

CREATION, EVOLUTION, AND OBJECTIVITY

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Two contrasting world-views, Creationism and uniformitarianism, have long been opposed one to the other. More recently a third opinion, which might be called secular catastrophism, has gained many adherents. An attempt is made here to investigate how these three world-views differ, and in so doing to draw some distinctions which may be helpful in discussing the matter.

Preface

The difficulty of maintaining an objective concept of nature is compounded by the concepts of "natural" and "supernatural" (the latter being regarded by many as an illusion—entirely subjective). This is further complicated by the fact that even natural events are often viewed as the result of Divine Purpose. We might say that "natural" is that which happens regularly under the same circumstances; e.g., if one steps into water, he sinks. The ability to walk on water (without technological assistance) would clearly be supernatural. In contrast to this deterministic example, stochastic events confuse matters even more. How improbable must a natural event be to be impossible without supernatural intervention?

To try to assure a uniform frame of reference for what follows, we will preface our discussion with a couple of seemingly straight-forward definitions:

Subjective: Of, affected by, or produced by the mind or a particular state of mind.

Of, or resulting from the feelings or temperament of the subject or person thinking, rather than the attributes of the object thought of.

Objective: Independent of the mind; real, actual. Determined by and emphasizing the features and characteristics of the object.

(From Webster's *New World Dictionary of the English Language*.)

Introduction

The creation-evolution *controversy* has raged for over a century: the *debate* is even older. Within the last century the two predominant camps (i.e., creationists and uniformitarians) have consistently viewed one another as objectionive and unscientific. In recent years another philosophy has rapidly gained adherents; that of secular catastrophism. From this camp the other two are derided—*both* accused of being unobjective and unscientific. In view of this accusation, perhaps some introspection and comparison are in order.

We can begin with a semidefinite tabulation, in Table 1, showing one area in which the three camps show a particularly marked difference: this being the kind of evidence they will accept. There are obviously gray areas between the different groups.

As would be expected, the philosophies embraced by these groups are reflected in their respective interpretations of varied scientific evidence.

World-View	Attitude Toward Evidence
Creationism	Acceptance of Biblical pronouncements—Consideration accorded to other records.
Uniformitarianism	Total rejection of Biblical pronouncements and other ancient records that contradict modern experience.
Secular Catastrophism	Evaluation of all ancient philological records. (Bible on approximately the same footing as others.)

Table 1. Attitude of the three world-views toward ancient literary evidence contrasted.

Evaluation of Testimonial Evidence

Since it is impossible for one individual to do with his own hands all the experiments that establish his science, he almost always accepts many reported results of scientific experimentation by others. This is in effect an act of faith (beyond one's own experience) even as the creationists' acceptance of the Biblical account of origins (and subsequent events, even though highly unusual). Thus, even the form of the literature has some bearing on its adjudged value.

Some subjectivity might well be admitted then by creationists because of this acceptance of Biblical revelation concerning origins, observation of which was naturally not possible by man. However, as we shall see, this is often not the full extent of the subjectivity.

Subjectivity is seen in uniformitarianism in its (frequently documented) rejection of even contemporary hard scientific evidence that contradicts its tenets.

Secular catastrophism tends to evaluate all observational evidence regardless of its literary context, but systematically disallows all elements that appear to be supernatural; which again is subjective editing.

Two points separating creationists from noncreationists are the problem of existence and the idea of progressive complexification (evolution of individuals and interrelationships between individuals). Existence is explained to the satisfaction of the creationist by the Bible. There is no scientific theory that can explain this to the satisfaction of the noncreationist, and secular catastrophists have had nothing original to offer in this respect. Complexification, a necessity for the noncreationist, is rejected by most creationists as contradictory to their interpretation of Biblical records.

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Evaluation of Static Evidence

Although the acts of creation were not observable by man, change is; e.g., in the fossil record. How is this record to be interpreted? In attempting an interpretation, all that can be said with certainty is that some biological forms of the past no longer exist, and some forms alive today do not appear as fossils. Some of the former have apparently become extinct. Others have possibly changed form to the extent that the extinct and the extant are not recognizable as part of the same line. (Even males and females of some living species bear little resemblance to one another.)

