

Caged Minds? Creation, Modern Science and Christianity¹

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This essay is based upon the opening address in the multi-disciplinary 'Creation/Evolution Presentation' to the students and staff of The University of Melbourne (October 8, 1992).

Mr Graeme O'Neill,² science and technology writer for **The Melbourne Age**, an atheist and prominent critic of 'creation science' (or creationism) has described the influence of creationists³ as

'an insidious force whose growth threatens the intellectual roots of society'. He states that 'the cage that creationism builds around young minds limits curiosity and inquiry to narrow avenues, and constrains the free and creative thought that has characterised Western science since the Renaissance'.

These accusations, contained in the booklet entitled **Creationism: Scientists Respond**, published by the Australian Skeptics (Victorian Branch) in 1991, are without foundation. O'Neill may choose to believe that the creationists' belief in special creation is anathema to modern science, but he cannot ignore the fact that most of the branches of modern science were founded by believers in special creation.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE BIRTH OF MODERN SCIENCE

Dr Loren Eiseley⁴ (1907-1977), professor of anthropology, science history writer and evolutionist, has concluded that the very birth of modern science was largely a result of the conviction shared by its founders, that the Christian conception of God provided the rationale for scientific investigation. Eiseley stated:

'... it is the Christian world which finally gave birth in a clear articulate fashion to the experimental method of science itself. Many things undoubtedly went into that amalgam: Greek logic and philosophy, the experimental methods of craftsmen in the arts as opposed to the aristocratic thinker — all these things

have been debated. But perhaps the most curious element of them all is the factor dwelt upon by Whitehead — the sheer act of faith that the universe possessed order and could be interpreted by rational minds.⁵ For, as Whitehead rightly observes,⁶ the philosophy of experimental science was not impressive. It began its discoveries and made use of its method in the faith, not the knowledge, that it was dealing with a rational universe controlled by a Creator who did not act upon whim nor interfere with the forces He had set in operation. The experimental method succeeded beyond man's wildest dreams but the faith that brought it into being owes something to the Christian conception of the nature of God.⁷ It is surely one of the curious paradoxes of history that science, which professionally has little to do with faith, owes its origins to an act of faith that the universe can be rationally interpreted, and that science today is sustained by that assumption.⁸ (Emphasis in original.)

Eiseley notes that one of the most significant Christian concepts to assist the rise of modern science was that of time.

With the rise of Christianity a sense of time totally unlike that entertained by the historically shallow primitive or the endless cycles over which Greco-Roman thought had brooded in antiquity took possession of the European mind. The Christian saw time, worldly time, as essentially the divine medium in which a great play — the drama of the human Fall and Redemption — was being played out upon the stage of the world. This drama was unique and not repetitious. Older pagan notions of eternal recurrent cycles were blasphemous to the Christian mind!⁹

The Christian doctrine of the Fall and the concept of

time as linear (having a beginning, a temporal sequence, and an end) are rooted in the doctrine of special creation as taught in Genesis. It was the Sovereign God, Creator and Sustainer of all things, Who inaugurated the flow of time and gave 'being' to the matter-space-time continuum. Furthermore, the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation highlights the transcendent character of the Christian God, Who through His Son, stepped into this world from 'above' and from 'beyond' it. He Who is immortal became mortal. Eiseley quotes Professor Lynn White at this point:

*'. . . the axiom of the uniqueness of the Incarnation required a belief that history is a straight line sequence guided by God. . . No more radical revolution has ever taken place in the world outlook of a large area.'*¹⁰

The great German theoretical physicist and philosopher, Baron Carl Friedrich von Weizsacker, has maintained that the reason why empirical science arose in Western Christendom, was due to the widespread belief in the doctrine of the unity and constancy of God. It is this belief, he argues, that supplied the necessary presuppositions of the scientific enterprise. He stated that modern science is a *'legacy, I might even have said, a child of Christianity'*.¹¹ Only Biblical thought held that the world's order is dependent upon a Creator. Since nature is not divine as many ancient cultures believed it to be, it was therefore considered permissible to experiment on nature. Dr Stanley Jaki (who holds earned doctorates in both theology and physics) has concluded that modern science *'owes its very birth and life'* to the once nearly universal belief in a Creator.¹²

