why selection would favor a peahen that is attracted to a peacock with a display that is life-threatening. {28}

2. *Evolution is a mechanistic theory that is still without a mechanism to account for all the complexities of living organisms.*

1. The most common example of natural selection given in textbooks is the peppered moth of England. After close examination we find that the black variety of moth was always present in small numbers in the population. As the impact of the environment on the trees changed, the frequency of the two varieties of moth changed. While this is natural selection, it does not tell us how peppered moths came about in the first place. We see a species adapting to minor environmental changes, but nothing new is created.
2. Neo-Darwinism is a slow and gradual process that is said to be fueled by mutation and natural selection. {29}
 - a. Bacteria, fruit flies, and certain plants have been bombarded with various mutagens. In the end, the same species of organism is still with us though somewhat hampered in its ability to survive on its own.
 2. Natural selection is a conservative process, not a creative one. Artificial selection demonstrates that there are limits to the amount of change an organism can experience.
3. Punctuated equilibrium postulates that evolutionary change takes place rapidly during the speciation process ('punctuated') followed by long periods of little or no change, termed stasis ('equilibrium'). {30}
 - a. Speciation is unobservable and untestable in the present as well as in the fossil record.
 2. Punctuated equilibrium is actually a description of the fossil record that attempts to explain the gaps in the fossil record. No real biological explanation exists for rapid change during speciation.
4. There is no satisfactory explanation for the acquisition of new genes that code for proteins the cell did not possess previously. There are hundreds of genes present in eukaryotic cells that are not found in prokaryotic cells. {31}

3. *Nearly all species and adaptive structures appear suddenly in the fossil record with few if any predicted evolutionary transitions.* {32}

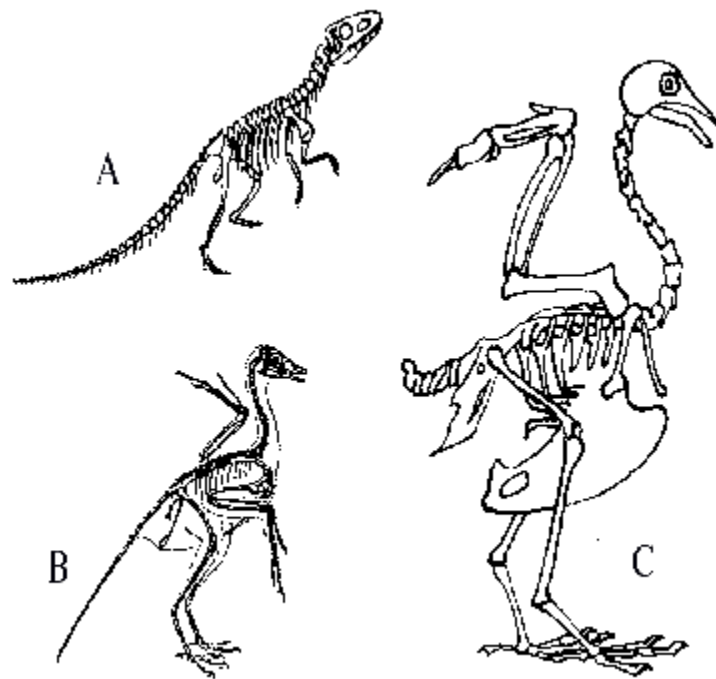
- a. Swimming (whale, seals, turtles, etc.) and flying (insects, pterosaurs, birds, and bats) adaptations appear suddenly in the fossil record with

no transitions.

2. The fossil bird *Archeopteryx* is a curious mosaic of "reptilian" and avian characteristics that does not illuminate the reptile-to-bird transition. "The origin of birds is largely a matter of deduction. There is no fossil evidence of the stages through which the remarkable change from reptile to bird was achieved." {33}
3. The lack of transitional forms is not just characteristic of these few examples, but is common throughout the entire fossil record.

Whatever view one wishes to take of the evidence of paleontology, it does not provide convincing grounds for believing that the phenomenon of life conforms to a continuous pattern. The gaps have not been explained away. {34}

All the fossils which have been dug up and are claimed to be ancestors—we haven't the faintest idea whether they are ancestors {35}



Skeletons of a Triassic thecodont (A) representing the presumed reptile ancestor of birds, the Jurassic fossil bird *Archaeopteryx* (B), and a modern bird (C).

4. Some organisms termed *living fossils* survive today unchanged for what appears to be millions of years. Creatures such as armadillos, alligators, snapping turtles, sturgeons, bowfin fishes, and horseshoe crabs have been around for 20 to 230 million years. How have these and other creatures survived untouched through the eons while so many others have changed drastically, and 99 percent have become

extinct?{36}

4. *Evolution's Big Bang - The Cambrian Explosion of Life*

1. The Cambrian is essentially the first period where true multi-cellular life forms appear over 500 million years ago according to traditional evolutionary theory. The Precambrian reveals some multi-cellular forms but they seem to be unrelated to what appears in the Cambrian.
2. The time frame for the duration of the Cambrian has been steadily shrinking for many years, but it has always been called an explosion of life. The cover article of a 1995 issue of *Time Magazine* put it this way:{37}

New discoveries show that life as we know it began in an amazing biological frenzy that changed the planet almost overnight (front cover).