Given the imperfectly known possible range of variation within living species (such as dogs), it is impossible to say that one form complexified from another. This complexification is a forced conclusion of noncreationists by their rejection of a Creator (and/or a particular creation process). However, neither can it be said that any given living form not appearing in the fossil record would be like one that does to the point of being interfertile. This interfertility is a forced conclusion of creationists based on their interpretation of the Bible. Both conclusions reflect a degree of subjectivity.

Evaluation of Dynamic Evidence

A living biological interrelationship often cited as proof of creation is that of the Yucca Moth and the plant from which its name is derived; a highly specialized animal-plant relationship—each dependent on the other for its survival. The Yucca Moth and its host certainly refute any argument for gradualism in their development; else how would they ever have survived until culmination? More positively, as do so many other things and combinations of things, they bespeak intelligent design. What is often not recognized by creationists, however, is that this would seem to be a postdeluge arrival, as must be true of a large number of similar relationships. Given a universal destruction during the Flood, the relationship *must* have arisen (complexified) afterward, since there is no reason to suspect that the two components migrated in unison from the Old World to the New, surviving only in the latter. The alternative is something less than universal destruction by the Flood.

Whatever be the facts about the point here raised, two conclusions can be drawn from this relationship.

1. Uniformitarianism is refuted, as the "system" was necessarily complete at its inception.
2. Intelligent design is exhibited.

Nothing can be concluded so far about the time or method of its creation. In this regard, there are two possibilities:

1. Creation "in the beginning"—with the ramifications noted above.
2. Sudden ("catastrophic") genetic change—reprogrammed behavior—after the Flood (clearly with purpose).

Any conclusion on this will also reflect a degree of subjectivity.

Creationists' Evaluation of Biblical Evidence

Insofar as we have to *interpret* any part of the Bible, to that extent any science so derived is subjective. Areas of the Bible that are less than explicit should be used only as *guides* in directing and understanding our *research*—lest they lead to erroneous interpretations that become unjustifiable tenets.

A case in point is the so-called predeluge "vapor canopy." In an earlier issue of the *Quarterly* I pointed out that consideration of all relevant verses in Genesis I would lead to the untenable conclusion that the canopy would have encompassed the Greater and Lesser Lights; "waters above the firmament" therefore meaning something other than such a canopy.¹ One defensive response to this was "We *believe it is possible* for the word 'firmament' to have two meanings . . . In one instance firmament *may* refer to the lower atmosphere in which the fowl fly (1:20), while in 1:17 the reference *may* be to space where God placed the sun, moon, and stars." (Emphasis added.) Does such interpretation not differ only in degree from that of individuals who interpret the Genesis use of the term "create" as an evolutionary process? How can one claim that the Bible is the basis of his belief when some cherished opinion formed on non-Biblical grounds becomes the basis of Biblical interpretation? We (author included) frequently cast stones at the uniformitarians—but even among creationists objectivity sometimes appears to be a will-o-the-wisp.

Natural vs. Supernatural

For many years creationists have discussed and debated the possible causes of the Great Deluge and have pondered over the source of the water. It seems to be agreed that while the Deluge is not denied to have been an instrument of God, there is some "natural" explanation for it. No one has suggested that the waters just materialized from nothing; few that they were created just for the occasion. Recourse is frequently made to the collapse of the aforementioned "vapor canopy." The same canopy (its one-time existence and collapse) is invoked as an explanation for a variety of phenomena associated with both our planet and its inhabitants.

Creationists' "natural explanations" for Biblical upheavals often reflect a rather subjective selectivity. To try to explain some phenomena as natural (i.e., violating no physical laws) frequently provokes an adverse emotional response. One sometimes wonders what is allowed to be natural and what must be supernatural.

By definition, the creationist accepts God's miraculous creation of nature—life and intelligence are necessary to beget life and intelligence. Even though not restricted by the physical laws He established, who is to say by what means the Creator is to deal with His Creation? Can He not use one part of this Creation to effect His Will in another part? And is He not a God of order?

In the study of Biblical history, many curious things present themselves. In seeking to understand them, while the supernatural is not precluded, a natural explanation should be sought first—else whence the basis for any line of scientific inquiry?

