

THE PREMISES OF EVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT

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Sigmund Freud, as an evolutionary scientist, has been a source of embarrassment to his many dedicated followers at one critical point: Freud grounded his evolutionary thinking firmly on the theories of Lamarck. The inheritance of acquired characteristics is basic to Freud's anthropology, biology, and psychology. In the face of extensive criticism, Freud "adhered throughout his life" to "the Lamarckian belief."¹ At this point, even his devoted disciple and biographer, Dr. Ernest Jones, criticized Freud as "What one must call an obstinate adherent of this discredited Lamarckism."² Freud, however, was resolute. Because of his hostility to religion, the doctrine of evolution was intensely important to Freud, and evolutionary theory provided for no effective mechanism for evolution apart from Lamarck. To deny Lamarck and the inheritance of acquired characteristics was to posit a god-like power somewhere in or behind evolution and to introduce illegitimately an element resembling the supernatural. It pointed to an intelchey of being, a potentiality or power far exceeding the original elements of the universe. If *nothing is acquired*, then *everything is involved*, and what has evolved was originally involved in the original spark of energy or matter out of which all the universe has developed. Such an assumption would be ridiculous; it would place in that original atom powers commensurate with God. Freud saw only one consistent theory on which to ground his evolutionary faith: Lamarck's concept of acquired characteristics. Freud stated his thesis succinctly: "If nothing is acquired nothing can be inherited."³ All of Freud's psychology rests on this concept of acquired characteristics. It is not our purpose here to analyze the implications of this position for Freud's psychoanalytic theory; this has been done in another context.⁴ What does concern us is Freud's thesis: "If nothing is acquired nothing can be inherited." To introduce any other mechanism is to introduce the miraculous in disguise.

Freud's shrewd observation deserves renewed attention. The miraculous is indeed commonplace in evolutionary theory, although in disguised manner. An important aspect of the standard evolutionary geological time tables is the urgent necessity for countless millions of years to dilute the miracle of evolution and make them "natural." It is assumed that changes which are impossible or else miraculous when pinpointed in time can be rendered possible and natural when blanketed with millions of years. Given the millions of years, spontaneous generation is also "naturalized" as well as other necessary steps in the evolution of species. *Philosophically*, the basic assumption of these positions is the inherent power of all being; the entire spectrum of

nature has within itself a *being in process* of almost unlimited potentialities. This being in process has manifested already a measure of potentiality in the universe we know; there is no reason to suppose that its potentiality is exhausted or that somewhere continuous creation is not in process. This being, which is the whole of the natural world, possesses, therefore, whether consciously or not, probably unconsciously, all the vast reservoir of power which orthodox Christianity has associated with God. In a sense, of course, the greater faith rests with the evolutionist in assuming that the order, structure, and design of creation is the product of a blind and unconscious potentiality rather than the totally self-conscious and ontological Trinity.

The implications of this position are especially of interest when we analyze the philosophical position of those who hold to creative evolution or progressive creationism. This compromising position represents an attempt by neo-evangelical Christians to retain the respectability of science and of Christianity as well. Basic to their position is the denial of the *creative act* in favor of a *creative process*. The six days of creation give way to the geological time table, a substitute god of like creative power. But the moment creativity is transferred or to any degree ascribed to the process of being, to the inner powers of nature, to that extent sovereignty and power are transferred from God to nature. Nature having developed as a result of its creative process has within itself inherently the laws of its being. God is an outsider to Nature, able to give inspiration to men within Nature but unable to govern them because He is not their Creator and hence not their source of law. Of course, the creative evolutionist denies that he is surrendering God; he is trying to retain all the values of two systems of thought. But, in attempting to serve two masters, he is clearly being disloyal to one, since both have mutually exclusive claims. Where does creativity rest, within God or within Nature? If it rests in God, then the universe is, as Genesis 1 declares it to be, the result of a series of creative acts without process in the short span of six days, and all perfect and good. If creativity rests in Nature, then the universe is the result of a creative process, and the laws of its being and of its creatures are to be derived, not from an alien God who is an outsider, but from Nature itself. The creative evolutionist attempts to hold to either an outright dualism, and, in every dualism one god becomes the evil god, or he attempts to maintain the two in dialectical tension. It is not without significance that virtually all progressive creationists, while professing degrees of criticism of dialectical theology, do nevertheless maintain a relatively apprecia-

tive and even friendly attitude towards this radical departure from orthodox Christianity. Indeed, progressive creationism or creative evolution must be described as at least incipient dialectical theology.