The list of leading scientists who believed in Biblical creation is impressive. Those among the founding fathers of scientific disciplines include:¹³ the physicist, astronomer and mathematician, Sir Isaac Newton (who discovered calculus and formulated the law of gravity and laws of motion); in physics, Leonardo da Vinci (hydraulics), Michael Faraday (field theory, inventor of the electric generator), George Stokes (fluid mechanics), James Clerk Maxwell (electrodynamics), James Joule (heat generation from electrical current), Sir Ambrose Fleming (electronics), Sir William Thompson (Lord Kelvin) (thermodynamics); in chemistry, Robert Boyle (gas dynamics), John Dalton (quantitative chemistry), William Ramsay (discoverer of the inert gases); in biology, John Ray (systematic biology and natural history), Carolus Linnaeus (systematic biology), Gregor Mendel (principles of heredity), Louis Pasteur (bacteriology), Rudolph Virchow (pathology), Louis Agassiz (ichthyology and glacial geology); in geology, Nicholas Steno (stratigraphy), John Woodward (palaeontology), Sir David Brewster (optical mineralogy), William Buckland, Benjamin Silliman, Adam Sedgwick, John Woodward, Georges Cuvier (vertebrate palaeontology); in physiology and medicine, William Harvey (blood circulation) and Joseph Lister (antiseptic surgery); in astronomy, Nicholas Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler (celestial mathematics), William Herschel, Edmund

Halley, Edward Maunder; in mathematics, Blaise Pascal (hydrostatics and probability), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (analytic geometry and co-discoverer of calculus), Bernard Riemann (non-euclidean geometry), and Rene Descartes (analytic geometry); in computer science, Charles Babbage (inventor of the calculating machine and actuarial tables). Finally, in my own field of entomology I must mention the world renowned French entomologist Henri Fabre (1823-1915).

Sir Francis Bacon, who is considered the 'Father of Modern Science', employed his famous inductivist approach to embrace a theory of creation. Far from stifling free and creative thought, belief in Biblical creation has stimulated the growth of modern science. Indeed, it has provided one of the 'intellectual roots' (to use O'Neill's words) of modern day society. A large number of the world's greatest inventors, discoverers and pioneers were committed to a personal relationship with their Creator. These include the Wright brothers who built and flew the first aeroplane, Samuel Morse (inventor of the Morse Code) and Christopher Columbus.

All of the scientists and pioneers I have mentioned held views totally incompatible with modern evolutionary theory. And yet evolutionists like Graeme O'Neill would have us believe that belief in creation constrains the freedom and creativity of the mind. He has stated:

*7 am dismayed that at least 30 per cent of students entering the science courses in our [Australian] universities are either creationists, or hold views incompatible with modern evolutionary theory.'*¹⁴

If O'Neill was ever appointed to a position of influence in the University system, one can only assume that he would shut out or fail all creationists from the system. Such a discriminatory approach would eliminate Kepler, Pascal, Maxwell and Newton from higher education if they were ever reborn into the present and maintained a creationist viewpoint.

THE ARGUMENT FOR A DESIGNER BASED ON DESIGN

The concepts of design and Designer, which were integral to pre-Darwinian biology, are now rejected by evolutionary biologists. The rational inference that exquisite design features in biology imply a Designer was in part based on the mechanical analogy of Nature with machines and the conviction of an underlying order of universal laws set in place by a Creator. William Paley (1743-1805) cogently presented the view that Nature's adaptations are due to purpose and design (teleology) using his famous Watchmaker/watch analogy. His arguments were published in two famous books **Natural Theology** (1802)¹⁵ and **A View of the Evidences of Christianity** (1794), and rely on the validity of the mechanical analogy. In his book **Evolution: A Theory in Crisis** (1985), evolutionist Dr Michael Denton has discussed this issue.¹⁶

He is a religious agnostic and critic of Neo-Darwinism and maintains that biological cells exhibit machine-like functioning and precision in the storage and retrieval of complex coded information. Such design implies a Designer and Denton argues that Paley's arguments for a Designer are just as cogent today as when they were first presented.¹⁷¹⁸

Evolutionists persist in their objections to the argument for special creation based on the design/Designer analogy, arguing that it is invalid to use analogical reasoning. This objection can be dismissed, since evolutionists rely on analogical reasoning to establish the validity of the central core of their theory — natural selection. Darwin himself argued for the efficacy of natural selection as the 'chief agent' of biological design, by drawing on the analogy of artificial selection applied by man to domestic stock. Using this analogy he argued that natural selection is genuinely **creative** and that this system of evolutionary change is inherently **progressive**. Darwin expressed a faith commitment when he wrote that

'natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress toward perfection'.¹⁹

Elsewhere he wrote that

'... every step in the natural selection of each species implies improvements in that species in relation to its conditions of life . . . I can see no limit to this process of improvement'.²⁰

Evolutionist and palaeontologist, Professor Stephen J. Gould, has stated:

'The essence of Darwinism lies in a single phrase: natural selection is the creative force of evolutionary change. No-one denies that natural selection will play a negative role in eliminating the unfit. Darwinian theories require that it creates the fit as well'.²¹

He has also stated that

'Natural selection is a creator, it builds adaptation step by step'.²²

The principle of uniformity underlies the design/Designer analogy. A recurring pattern of events linked to the principle of causality and circumstantial evidence leads to the conclusion that complex coded information can only ultimately originate from genuine design or a First Cause (or intelligent cause). Philosophic materialists committed to the General Theory of Evolution ('molecules-to-man' evolution) reject the view that design features in biology can be linked to a First Cause. Their theory of origins states that

'all the living forms in the world have arisen from a single source which itself came from an inorganic form'.²³

This theory can be summarised as:

- (i) matter + energy + time + chance → single cell
- (ii) single cell + time + chance + energy → multicellular life, including Man²⁴

This is the classic theory taught in textbooks and high

school and university courses in biology. Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism are proposed mechanisms of the General Theory of Evolution, and they confine the origin of life and all biology to strictly naturalistic, mechanistic processes (that is, secondary causes). First causes are excluded and relegated to the domains of philosophy and theology. The Watchmaker (or First Cause) is effectively replaced by natural selection which becomes a teleological 'mechanism' — ensuring that living organisms are supplied with useful, or purposeful, features.

Dr Richard Dawkins, an atheist and committed Neo-Darwinist, published a book in 1986 entitled **The Blind Watchmaker**. Like Darwin's work, his defence of the 'creative' power of natural selection is based on a number of analogies. Dawkin's book has been widely hailed by evolutionists as a lucid and convincing defence of Neo-Darwinism and an effective response to the perceived threat of creationism. Graeme O'Neill describes the book as

'the most lucid explanation of how random mutation, abetted by the sieve of natural selection constructs complex organs and organisms in step-wise fashion by building on existing complexity'.

Dawkins states:

*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, and impress us with the illusion of design and planning. The purpose of this book is to resolve this paradox [that is, chance versus design] . . . and . . . to impress the reader with the power of the illusion of design.*²⁵

Here in its naked perversity is the absurdity of the Darwinian dogma that has gained such respect among members of the intellectual establishment. The Darwinian delusion is reminiscent of the well-known story of the Emperor's new clothes. The obvious truth of the reality (in this case — of genuine design features demanding a Designer) is denied in favour of the myth that design is an illusion. The Emperor favoured the illusion because the crowd pandered to his ego. It was only when a young boy pointed out that he was naked, that he realised what an utter fool he had been. Tell the people a lie long enough, Goebbels is reputed to have said, and the people will come to believe it.

Dawkins would have us believe that all design in biology is an illusion and is merely the product of a 'trial-and-error' mechanism (natural selection operating on randomly occurring variation). This is anti-science and a philosophical absurdity. There has never been a single case established in empirical science where complex coded information has arisen by trial-and-error processes such that self-replication is possible. Rather, it is fundamental to all experience that it arises from an intelligent cause or causes (primary causality). This principle is the basis of

the multi-million dollar programmes searching for extra-terrestrial intelligence (ETI) using signals analysed by radiotelescopes.

Evolutionist and atheist, the late Professor Carl Sagan of Cornell University, has pointed out that all we need to discover to prove ETI, is one message that contains information and not mere order, even if the message is not translated. The irony is that millions of dollars of taxpayers' money are spent on funding a so-called 'science' (evolutionism) which applies the very opposite approach in the study of biological information on this planet. All biologists know that life exhibits extremely intricate machine-like order and complex coded information. Is it not then reasonable to infer from these data, an intelligent cause of the singularity of life's origins as a valid part of science?