Conclusion

Creationists admit that there have been changes in the life forms occupying this planet. On the basis of existing physical evidence, e.g., fossils, they cannot say that the changes have been less than any given degree, nor can evolutionists say that they have been greater than any given degree. Neither can say if any apparently new form represents a degeneration, "revision," or complexification relative to its predecessor.

The fossil record cannot be interpreted as evidence for the sudden initial appearance of fully developed life forms, since it resulted from destructive processes well after the proliferation of those forms. It may provide evidence *against* slow, continuous, gradual development. All life forms and extant biological interrelationships logically demand functionality at their outset, although this in itself says nothing about the *time* of their appearance.

The existing order of the universe, from microcosm to macrocosm, demands the recognition of a Creating Intelligence. It offers no evidence favoring particular means of creation or any subsequent *modus operandi* on the part of the Creator. Such things can be known only from records.

If there were no Book of Genesis, what would our creation philosophy be? (This is virtually the case in uniformitarian thought.) This question should make extremely clear the dependence our theories and hypotheses have upon Biblical pronouncements—and our interpretation of them. Regardless of the philosophy, some subjectivity is unavoidable—but we should take great care to minimize it.

References

- ¹Strickling, James E., 1976. The waters above the firmament. *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 12 (4):221.

WHAT CAN MUTATION AND SELECTION ACCOMPLISH?

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The author of this article had a mental shock when he was a college student, while reading *Plant-Breeding* by L. H. Bailey of Cornell University. I had been confident that the more one selects seed for planting, the more he improves his garden in future years. A common attitude was that the more you throw away the more you improve the quality of what is left. What a shock it was to learn about a gardener who selected big beans, also little beans (all by weight), and harvested the same average crop from each.

This careful investigator, Wilhelm Johannsen, was proving something that I, until I read about it, had never heard of, namely the limit of effective selection. Could it be that the method on which Darwin depended did not always produce results?

In explanation it should be said that in the beginning of Johannsen's work, the expected result did occur: big beans did produce big beans. But weighing the progeny of each stalk and planting them in separate plots, he found that *from the same plant*, little beans produced plants giving the same average weights as the big beans. For instance, taking an example from line A, one bean at planting weighed 40 centigrams and bore beans averaging 57.2 cg.; another bean weighed 70 cg. and produced beans averaging 55.5 cg., not far from the same.¹ In plants like beans, which normally pollinate themselves, it takes but one generation to produce uniformity in the genes of the progeny; and among things that are alike, of course there is no point in selecting. Any difference among the plants is caused by the environment and this, it is agreed, is not inherited. By the way, it was Johannsen who gave us the word *gene*, which is now used very widely.

You will recall that such results, although confirmed by various careful geneticists,² were at variance with

Darwin, who assumed that all genes change slightly and in all directions at each reproduction. It was unpleasant to have disharmony in the family of scientists and it led to hard words. We will let Byron Nelson relate to us the facts of the story.

From the beginning a pronounced dislike for Mendel's laws was apparent on the part of evolutionists. Alfred Russell Wallace, Darwin's close friend and co-worker, said, "On the general relation of Mendelism to evolution, I have come to a very definite conclusion. That is that it is really antagonistic to evolution." . . . Professor Scott of Princeton, another evolutionist, has said, "Interesting and profoundly important as are the results of Mendelian investigation, it must be admitted that they have rendered but little assistance in making the evolution process more intelligent, but instead of removing difficulties have rather increased them." Bateson revealed the situation when he said, "I notice that certain writers, who conceive themselves to be doing a service to Darwinism, take occasion to say that they expected as much (of Mendelism) and that from the first *they disliked the whole thing*." (Emphasis in the original)³

Although Nelson's degree was in theology he observed carefully and widely and wrote several books which have been read widely. In his book he gives the references to the above quotations very exactly.

To react to the situation the evolutionists took a characteristic step: instead of doubting evolution they would explain their beloved obsession by mutation and keep selection.

Perhaps you know that creationists recognize mutation just as much as evolutionists do. Usually a mutant (a change caused by mutation) has been caused by a change in a gene; but an unusual number of chromosomes, a break in a chromosome, or one turned end for

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