

Evolution Highly Improbable II: A response to Marshall Berman

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Editor:

Marshall Berman, in his 5/7/97 letter, asserts that I misapplied the rules of probability in my analysis of the likelihood of life arising by purely naturalistic means. If my analysis were correct, he suggests, it "would turn the scientific world upside down." But the science community, like Mr. Berman, is basically engaging in denial on this issue. Fred Hoyle, the eminent British cosmologist, published similar arguments decades ago. Most of the community just put their hands over their ears and refused to listen.

In reality the necessary analysis is so simple and direct it does not require any special intelligence, ingenuity, or advanced science education to understand or even originate. In my case, all I did was to estimate a generous upper bound on the maximum number of chemical reactions -- of any kind -- that could have ever occurred in the entire history of the cosmos and then compare this number with the number of trials needed to find a single life protein with a minimal level of functionality from among the possible candidates. I showed the latter number was orders and orders larger than the former. I assumed only that the candidates were equally likely. My argument was just that plain. I did not misapply the laws of probability. I applied them as physicists normally do in similar analyses.

Why can Mr. Berman, with a Ph.D. in physics, not grasp such trivial logic? I strongly believe it is because of his tenacious commitment to atheism that he is willing to be dishonest in his science. He is willing not only to be dishonest in his science, but he also is on a campaign to force this fraud on the public school students of our state as chief spokesperson for the New Mexicans for Science and Reason to the State Board of Education. Members of the State Board of Education as well as the State Department of Education can vouch to the intimidation tactics that Mr. Berman and this group has applied over the past several months in attempts to influence their procedures and decisions.

If Mr. Berman really has any hypothesis, any conjecture, even any clue or speculation how just a single functional life protein might arise spontaneously by natural processes, let him step forward and spell it out for the Monitor readership. I can tell you in advance he does not and will not. In his last letter he tries to distract attention by alluding to 'non-random processes' and 'deterministic events.' But where within his atheistic materialist framework can he turn to find such an agency? I say it is time for citizens to insist that this charade end. It is time the false and misleading claims be stopped by reviewers in the scientific journals. It is time for such claims be challenged in the popular media and in the tax-supported public schools. Does anybody out there have the courage to join me in this enterprise? Yes, praise God, there are many.

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