

Watch Your Language

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A recent television advertisement for a zoo runs:

YOU BELONG IN THE ZOO

This is typical of language that embraces evolution. More scriptural and in accordance with Genesis 1:26 would be the statement:

THE ZOO BELONGS TO YOU

God gave man authority over animals, because he's different. He's made in the image of God, not of apes. Any external similarities are due to their having the same Creator and being made of the same material (Genesis 2:7,19).

Evolution **assumes** we're just animals. But God gave us a self-conscious mind and a morally sensitive spirit. In our spiritual nature, we are made in God's image.

Over the past century or so, users of the English language (and indeed users of other languages) have gradually moved from a **dynamic** use of scientific terms into an **automatic** type of expression. The historic Prague School of linguistics was first to draw attention to differences of this kind during the early 1930's.

By that time, literary language had become very different from scientific language, which already exhibited marks of a so-called 'objective' style. Since then, more and more linguists have become aware of the 'automatic' characteristic of scientific text and recognize that our media use this kind of language when presenting scientific programmes or programmes claiming to speak with scientific authority.

This article will claim that there is an atheistic or at least pantheistic assumption behind such automatic usage of language.

1. Language may play down ideas of orderliness in the natural world. Man has imposed order, it seems, on a random array of natural facts. This is the opposite of eighteenth century scientific language, which

- (a) mentions God at frequent intervals, and
- (b) instils wonder into the reader at the obvious order in the universe.

Instead of God's order we now have man's imposed order.

2. Evaluative language is avoided, because it's said to bias the reader or listener. Authors are usually unaware that by trying to outlaw evaluation (which in the end they can't do anyway) they are prejudicing people towards believing that scientific theories are good theories because they're 'neutral'. No theory is, of course, neutral and all are biased. It just depends which bias is the true one.

3. So-called 'traditional' assumptions are questioned: it's 'scientific' to question everything. Though there's some truth in this we must

- (a) distinguish between asking questions and questioning, which is doubting, and
- (b) realise that continual questioning leads either to confusion or to a refusal to accept any values whether good or bad.

After all, some things in life are established fact. In questioning older theories, such as Flood geology, the assumption is that man continually advances.

An attitude of perpetual questioning leads to the use of what linguists call modal expressions such as: 'it may be', 'possibly', 'probably'. **The Origin of Species** is full of such tentative expressions.

4. Automatic language treats theory as fact. This is the opposite of 3 and is particularly true of evolutionary theory. It is done by

- (a) exaggeration, that is, using large round figures with no basis in empirical fact, and
- (b) asides or parenthetical clauses, often beginning 'which. . .'. People tend to interpret such phrases as true findings.

5. Forces such as 'Nature' (instead of God) are personified. However, 'Nature' also does sinful things which arose through original sin. Evolution itself also 'does things', as we indicate later on.

6. In much of modern language we see the use of 'automatic' or 'impersonal' verbs for non-human entities. For example:

adapt now often means to have internal force or ability to adapt.

adjust now often means to have internal force or ability to adjust.

develop now often means to have internal force or ability to develop.

evolve now often means to be able to change by itself.

integrate now often means to be able to contribute to something else.

select now often means to have internal force or ability which can choose.

From being used as (a) active or (b) agentive passive verbs in the eighteenth century, implying that objects/animals were adapted etc by God, these verbs have acquired in-built active assumptions, suggesting an internal life-force. Thus:

Personal active: God has adapted this animal wonderfully. . .

Agentive passive: This animal has been adapted (by God) for. . .

Automatic use: This animal (gradually) adapted to. . .

The cause of such implied changes may be

- (a) the environment, which then assumes a 'randomly purposeful' role, or
- (b) the organism itself, more popular today since genetics is 'in' and psychology is more cognitive than behaviourist nowadays.

Such language encourages belief in

- (a) pantheism, or a-god-in-everything, or
- (b) animism, or a-god-in-active-things.

Both are characteristic of what were once called 'primitive' beliefs. But see the next paragraph.

7. We also see an increased use of loaded terms like 'primitive', 'mature' etc, suggesting that age in the sense of 'long-ago-ness' means simplicity and imperfection, whilst age in the sense of 'adulthood' means advance. Another term is 'natural', which implies 'without God's help'.

8. Automatic language is full of circularity, that is, saying nothing in many words.

Some examples of these language changes are worth noting. In **Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1771**, we read under ASTRONOMY:

It is noways probable that the Almighty, who always acts with infinite wisdom, and does nothing in vain, should create so many glorious suns, fit for so many important purposes, and place them at such distances from one another, without proper objects near enough to be benefited by their influences. (Vol. 1, p. 434J
... wherever the Deity exerts his power, there he also manifests his wisdom and goodness, (ibid, p. 445J

Examining such old science books leaves the reader with a healthy humility, sense of wonder, and understanding of the greatness of God.

But in **Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979**, we read under ASTRONOMY AND ASTROPHYSICS:

A few nearby stars, however, all about 10,000,000,000 years old, have velocities of more than 150 kilometres per second relative to the Sun because of slower galactic rotation. . . (Macropaedia, Vol. 2, p. 253J

In this innocent-looking passage, notice the vast round figures in a parenthetic construction, leading the reader to suppose it can be assumed to be a scientifically proved figure, even if a rough estimate. The same applies to galactic rotation, where slower speed is assumed. Much in astronomy is subject to considerable doubt. To be fair, the article in general does give clues to the doubtful state of the science, but the general style leads one to attribute more confidence than is reasonable.