CAUSALITY AND THE ORIGIN OF INFORMATION

The widely acclaimed Islamic scholar Frithjof Schuon, who supports Divine creation, has highlighted the flaw in modern biology based on the General Theory of Evolution, when he states:

The deficiency in modern science lies essentially in its neglect of universal causality; it will no doubt be objected that science is not concerned with philosophical causality but with phenomena, which is untrue, for evolutionism in its entirety is nothing other than hypertrophy [an intellectual deformity], thought out as a means of denying real causes [First Causes].²⁶

The result of this 'hypertrophy' (evolutionism), is that non-rationality, chance, and impersonality, are adopted as being primary realities, with rationality, design and personality, as secondary. First causes are erroneously interpreted as merely the by-product of impersonal insentient forces. All theories based on the General Theory of Evolution, including all forms of 'theistic evolution', fail to explain scientifically how space/time is supplemented with complex coded information.²⁷⁻²⁹ As one contributor to the Symposium, 'Biogenesis, Evolution, Homeostasis' (1973) has stated:

The question of the ultimate source of information is not trivial. In fact it is the basic and central philosophic and theoretical problem. The essence of the theory of Divine Creation is that the ultimate source of information has a separate, independent existence beyond and before the material system, this being the main point of the Johannine prologue.³⁰

And what is the Johannine prologue this scientist refers to? It is none other than the famous passage penned by the Apostle John in the first century AD — John 1:1—3.

'In the beginning was the Word [the *Logos* in Greek], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that

has come into being.'

The Greek word *Logos* employed here carries the meaning 'Reason and Mind of the Cosmos'.³¹ The theologian Dr Carl F. Henry has expressed it this way. The *Logos* is

'the foundation of all meaning, the transcendent personal source and support of the rational, moral, and purposive order of created reality.'³²

SPECIAL CREATION: A SUPERIOR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Divine creation teaches that Mind does not derive ultimately from matter as taught in evolutionism. Special creation teaches that God created all the different basic kinds of living organisms separately. The presuppositions central to special creation provide a vastly superior paradigm or worldview framework within which to do biology, compared to that of evolutionism. Special creation allows for the concept of First Cause in biology. It recognises that the question of life's origins lies outside empirical science and provides a coherent framework for exploring the question of teleology (purpose/design) in biology.

In contrast, explanations confined to the General Theory of Evolution, are forced to 'explain away' design features as mere illusions. Consequently, the innumerable 'puzzles of perfection' documented in nature provide no insight into the true nature of reality. One of the strange paradoxes of modern biology is that, having described the exquisite 'design features' in nature, evolutionists often conclude by such statements as: 'I couldn't have designed it better myself or wax lyrical about the marvellous 'engineering design' produced by Nature. Evolutionist Stephen J. Gould argues that 'good engineering design' can be used as an independent criterion of an organism's fitness.³³ Ironically, such teleological reasoning is based on the analogy of design/Designer.

Evolutionist Richard C. Lewontin of Harvard University, who like Gould and Dawkins treats 'design features' in biology as mere illusions, states:

'It was the marvellous fit of organisms to the environment [that is, their adaptations] that was the chief evidence of a "Supreme Designer" [in pre-Darwinian times].³⁴

As a biologist who has researched in my specialty area of entomology^{35,36} for over 20 years, I have become convinced that the design evident in nature can be adequately explained only by seriously considering the possibility that such design derives from a Designer Who transcends the matter-space-time continuum. Such design is evident in the very first life-forms that appear in the geological record (for example, consider the marvel of the trilobite eye).³⁷ I am convinced that the concept of special creation provides a superior scientific model of origins to one based on the General Theory of Evolution.

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2. Graeme O'Neill has vigorously opposed those who hold to special creation and was originally to have debated the subject with Carl Wieland at The University of Melbourne followed by a multi-disciplinary critical panel for both sides. At the last minute, he backed out of the agreed format. The seven-member creation team presentation was an alternative programme arranged to replace the cancelled debate. O'Neill has consistently maintained without good reason that CSF (now AiG) was responsible for the cancellation of the debate format.
3. His criticisms have been focussed on 'young-Earth creationism' as represented in Australia by Answers in Genesis (Australia), and in North America by Answers in Genesis (USA), the Institute for Creation Research (San Diego), and the Creation Research Society which publishes an influential quarterly journal. However, the term 'creationists' is often applied to all theists who believe in Divine creation — leaving aside the specific question of the age of the Earth. But O'Neill is antagonistic to all 'creationist' views.
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'My good friend Professor Roger Short of Monash University says that up to 40% of students entering medical and biology degree courses are either Christian fundamentalists or hold views that are incompatible with neo-Darwinian theory.'
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