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Addendum

Reisz and Laurin in a recent treatment on turtle origins point out that turtles have "substantial fossil records," but that their "origins and relationships . . .

have remained unresolved." (p. 324) Their suggestion for the evolutionary dilemma implicates a small South African parareptile, *Owenetta*. If their conclusion were true, then as Fraser has pointed out, there are implications affecting our understanding of the integrity of the whole reptilian class. So we continue to have a phyletic muddle. One way I believe scientists can move toward extricating themselves from this condition would be to give more serious attention to an abrupt appearance (discontinuity) model.

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SYMPOSIUM ON VARIATION—VI

THE LIMITS OF BIOLOGICAL VARIATION

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Abstract

The topic of biological variation in nature is approached from its philosophical and biblical parameters, rather than from the approach of a research scientist.

Introduction

When attempting to understand the limits of biological variation, it is important to recognize certain realities which exist within the world of nature and to operate within those realities. Living organisms, for example, exist according to types or kinds, and that reality makes it possible to classify organisms systematically as taxonomists do. Organisms of a given type, such as roses, corn, dogs and human beings, are known to have the capacity for a limited amount of variation. That reality is often spoken of as micro-evolution which, essentially, is a reshuffling of existing genes; there is no generation of new genetic information but merely mutation of existing genes.

Law of Biogenesis

Every organism is what it is because of the built-in genetic information present in its parents. Organisms are programmed entities; they have no option of being anything other than what they are programmed to be. Information, in turn, always comes from intelligence, never from nonintelligence; that, too, is one of the realities in the world of nature. The programmed information which resides in the DNA molecule (deoxyribonucleic acid) was imposed on the physics and chemistry of that molecule by an intelligent Being at the time the first organism of a given type was created. The programming of the DNA molecule was a supernatural event by a supernatural Being, namely, the God Who, according to Genesis 1, created a wide assortment of living creatures, each according to its own kind; and He programmed each one genetically to reproduce its kind. Thus in terms of the order of creation, the kinds or types are stable throughout

time. That is confirmed by a widely accepted law, namely, the law of biogenesis, the essence of which is that life always comes from life of the same kind.

The genetic information built supernaturally into the DNA molecule is present in such a way that in the process of reproducing, an organism not only replicates itself but does so in such a way that the offspring is slightly different from its parents, yet always of the same type or kind. The genetic programming by the Creator precludes unlimited variation; roses always reproduce roses irrespective of the numerous varieties which are derived and human beings always give birth to human beings, as different as they may be. Through this inbuilt genetic information, the Creator guarantees that the many kinds of originally created plants and animals will remain in existence generation after generation. This stability (stasis) of organisms is also one of the pronounced characteristics which is observed in fossil organisms and the fossil record itself is likewise one of the great realities of nature.

Design

In consequence of the more detailed knowledge about the structure and operation of the biological cell known through the relatively new science of molecular biology, it is more obvious than ever that organisms are products of *design* and that each kind of organism has its own unique features. Two centuries ago William Paley (1743-1805) perceived nature as possessing design, and he published a book entitled *Natural Theology* (1802). Although philosophers and others have attempted to blunt Paley's argument of design, the realities of the biological world as they are known through molecular biology reveal more clearly than ever before that behind every living organism

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and its unique features stands an all-intelligent Being Who imposed on matter all the information needed to build, maintain and procreate creatures according to their originally created kinds.

Note what molecular biologist Michael Denton says about Paley's argument of design (1986, p. 341).

Paley was not only right in asserting the existence of an analogy between life and machines, but was also remarkably prophetic in guessing that the technological ingenuity realized in living systems is vastly in excess of anything yet accomplished by man . . . The almost irresistible force of the analogy has completely undermined the complacent assumption, prevalent in biological circles over most of the past century, that the design hypothesis can be excluded on the grounds that the notion is fundamentally a metaphysical *a priori* concept and therefore scientifically unsound. On the contrary, the inference to design is a purely *a posteriori* induction based on a ruthlessly consistent application of the logic of analogy. The conclusion may have religious implications, but it does not depend on religious presuppositions.

The Supernatural

Also relevant to the topic of the limits of biological variation is the question of the existence of a realm of reality in addition to our world of time, mass and space, namely, the *realm of the transcendent, the eternal*. It is erroneous to hold that only that which can be measured and dealt with empirically is real; and that time, matter and space *alone* are the sole realities. There is no way scientifically to validate that viewpoint. Although the realm of the supernatural cannot be researched, yet it can be *inferred* on the basis of what is known in the realm of time, mass and space.

Every person is in a position to conclude that the realm of the transcendent is real. Recall these ancient words:

What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20).

From this it can be seen that God expects a person to look at nature and draw the obvious common sense conclusion, namely, that nature came into existence by an almighty Deity. Not to draw that conclusion is to do violence to one's capacity to think logically.

The Holy Scriptures partake of both dimensions of reality. They embody the world of time, matter and space by virtue of their having been written by people who lived in that realm, and they embody the world of eternity by virtue of their having been inspired by the Holy Spirit Who exists in the realm of eternity. Every person needs the Bible as a necessary reference point for his thinking and living. To bypass the Holy Scriptures is to bypass the highest source of truth, to lose one's orientation to the world in which he lives, and to forfeit eternal life with Christ. The lives of people are fulfilled to a high degree when they live in both dimensions of reality as they are known from the Scriptures.

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SYMPOSIUM ON VARIATION—VII

SIMILARITIES AND DIVERSITY AMONG ORGANISMS: WHICH WORLD-VIEW DO THEY SUPPORT?

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Abstract

Both variations and similarities exist among life forms. This article is a brief consideration of the explanations offered for the existence of these, by an evolutionary and by a creationist view of nature. Following the introduction of the subject, three sub-topics will be considered: a) origins of life forms; b) the meaning or purpose of existence for life forms; and c) predictions offered for the future of life forms.

Introduction

Our planet is unique in the solar system in that its surface is completely covered by live organisms. It is not possible to find a cubic inch of surface matter on Earth which would not contain at least 10,000 bacteria. Spores fill the air and microorganisms have been found beneath thousands of feet of water in the ocean. This abundance of life forms on Earth is in

stark contrast to our environment in space, where sterility rules as far as scientists have been able to probe.

The phenomenon of life represents such an extraordinary arrangement of matter that it would be remarkable enough if there was only a single form of life on Earth. Instead, the biosphere consists of nearly two million diverse species of organisms. Taxonomists have divided this large number of diverse organisms

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