

# Six Problems with Evolution: a response to Graham Mark

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31 Mar.1995

*The Los Alamos Monitor*

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Editor:

I would like to comment on Graham Mark's 3/16/95 lengthy guest editorial in defense of evolutionary theory that, in large measure, was a reaction to my 2/23/95 letter which contained six points of criticism of the theory. I will organize my remarks around these same six points, but in two parts. Part I will deal with issues related to information theory, while Part II will give the alternative interpretation Mr. Mark requested of the data he believes to demonstrate "the fact of evolution."

I will begin Part I by reiterating the first point of my 2/23/95 letter that evolutionists usually deemphasize the fact that their explanation for life's origin and history is intimately linked to a distinctive model for reality. This model, which I will refer to as the materialist model, assumes that everything that is real can be built from and described in terms of the elementary particles of physics.

A person committed to this model usually argues that categories not within this definition of reality are inaccessible to human reason, outside the perview of science, and generally not worthy of serious intellectual attention. Hardly anyone in the world today with a university education has not been exposed to a major dose of this particular philosophical outlook.

A survey of the history of Western thought readily traces this way of thinking to the eighteenth century philosopher Immanuel Kant who insisted the only category of reality accessible to human reason is that of the phenomenal, or material, realm. All other categories such as aesthetics, ethics, human emotion, and certainly all things spiritual, Kant argued are beyond reason.

Such a limitation on human reason is in stark contrast with the classical Greek outlook which divided reality into two main categories, the phenomenal and the noumenal. The word noumenal, derived from the Greek word 'nous' for

mind, pertained to realm of ideas, thoughts, universals, and ideals. In this classical Greek way to thinking, true reality and perfection resided in the noumenal realm. Only a limited and imperfect expression of noumenal realities were to be found in the phenomenal.

My point here is that it is important to have a keen understanding of ones model for reality, including its underlying assumptions and potential points of failure, especially when dealing with an issue as fundamental as life's origin. If ones model for reality is defective, it is possible to make serious logical errors when handling the truly important questions.

One obvious difficulty for the materialist model is how consciousness can be accounted for in terms of purely material constituents. A committed materialist is locked into proposition that mind and consciousness must be manifestations of matter and the laws of physics alone. Yet this position is logically necessary only if the materialist assumptions about the nature of reality are correct. I believe it is simple and straightforward to show that the materialist assumptions about the nature of reality almost certainly are not correct.

The demonstration to which I appeal involves not consciousness or mind itself directly, but rather a tangible product of consciousness or mind--namely, language. Language involves a vocabulary, symbolic code, and a set of grammatical rules to relay or record thought. Many of us spend most of our waking hours generating, processing, or disseminating linguistic data. Seldom do we reflect on the fact that the fundamental essence of such data might be nonmaterial.

This conclusion may be reached, however, by observing the linguistic information itself is independent of its material carrier. The meaning or message obviously does not depend on whether it is represented as ink patterns on paper or as alignment of magnetic domains on a floppy disk or as voltage patterns in a transistor network. The message that I have won the ten million dollar lottery is the same whether I receive the information by mail or by telephone or on television or over Internet. If it is plausible to conclude something as tangible and familiar as linguistic information has an existence independent of matter or energy on which it rides, is it not also plausible to suspect the capacity which generates such information in its essence is nonmaterial as well?

I contend the correctness of the materialist model for reality is a question which simply cannot be avoided in a reasoned dialogue on the issue of

evolution. The origin of the exceedingly complex linguistic structures which comprise the construction blueprints and operating manuals for all the complicated chemical nanomachinery and sophisticated feedback control mechanisms in even the simplest living organism is very much related to the answer. If the Greek view was approximately correct that there does exist a noumenal type of reality, then must that information not be included in evaluating the issue?

The second point of my 2/23/95 letter concerned the issue of biogenesis, that is how the first life arose from nonliving chemicals. I argued that evolutionary theory does not have a clue how it could happen and that evolutionists are dishonest in giving impressions to the contrary. Mr. Mark's comments confirm this claim. When he states, "there is no scientific reason to reject the hypothesis that life originated through natural and repeatable biochemical processes," just whom does he think he is fooling? Undergraduate level biochemistry and thermodynamics readily reveals which direction is favored in monomer-polymer reactions of amino acids in aqueous solution. There is an incredible thermodynamic barrier against formation of the sorts of polymers found in even the simplest life. This is not even to mention the uniform symmetry properties of biological molecules. So Mr. Mark here is not writing to scientists but rather engaged in deceiving nonscientists.

Similarly, when he states that "evolutionary theory provides a plausible, mechanistic explanation of how bacterial genomes...have come to be," in response to my observation that the simplest bacterial genomes represent coded algorithms one million words in length, what sort of logic is he pursuing? When he adds it is by "natural selection," he must be alluding to a fantasy type of biochemistry that operates by rules other than the ones we observe on earth. Again Mr. Mark here is not writing to serious scientists. I invite him to produce citations in the scientific literature to substantiate his claim that evolutionists have identified "a plausible, mechanistic process" by which nonliving chemicals organize themselves to produce a bacterial genome. He cannot because such citations do not exist.

Why is Mr. Mark forced to make such dishonest statements? My assessment is that it is because he is locked into a materialist framework that offers him no alternatives. Materialism simply cannot deal adequately with noumenal reality. Complex linguistic data structures fall into this category. The laws of physics just do not provide any mechanism for generating meaning carrying coded language structures. Such structures are the very basis of life.

These remarks also apply to point three of my earlier letter concerning the lack of an evolutionary mechanism for modifying genetic language structures in the complex ways required to generate the uniqueness evident at levels of family, order, class, and phyla in the taxonomic framework. For brevity's sake I will not reiterate the problems involved in finding a means for accomplishing such feats inside the laws of physics.

I will close by pointing out that information theory and linguistics are legitimate academic disciplines that apply human reason to investigate categories I have argued are essentially noumenal in nature. I therefore conclude Kant's basic conclusions regarding the limitations on human reason (and science) are faulty and there is then no good reason any longer to be locked into a materialist mindset. And why would anyone want to be, given the horrendous human/social consequences demonstrated so vividly in the former Soviet Union?

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