The article EVOLUTION in **Vol. 7**, p. 7 of the same work, offers evidence of disguised propaganda:

Evolution . . . has led to (a) profound revolution in the history of ideas because it has revealed the affinity of man to all other living beings and has shown that change, not stability, is the rule of life. Evolution is the kernel of biology.

Notice that evolution has revealed and shown various things. The theory is personified. It is in danger of becoming a god. Higher up on the same page:

The omnipotence that primitive peoples ascribed to their deities made it natural for them to believe that whatever is was created.

Here it is assumed that evolution (the revelation of nature study) has replaced a primitive, man-invented belief called creation. There is no

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suggestion that man-centred belief has replaced a God-given faith. Rather, it implies that without God's help man will believe 'naturally' in creation. Actually the reverse is true according to Scripture (see Romans 1:21). Just before this extract we find parenthetical assumptions:

Man's interest in his own *origin* ... is reflected ... in legends of creation popular among the peoples of antiquity — Sumerians, Egyptians, Greeks and Hebrews, whose sacred book, the Old Testament, contains two descriptions of the creation and traces of a third.

The assumption that there are two or three (contradictory?) creation stories is quite unjustified, as is the phrase 'legends of creation' applied indiscriminately to include the Old Testament.

Further on in the article we find:

. . . before Charles Darwin established evolution as an inescapable fact and showed how it was brought about, biology was in a state of chaos.

Note the two incorrect dogmatisms, stated parenthetically using the conjunction 'before', so that the reader absorbs it as a proven fact in passing and moves to the main statement about the chaotic state of biology, in which there is some truth. Actually, Charles Darwin never established evolution as an inescapable fact and most certainly never showed how it was brought about. In fact, he admitted he couldn't show this.

The article goes on to talk about 'countless puzzles that presented themselves'. Since these puzzles 'present themselves', the randomness of the natural world is implied. Why this world has so many organisms ideally suited to the environment, yet with evidence of unnecessary suffering, cannot be explained by a scientific expert. Scripture, however, provides an answer which, read with care, shows that God created a perfect world which was later spoilt by sin. But God also keeps this imperfect world in order, hence the continuing evidence of His power by nature. Continuing to cite the article:

Evolution provided the first unifying, general principle applicable to all living beings, which are now as they are because they have become what they are, having undergone modification during descent from other species.

Once again the parenthetical bit about modification, beginning 'which', is the assumed fact. Creationists in one sense believe living beings have become what they are, though 'become' doesn't mean 'evolved into' but rather 'came into being by God's word', as when 'man became a living soul' (Genesis 2:7).

From television programmes we hear similar

language, for example, on a programme on natural life on the heath, from the BBC:

On the heath some plants have evolved an original method of survival.

The animism is obvious.

One clear example of terminology having changed its meaning since Darwin is current use of 'survival of the fittest', where most today take 'fittest' to mean 'most healthy', no doubt due to the popularity of fitness campaigns. Darwin used it to mean 'suited to the environment'. Unfortunately this change could pave the way for rejecting an unhealthy human foetus or the ailing aged. Even so does language dominate the thinking of most people.

'Automatic language' contrasts with pre-evolutionary scientific styles where it's assumed that 'nature' obeys God's laws. The nineteenth century emphasis on 'progress' which informs today's language poses a dilemma in a world where much seems to be disintegrating. Life goes from 'primitive' to 'advanced' in the media, whether it's science, history or religion. In Scripture the movement is from a well-ordered world to a rebellious one, from well-balanced nature to one in travail. Against this God provides a way of restoration. Today's 'primitive' tribes should not be blamed for failing to develop. They have instead inherited a residual culture from a once civilized but sinful past.

Why do people talk this way? The automaticity of media language compares with that used by Aaron in Exodus 32:24:

I threw (the gold) into the fire, and there came out this calf.

In other words, it just happened — spontaneous generation. In their passion for 'objectivity', Aaron and the science authors omit the agent of changes in the world, so no-one is responsible for anything. If God is not responsible, how could man be responsible for his actions?

Summarizing, we find the following devices help to brainwash today's Western world into accepting the evolutionary framework:

- * The use of 'middle voice' verbs like adapt, adjust, etc.
- * Personalization of concepts like nature, evolution, etc.
- * Parenthetical statement of doubtful findings as if true.
- * Use of terminology implying progressive improvement.
- * Avoidance of overtly evaluative terms, but refusal to acknowledge that all language implies some evaluation. Nothing is purely objective.

We are not suggesting that scientists and others set out to deliberately deceive. What we are saying is

that as evolution has been accepted by the majority of science writers and broadcasters, so the language has reflected the subtle changes in attitude. Those of us who espouse the creationist viewpoint should realize what is happening, and create a language style for ourselves which will show clearly that the dynamic in nature is entirely due to God's power and maintenance of the system until Christ's return once again changes the world's society, ecology and genetics.