3. From the time life first appeared on earth in the evolutionary scenario up until the Cambrian, little more than bacteria, algae, and other single-celled life forms existed.

For billions of years, simple creatures like plankton, bacteria, and algae ruled the earth. Then, suddenly, life got complicated (p. 67).

4. The duration of the Cambrian was once thought to be over 50 million years. Even at that time frame the amount of evolution taking place seemed to be happening with lightning speed. Then the time frame was shortened to 30 million years. Now it is less than ten.

Virtually everyone agrees that the Cambrian started almost exactly 543 million years ago and, even more startling, that all but one of the phyla in the fossil record appeared within the first 5 million to 10 million years. 'We now know how fast fast is, 'grins Bowring, 'And what I like to ask my biologist friends is, How fast can evolution get before they start feeling uncomfortable?' (p. 70).

These "phyla" Bowring speaks of are broad categories of classification. All fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals are in the same phylum. Squid, octopi, oysters, clams and snails are in another phylum. Lobsters, crayfish, insects, and millipedes are in still another. The usual picture of an evolutionary tree that would describe the appearance of all these different creatures would be a very tall tree indeed.

5. Current evolutionary processes are much too slow to account for this much change in so little time.

Of course, understanding what made the Cambrian explosion possible doesn't address the larger question of what made it happen so fast. Here scientists delicately slide across data-thin ice, suggesting scenarios that are based on intuition rather than solid evidence. (p. 73)

This intuition is based on a naturalistic world view. While evolutionists may be puzzled by the Cambrian explosion they steadfastly search for a mechanistic explanation because naturalism does not allow for a creative event. Therefore, there must be an evolutionary explanation despite the evidence. The naturalistic world view is very powerful in this way.

6. The new data concerning the Cambrian are forcing some evolutionists to recognize something creationists have been saying for decades. If new phyla appear only in the Cambrian, then this would seem to indicate that there could be limits to the kind of change that can occur in an organism.

Even more speculative are scientists' attempts to address the flip side of the Cambrian mystery: why this evolutionary burst, so stunning in speed and scope has never been equaled Why no new phyla? (p. 74)

'There must be limits to change,' says Indiana University developmental biologist Rudolf Raff. 'After all, we've had these same old body plans for half a billion years.' (p. 74)

7. Finally, here is one evolutionist's attempt to explain, by metaphor, just what happened in the Cambrian and how astonishing the results are.

Imagine an organism built of a hundred basic features, with twenty possible forms per feature. The grabbag contains a hundred compartments, with twenty tokens in each. To make a new Burgess creature, the Great Token-Stringer takes one token at random from each compartment and strings them all together. *Voila*, the creature works--and you have nearly as many successful experiments as a musical scale can build catchy tunes (Stephen Jay Gould). {38}

While Gould did not intend the Great Token-Stringer to be mistaken for a Creator. I believe that is what he has inadvertently described. Although I doubt the Creator was surprised when His creation worked! Also note that musical scales do not build catchy tunes; a mind performs this task using a given musical scale. The same is true

with creatures.

5. **E. The Blind Watchmaker** Richard Dawkins's book *The Blind Watchmaker* fervently asserts that "natural selection is the blind watchmaker, blind because it does not see ahead, does not plan consequences, has no purpose in view. Yet the living results of natural selection overwhelmingly impress us with the appearance of design as if by a master watchmaker, impress us with the illusion of design and planning." {39} Mutation and natural selection build complex adaptations such as flight by numerous almost imperceptible changes over thousands and millions of years. But these scenarios are without experimental and observational support. {40}

1. There is no way to know whether a long series of micromutations is a greater or lesser miracle than making the change all in one jump.
2. The sheer number of favorable mutations required is incalculable. A bird not only needs wings, but also feathers, lungs, bone structure, brain morphology, etc., yet these all occur blindly.
3. Natural selection constantly runs into problems caused by the fact that mutations often affect more than one characteristic. -Selection for one slightly favorable trait may have to be balanced with several other deleterious traits caused by the same mutation. Comparisons to artificial selection are superfluous since artificial selection is purposeful and has shown time and again that biological variation is anything but limitless.

6. **Beauty is pervasive in the natural world, from subatomic particles to crystals to biochemical pathways to butterflies to tropical jungles to the planets to the universe.** {41}

1. If beauty were the result of chance, it would be extremely rare.
2. If beauty were the result of necessity, why would we be soothed by bird songs used to attract mates, establish territories, and threaten enemies?
3. It seems reasonable to assume that we appreciate the beauty in nature because we have a mind patterned after the intelligence that is responsible for the beauty.

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