ASSUMPTIONS AND HUMAN NATURE

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In scientific work, even as in everyday life, one proceeds on the basis, not only of established facts, but also of unproven assumptions. This is inevitable, and by no means blameworthy. What is blameworthy is to refuse occasionally to examine the assumptions, or worse still to try to prevent those who would examine them from getting a hearing. The evolutionary dogma, in particular, depends on many unproven assumptions; and there has too often been a reluctance on the part of those who propound the view to examine the underlying assumptions critically.

It is human nature to assume that certain inclusive statements represent the whole truth, although not proved to be entirely true. An example is the diffuse feeling of some persons that growth equals evolution and that either word is a synonym for creation. Assumption, however, does have a standing in that it is a starting point for work or research. The unproved parts of the assumption are taken to be no hindrance in the contemplated work. But if the foundation ideas are based upon wishful thinking or skewed observation they are inadequate or misleading. In time a false assumption may even pass as a law.

Since assumptions are often made, both in science and in ordinary life, it is well to look into the meaning and validity of the process. The Random House Dictionary lists the following related words: taken for granted, postulated, fictitious, suppose, presuppose. The first synonym listed is probably the best, for an assumption usually resembles the experience or thought of a group of people rather than the vagary of an individual. It often represents the thoughtless acceptance of the views of the majority, whether true or not.

A number of ideas which rest upon no better foundation than assumption are recognized, for instance, "Progress is innate; it comes about of itself." "Evolution is another word for growth or creation." "The degree of likeness between two organisms indicates their degree of kinship." Actually this likeness is only one of the criteria of kinship. Another assumption is that a fossil is supposed to have lived where it is found, thus ruling out severe floods or cataclysms in the history of the earth.

For at least 80 years evolutionists have been making the following assumption which, as you can see, is based not upon observation but on the faith that evolution is necessarily true: "The (rock) formations of different regions are arranged in their true order by the *law of included organisms*; i.e., formations, however widely separated, which contain a similar assemblage of fossils are equivalent and belong to the same division of geological time."[1]

Actually there are many data to indicate God made new types of living things, while now he is maintaining those types. The mutations which we see are not new types but subtractions from the old types; they do not give the (improved) morphology, like vertebrae, feathers, seeds in ovaries, or improved coordination, which evolution calls for.

A young man once asked the author, "Would it not be easier to believe that animals in the beginning arose just as they do now?"

"Why, that would be impossible," I replied; "young animals at present come from parents; in the beginning there were no parents."

A Need for Assumption

One could go on with the mention of ideas which are accepted without serious thought, with the admonition to give more observation and reflection. But we must recognize that while assumption is not proof, there actually is a place for it. About the first of May in this latitude a farmer decides that the weather will be favorable for him to plant corn. He cannot prove that there will be no more frost; indeed corn at times has been frozen; but in order to have time for the crop to ripen he had better assume that there will be no more frost until fall, and plant the seed; as he usually does.

Before we start any work or research we make certain assumptions as to the given facts although we may not be conscious of our thoughts. The person who cannot come to a decision loses time or may do nothing at all. In ordinary work we usually rely upon *valid* basic assumptions, but in our ideas of the nature of the world and of human nature, wishful thinking and the ideas of others play a big part. "All study of the natural sciences involves some assumptions; hence it is highly important that all our assumptions be rigidly sound."[2]

Here we are dealing in philosophy, a very simple and basic branch of that study. We are seeking the function of assumption; and it essentially is this: it saves us from the stultifying result of indecision and gives the faith which brings action in study and work. Does this show that it is always true? By no means!

The Usual Trend

An assumption usually is accepted by a majority of the people; but what about the minority, which may include some active thinkers and researchers? They are an irritating problem for the majority, but in time may become the majority. The majority party prolongs its rule of thought because it accepts as truth that which the thoughtless ones *want* to believe; e.g., they do not want to obey the Bible, therefore they say it is only a fabrication.

Observation and experiment often are hard to perform; for instance no one has observed the beginning of the Earth; experiments in genetics are slow and sometimes costly. Then there is a temptation for scholars to rely upon the theory which they like and say that all informed persons agree. Of the persons who disagree they

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can say they are uninformed; but it is hard to convince the world that holders of advanced degrees in science are uninformed.[3]

Truth is not the product of time or place, and does not change like fashions in clothing. There was a time when a majority of Europeans thought that lead could be turned to gold and that the Sun revolved around the Earth. When the author was in high school, physicists said that light is of the nature of vibrations, not particles as they used to teach; they had solved the problem. But now they recognize that in some research it seems that light consists of particles after all. We cannot rest content that the latest ideas always are the most trustworthy; there still may be changes in which a part of the past will claim its own.