This was clearly apparent in the American Scientific Affiliation symposium, edited by Russell L. Mixer, *Evolution and Christian Thought Today* (1959). The Thomistic (or dialectic) nature of this symposium was cited by this writer in a review article.⁵ Such progressive creationist writers hold commonly to a double-revelation theory, a revelation of spiritual truths through the Bible by God, and the revelation of God in nature. It is held that these two truths cannot be in contradiction.⁶ Basic to this double-revelation theory is the Thomistic and Greek concept that the reason of autonomous man is capable of impartially and objectively investigating the truths of creation and of establishing them into a valid revelation of nature. The source of "revelation," then, concerning the universe is man's reason and science. The source of revelation concerning God and the supernatural is the Bible. Reason and science can establish firmly truth in their realm, the knowable, whereas the province of the Bible lies beyond the natural world. To use the Bible as a source-book for facts concerning nature and history is thus regarded as illegitimate. Jan Lever has gone so far as to say "that we may not consider the language of the Bible as scientifically conceptual language; hence, we may never demand from Scripture exact physical, astronomical, biological and thus also not exact historical knowledge."⁷ This position rules out of history not only the prosaic account of Genesis 1, but also the accounts of the resurrection and the poetical narratives of the virgin birth. Such a view of the Bible is not Christian: it is dialectical, and the difference between these scholars and Karl Barth is only one of degree, not of kind.

Moreover, this dialectical position, by holding to two realms of truth, gives us two sets of infallible truth which cannot be attacked. Since the Bible is limited to revealing only spiritual truths, most of it is open, of course, to attack because it is within the domain of science and history. What about evolution? Wherein lies its immunity? James O. Buswell III has given clear expression to this area of infallible truth:

One of the chief drawbacks to the anti-evolutionists, from Darwin's early critics to the present day (familiar as some of their leaders are with the data), is that their activities and literature have been almost completely wrapped up in arguments over petty fragments of the record, assuming that to attack evolution as a total philosophy one must show the data upon which the assumptions are based to be untrue.⁸

This is an amazing statement. The data and facts of evolution can be untrue, but "the total philosophy" of evolution cannot be disproved, and it is wrong to

assume that "to attack evolution as a total philosophy one must show the data upon which the assumptions are based to be untrue." What other recourse does a scientist have? If fallacious and "untrue" data as the foundation of a theory fail to disprove that hypothesis, what can be done? Buswell does not give an answer, but it is apparent that the double-revelation theory is implicit in this perspective. We have an area of immunity from disproof because it is an area of revelation.

The appearance of Darwin's thesis was the appearance of an alternative revelation to the Bible. According to George Bernard Shaw, "If you can realize how insufferably the world was oppressed by the notion that everything that happened was an arbitrary personal act of an arbitrary personal God of dangerous, jealous and cruel personal character, you will understand how the world jumped at Darwin."⁹ Although Shaw's conception of God is a gross caricature, his basic analysis is correct. On the one hand, man faced an account of origins as the creative act of the ontological trinity, a totally self-conscious Person, omnipotent, omniscient and sovereign, and to whom man is totally responsible. On the other hand, Darwinism offered an account of origins which performed also all the miracles of creation and yet was totally impersonal, materialistic, and held no man to account. An unregenerate world jumped to it as "liberation." It provided, to cite the title of a modern book, a "god without thunder." In this evolutionary perspective, potentiality resides *within* the universe, not beyond it in God. This position is an article of faith. A prominent philosopher, in discussing the question of origins, stated candidly that the philosophically astute naturalist will refuse to ask the question of origins: just as the Christian will take God and the Bible as his "given," so the pragmatic naturalist should insist on taking the world as it exists today and the concept of evolution as his "given," his basic assumption about reality.

The creative evolutionist holds therefore a position which lacks the philosophical consistency of either the naturalist or the orthodox Christian: he attempts to operate in terms of two "givens" and to maintain them in dialectical tension. But every dialectical position, because it is an attempt to maintain and reconcile two mutually exclusive concepts or "givens," is doomed ultimately to resolve the tension in favor of one. A dialectical position is precisely the insistence on maintaining this hold on two warring concepts, and, while it is doomed to collapse, it finds nothing more difficult to accept than this inevitable collapse.

We have thus two rival faiths, each with its belief in miracles, one by God, the other by the potentiality inherent in the universe. We have a third position, the attempt to unite these two. But Freud's resort to Lamarck had as its motive the resolution to avoid

this dilemma of rival miracles. *Granted* the validity of acquiring characteristics, then evolution is a thoroughly natural and explicable phenomena. But here Freud introduced as much faith as he had rejected: the faith in acquired characteristics is a faith, and an amazing one. Systematically, according to this theory, from the beginning of time, important new characteristics have been acquired by various forms of being and have then been transmitted to successive forms of matter and then of life. These modifications are “induced by the action of environment.”¹⁰ Lamarckism is environmentalism, and while Lamarck is disowned, environmentalism is basic to many areas of study other than Freudian psychology, and the implicit Lamarckism in much evolutionary thinking is considerable. The point which concerns us is the inescapable miracles built into this position as into every form of evolutionary thought.

