



Current Events

Thoughts on the Existence of God

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Of all the fundamentalist groups at large in the world today, the Darwinians seem to me the most objectionable. They are just as strident and closed to argument as Christian or Muslim fundamentalists, but unlike those two groups the Darwinians enjoy intellectual respectability.

Darwinians and their allies dominate the scientific establishments of the West. They rule the campus. Their militant brand of atheism makes them natural allies of the philosophical atheists who control most college philosophy faculties. They dominate the leading scientific magazines and prevent their critics and opponents from getting a hearing, and they secure the best slots on TV. Yet the Darwinian brand of evolution is becoming increasingly vulnerable as the progress of science reveals its weaknesses. One day, perhaps soon, it will collapse in ruins.

Weak Underpinnings

Few people today doubt the concept of evolution as such. What seems mistaken is Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, whereby species evolve by infinitesimally small stages. Neither Darwin nor any of his followers--nor his noisy champions today--was a historian. None of them thought of time historically or made their calculations chronologically. Had they done so, they'd have seen that natural selection works much too slowly to fit into the time line allowed by the ages of the universe and our own planet. The process must somehow have been accelerated in jumps or by catastrophes or outside intervention.

There are five other weaknesses the Darwinians cannot explain away either. The best summary of these can be found in Richard J. Bird's *Chaos and Life* (Columbia University Press), page 53. Warning: This book is tough going but will reward the persistent.

If the theory of natural selection is incorrect, then the Darwinians' view that there is no need or place for God in the universe is itself weakened, though not necessarily overthrown. Physics, however, increasingly tends to suggest that there is a God role, particularly with regard to the origin of the universe. We now know this occurred about 13.7 billion years ago, and our knowledge of what happened immediately afterward is becoming increasingly detailed, down to the last microsecond.

Few now doubt there was a Big Bang. We know when it occurred and what followed. But we are just as far as ever from understanding why it happened or what--or who--caused it. Indeed, all calculations about the Big Bang are based on the assumption that nothing preceded it. It took place in an infinite vacuum. There was no process of ignition, or traces of it would have been left. Hence, this fundamental happening in history seems to conflict with all the laws of physics and our notions of how the universe operates. It was an event without a cause.

It also produced something out of nothing. More: It produced everything out of nothing. The expansion of the universe has proceeded ever since, and all the creative processes involved in it--including Earth and homo sapiens--were written into the laws laid down in that first tremendous explosion. We do not have to believe in an entirely deterministic universe to see that the first microsecond of history foreshadowed everything that has followed over the last 13-plus billion years.

If the laws of physics cannot explain how and why this event occurred, we must invoke metaphysics. And that means some kind of divine force. I've been rereading what Sir Isaac Newton wrote about God in the second edition of his *Principia* (1713). Newton saw God not as a perfect being--or any kind of being at all--but as a power, what he termed a "dominion." "We reverence and adore Him on account of His dominion," he wrote. This power was exercised "in a manner not at all human ... in a manner utterly unknown to us." Newton knew God only through His works. "He is utterly void of all body and bodily figure, and can therefore neither be seen, nor heard, nor touched." Our knowledge of Him is limited "by His most wise and excellent contrivances of things."

"... and the Word Was God"

This notion of God as an impersonal power or force, wholly outside the laws of physics, fits with the role assigned him as author of the Big Bang. And since that primal event there has been no need of further intervention by God in the affairs of the universe.

Or has there? I've also been reading Guy Deutscher's *The Unfolding of Language* (Metropolitan Books) and reflecting on the nature of words. Speech is the greatest of man's inventions and the mother of all others. Yet, in truth, nobody invented it. Its emergence and evolution proceeded in ways that are still almost a total mystery. It is as close to a miracle as anything associated with human beings.

Both the Hebrews and the Greeks, in different ways, believed there was something divine about "the word," or *logos*. The Greeks thought the word was the abstract principle of reason exhibited by an orderly universe. The Jews thought it the image of God, the beginning and origin of all things. It is possible, then, that the giving of the word to humanity was the second intervention of the metaphysical force or dominion in the process of history. That, I think, is the conclusion I have come to in these difficult matters. What will be the third, I wonder?

Paul Johnson, eminent British historian and author; **Lee Kuan Yew**, minister mentor of Singapore; and **Ernesto Zedillo**, director, Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, former president of Mexico; in addition to Forbes Chairman **Caspar W. Weinberger**, rotate in writing this column. To see past Current Events columns, visit our Web site at **www.forbes.com/currentevents**.