The more we believe in our assumptions, the less we say about their true nature. To be sure, they still are there; but we tend to pass them off as hard facts. In the text General Zoology by G. B. Moment the word *Assumption* is not found in the Contents, Index, or anywhere else as I have found; but concerning the origin of birds the author categorically states, "Birds have evolved from reptiles."[4] Like many other scientists he does not recognize facts which make this decision debatable; that all birds, and birds alone, have feathers, and no animal has feathers which are partly scales. Such teaching resembles indoctrination rather than science.

Another example, an historical one, of the silent acceptance of an assumption is the supposed inheritance of acquired characters. "In the discussion of Lamarck's concrete cases nothing was said about the supposition that the stretching of the parent giraffe's neck would affect the offspring, making its neck slightly longer. In other words, nothing was said about the assumption that changes of body in parents, however slight, are transmitted to the offspring; for example, that big muscles gained by a parent through exercise are passed on as bigger muscles to their children or that the neck-stretching of a parent giraffe's neck would produce by inheritance a longer neck in its offspring."[5] Now the inheritance of acquired characters has been ruled out of genetics because nobody has found clear cases of such results; indeed, the evidence seems to be against it.

The philosopher, H. H. Titus, adds his conclusion: "Since science is often said to be based on observation and experimentation, it is well to emphasize again that scientific knowledge depends also on assumption and postulates, and that these in turn rest essentially on faith."[6] Quite true: science, as well as belief in creation, makes much use of faith in finding the significance of observed facts.

Now let us look at the United States school system. Our nation, which recognized God in the Declaration of Independence, prayed in the Constitutional Convention and in Congress, puts God's name on our coins, nevertheless objects to mentioning God in textbooks. This ruling represents a body in unstable equilibrium, which, as you know, must fall. The only question is, How soon?

Call Them What They Are

G. A. Kerkut lists the following assumptions as a basis for believing in evolution:

"1. The first assumption is that non-living things gave rise to living ones, i.e., spontaneous generation occurred.

"2. The second assumption is that spontaneous generation occurred only once.

"3. The third assumption is that viruses, bacteria, plants, and animals are all related.

"4. The fourth assumption is that Protozoa gave rise to the Metazoa.

"5. The fifth assumption is that the various invertebrate phyla are interrelated.

"6. The sixth assumption is that the invertebrates gave rise to the vertebrates.

"7. The seventh assumption is that within the vertebrates the fish gave rise to the amphibia, the amphibia to the reptiles, and the reptiles to the birds and mammals. Sometimes this is expressed on other words, that the modern amphibia and reptiles had a common ancestral stock, and so on."

"The first point I should like to make is that these seven assumptions by their nature are not capable of experimental verification."[7]

On a later page this English scientist says: "In effect, much of the evolution of the major groups of animals has to be taken on trust. There is a certain amount of circumstantial evidence but much of it can be argued either way."[8]

Kerkut, unlike the average text writer, makes it plain that this listing is made not to test out hypotheses, but as basic principles of the living world as the evolutionists want to teach it; conclusions to the contrary are not permitted by the teachers. We creationists present both the evolutionary and creation models and ask the student to make up his mind. In many places, parents are pleased with such a change.

References

[1]Norton, W. H., 1905. Elements of geology, Ginn, p. 393. (Emphasis his.)

[2]Price, G. M., Report on evolution. Issued by the Christian Evidence League, P. O. Box 173, Malverne, N. Y., p. 24, 1971.

[3]For instance, there are about 500 members of the Creation Research Society who hold advanced degrees from recognized universities.

[4]Moment, G. B., 1958. General zoology. Houghton Mifflin, p. 470.

[5]Nelson, Byron, 1967. After its kind. Bethany Fellowship, p. 86.

[6]Titus, H. H., 1953. Living issues in philosophy. American Book Co., p. 113.

[7]Kerkut, G. A., 1960. Implications of evolution. Pergamon. Pp. 150 *et seq.*

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 154.