God, clearly, is an inescapable premise of human thought. Man either faces a world of total chance and brute factuality, a world in which no fact has meaning and no fact has any relationship to any other fact, or else he accepts the world of God’s creation and sovereign law. But men often refuse this choice. They deny the world of brute factuality, but they also deny God openly while trying to re-introduce all the attributes of God’s creative power in naturalized form. They cannot escape God as a premise of their thinking, but they refuse to accept Him as God. Their science operates on borrowed premises, and their hypothesis conceals a hidden and utterly irrational miraculous power. If evolutionary scientists eliminated this faith and confined themselves to the facts, they would have no knowledge at all, only a vast ocean of meaningless and unrelated facts which could not be related to one another except by positing a world of meaning whose hidden premise is God. With Cornelius Van Til, we must assert that, where it is consistently and rigorously applied, “science is absolutely impossible on the non-Christian principle.”¹¹

“An illustration may indicate more clearly what is meant. Suppose we think of a man made of water in an infinitely extended and bottomless ocean of water. Desiring to get out of water, he makes a ladder of water. He sets this ladder upon the water and against the water and then attempts to climb out of the water. So hopeless and senseless a picture must be drawn of the natural man’s methodology based as it is upon the assumption that time or chance is ultimate. On his assumption his own rationality is a product of chance. On his assumption even the laws of logic which he employs are products of chance. The rationality and purpose that he may be searching for are still bound to be products of chance . . .

“It will then appear that Christian theism, which was first rejected because of its supposed authori-

tarian character, is the only position which gives human reason a field for successful operation and a method of true progress in knowledge.”¹²

Only on the presupposition of Christian theism is a valid science possible. The orthodox Christian holds that God as Creator has created both the facts and the laws of physical existence, so that the facts exist in the context of law. God stands behind all creation as Creator and sustainer. He has, Van Til points out, adapted “the laws of our minds” to the “laws of the facts,” so that “the knowledge that we have of the simplest objects of the physical universe is still based upon the revelational activity of God.” Science is possible because the biblical revelation is true.

“Thus the truth of Christianity appears to be the immediately indispensable presupposition of the fruitful study of nature. In the first place without it the physical scientist could have no assurance that his hypothesis would have any relevance to any of the facts in his field of study. For then Chance would be supreme. There would be no facts distinguishable from other facts. Unless the plan and therewith the interpretation or thought of God be back of all facts in their relations to all other facts, no idea, no hypothesis that the human mind could make with respect to them, would have any application to them.

“Secondly, except for the truth of Christianity it would be impossible to *exclude* one hypothesis rather than another. It would be impossible to exclude such ideas as would enter “into the minds of the insane.” This second point is involved in the first.

“In the third place, without the truth of Christianity there would be no possibility of the testing of one hypothesis as over against another. The idea of testing hypotheses by means of “brute facts” . . . is meaningless. Brute facts, i.e., facts not created and controlled by God, are mute facts. They have no discernible character. They cannot, together, operate in regularity, thus forming a uniformity of nature. Thus they cannot constitute the reality which Christians and non-Christians know in common in order by it to test the “hypotheses” of the existence or the non-existence of God. It is the truth of Christianity alone that permits us to attach any significance to the idea of testing of an hypothesis.”¹³

The non-Christian scientist therefore is able to formulate and discover only because he operates on secretly Christian premises while denying that faith. “The natural man has valid knowledge only as a thief possesses goods.”¹⁴ Factuality apart from God is totally meaningless factuality. “No fact, then, is truly known unless its createdness in the biblical sense is owned by the scientist,”¹⁵ although this acceptance is generally an unacknowledged one.

But God remains as the inescapable premise of

human thought. Because God is the Creator, every aspect of the universe and of man is structured by God's creative act and eternal decree, and therefore reflects His law and order. Men cannot escape Him nor can they shut Him out. If they attempt to think without Him as their premise, they simply re-introduce His attributes in the form of miraculous potentialities and processes which reduce science to irrationalism and self-contradiction.

¹Ernest Jones, M. D.: *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, vol. I, p. 347. New York: Basic Books, 1953, 1961.

²Jones, II, p. 311 ; 1957, 1960.

³Jones, II, p. 222, 1955, 1962.

⁴See R. J. Rushdoony: *Freud*. Nutley, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1965.

⁵*Westminster Theological Journal*, pp. 59-68, November, 1960, vol. XXIII, no. 1.

⁶See John C. Whitcomb, Jr. *The Origin Of the Solar System: Biblical Inerrancy and the Double-Revelation Theory*, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1964. Adherents of the double-revelation theory

are cited on p. 31 f.

⁷Jan Lever: *Creation and Evolution*, p. 171. Translated by Peter G. Berkhout, M. D., Grand Rapids: International Publications, 1958.

⁸James O. Buswell III in Russel L. Mixter, editor: *Evolution and Christian Thought Today*, p. 169. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959.

⁹Cited by Arnold Lunn, in Introduction to *Is Evolution Proved?*, A Debate Between Douglas Dewar and H. S. Shelton, p. 4. London: Hollis and Carter, 1947.

¹⁰Sir William Cecil Dampier: *A History of Science and Its Relations With Philosophy and Religion*, p. 294. Cambridge: University Press, 1944. Third edition.

¹¹Cornelius Van Til: *The Defense of the Faith*, p. 285. Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1955.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 283 f.

¹⁴R. J. Rushdoony: *By What Standard?*, p. 24. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1959.

¹⁵Robert L. Reymond: *A Christian View of Modern Science*, p. 10, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1964.