Evolution

As expounded by Harold Foster

The fact that you drive an automobile and not an chariot is proof of evolution. If we could transport your automobile back in time two thousand years and drive into Rome alongside a chariot, it would be to the people of that day a literal miracle, not a man-made machine. We do not regard the automobile as a miracle of creation because we can look back at the long series of steps involved in its evolution.

Few of us would want to give up our cars and go back to chariots. Some of us would not even survive without modern transportation. In fact, without modern technology the production and distribution of food could not meet the world's needs. Consider that the development of the automobile would not have been possible but for hundreds—maybe thousands—of things in the physical makeup of the planet being "just right." It seems obvious to me that God took special care in designing planet Earth so that cars and airplanes and computers could evolve. From that point of view, their evolution is a miracle.

Why did it take so long for mankind to begin making use of these wonderful provisions? To put it another way, why did God leave us to discover how to do it on our own instead of including all that knowledge in the brain of Adam? It takes many millions of

people working together to support the technology and infrastructure upon which automobiles and airplanes and computers depend, and without that technology our earth could not support its present population. So the way it happened is the only way it could have happened. Surely this too was in God's design. He provided for evolution from chariot to automobile, and as with everything else he designed, he pronounced it good. I conclude that God likes evolution.

Evolution is a principle with many applications. The word "evolution" is most often taken to mean one particular unrealistic application of the principle. Another example of a word that stands for a principle with many applications is "work." When you mention "work" to someone it will most likely bring up an unpleasant association: a necessary evil. Mention "work" to specialists in fields such as psychology, athletic training, metallurgy, religion, or almost any other field, and the term will bring to their minds certain things very different from the usual meaning of "work." Just as there are different kinds of work, so there are different kinds of evolution. The word "evolution" has taken on a singular meaning in common parlance, but to limit it to that is like limiting the meaning of "work" to cleaning the floor—with a robot vacuum sweeper.

Evolution as a principle is about development in the sense of something new and perhaps better unrolling or rolling out of the very existence of something that came before it. This principle can be seen in operation everywhere there is human activity. Virtually all development in technology happens by evolution. In other

words, man uses evolution in his daily work. Evolution of this sort involves trial and error and natural selection, and mankind has been using it for thousands of years. It is the essential tool for the advancement of civilization. But it is only a tool and by itself has no power to do anything. Without human intelligence, evolution is as constructive as a saw lying beside a pile of lumber. Nevertheless, Darwin seized on this principle, substituting time for intelligence, and theorized (to continue the analogy) that if you have enough saws lying beside piles of lumber, one of them will eventually turn the lumber into a house. Darwin's desperate disciples, still motivated by the futile dream of banishing God from human conscience, fantasize that evolution created everything automatically; and they go around hawking that idol.

Theoretically we could make a robot that would build a house. Set it down beside a pile of materials, come by a few days later, and you have a robot and a house where there was a robot and a pile of materials before. Here we have a machine that has created order out of disorder, yet the robot itself has no intelligence; it is entirely mechanical, controlled by a computer program. Isn't that an example of progress being made without intelligence? If you have drawn your circle around the robot and the pile of materials when you ask that question, the answer is "Yes," there was no intelligence involved. But that is not the whole answer; the robot did not create itself. A lot of very smart people thought long and hard before the robot came into being. They wrote the program—created the information—that makes it do what it does. This is the image of God at work: humans are able to create information.

Evolution is driven by information, and the source of the information is God, ultimately. If someone says otherwise, they have not drawn the circle wide enough to encompass the whole story.

There is another kind of evolution that is more interesting. It is currently being used by mankind to do amazing things, but it is a comparatively recent discovery—or if not a recent discovery its use was impractical before the development of automatic computation. It fits the definition of evolution even better, for the root meaning of "evolve" is to unroll what was contained in the original. There is no trial and error in this kind of evolution. Basically it is computer software that creates things—all of them good and useful—that even the programer who wrote the software never prescribed exactly. There are many versions of this technique, but every accomplished programmer uses some form of it. Note that if you were to look only at the results and knew nothing of the method, you could, if you tied hard enough, mistake it for the slow type of evolution.

You can work hard, or you can work smart. If you work smart, you do not do things directly; rather, you design a method out of which comes a whole class of things automatically as needed. If you prefer to work long and hard, you wait until each thing is needed, and then you make the individual item to its individual specification.

Now if those on the front lines of the evolution debate who are trying to convince the world that evidence of design is everywhere would allow themselves to admit that God is at least as smart as a computer programmer, they would find themselves working

shoulder-to-shoulder with biologists, helping them distinguish between kinds of evolution. The quick kind does not depend on chance or need large amounts of time, for it is the result of intelligent, deliberate design taken to the next level. If man can do it, certainly God can do it too. To insist that there is no such evolution is to insist that God is less creative than his creatures, which I'm sure none of us wants to do.

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