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Evolution: Its Collapse In View?

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"How Science Responds When Creationists Criticize Evolution"
By Boyce Rensberger, Washington Post Staff Writer

Remember back in November '89 when the Berlin Wall came down? After three decades, a section of the Wall was torn down by German citizens in a matter of hours. By 1992, most of it was broken up for use in roadbeds and other construction projects. The same sort of thing is beginning to happen with evolution, and it's starting to crumble a lot faster than many might think.

Two of the hottest sites on the Internet are:

"[Molecular Machines](#)" by biochemist Michael Behe and "[The Deniable Darwin](#)" by mathematician David Berlinski.

Behe's book, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, already in its sixth printing since its release last August, is the first anti-Darwinian book to be published by a major New York house in several decades (The Free Press, a division of Simon & Shuster). Behe argues that biochemical systems, such as those involved in vision, the immune system, and blood clotting are so complex that "you can see they were designed by an intelligent agent and did not evolve according to Darwinian theory."

("Heretics in the Laboratory", *Newsweek*, Sept. 16, p.82). Behe refers to these biochemical systems as having "irreducible complexity"---a term that is certain to become part of the modern scientific lexicon.

Darwinists have been claiming that they solved the complexity problem long ago, not that they hope to solve it some time in the future. *Now* what do they do?

On October 29, Behe's opinion piece, "[Darwin Under the Microscope](#)", appeared in *The New York Times* (section A; p. 25) which was followed just four days later by Berlinski's review of Richard Dawkins' "[Climbing Mount Improbable](#)" in *The Globe & Mail* (Nov. 2, p. D11). Berlinski writes: "The theory of evolution is the great white elephant of contemporary thought. It is large, almost entirely useless, and the object of superstitious awe." The December 2nd issue of *Forbes ASAP* (*Forbes* magazine's technology publication for business) includes another Berlinski article, "[The End of Materialist Science](#)." *Forbes ASAP* refers to Berlinski as "the most controversial challenger to the dogma of modern science in our time."

Darwinists say, "We continually revise our theories and welcome critical examination and evaluation." They may revise aspects of their theories, but because evolution is so incredibly malleable, no amount of contrary evidence will convince them otherwise. But how much contrary evidence must accumulate before a theory is discarded?

Today evolution survives, not so much as a theory of science, but as a philosophical necessity. Good science is always tentative and self-correcting, but this never really happens in the case of evolution.

Regardless of the scientific data, the idea of evolution as a valid concept is not open to debate. Students are allowed to ask "HOW did evolution occur?", but never "DID evolution occur?". Which is a more objective question: "What were the ape-like creatures that led to man?" or "*Did* man evolve from ape- like creatures?"

On December 9 archeologist and paleo-anthropologist Mary Leakey died at age 83. Although Leakey was convinced that man had evolved from ape-like ancestors, she was equally convinced that scientists will never be able to prove a particular scenario of human evolution. Three months before her death, she said in an interview: "All these trees of life with their branches of our ancestors, that's a lot of nonsense." Associated Press (AP) Dec. 10, 1996.

With Leakey's words still ringing in my ears, *The New York Times* reported three days later that scientists had re-examined two major fossil sites in Java, and found that *Homo erectus* may have lived there as recently as "27,000 years ago". (December 13, P.A1) This dating analysis, conducted by McMaster University geologists Henry Schwarcz and Jack Rink, will serve to cast further doubt on the so-called evidence for human evolution. Why? If it can be shown that *Homo erectus* lived at the same time as modern man, *Homo erectus* may be no more than racial variants of *Homo sapiens*. That is what creationists such as Duane Gish ("*Evolution: The Fossils Still Say No!*", Master Books, 1995) have been saying for decades.

From *Maclean's Magazine* (Canada's weekly newsmagazine): ***

That would place him [Java Man] in the era of modern humans--- and argue against an ancestral relationship. "If these dates are right," said Philip Rightmire, an anthropologist at the State University of New York at Binghamton, "the multiregionalists will have to do

some fast thinking. "...The new findings also challenge the rival Out of Africa theory. That view holds that modern humans emerged in Africa as recently as 150,000 years ago and spread around the globe, driving Homo erectus into extinction---well before the era pointed to by the new finding.(Maclean's, science section,"The origins of man", Dec. 23, p. 69) ***

Marvin Lubenow has an M.S.in anthropology and zoology from Eastern Michigan University, and is the author of "Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils", Baker Book House, 1993. According to Lubenow, from the neck down, the differences between Homo erectus and modern humans are minor.(Erectus skeletons are usually smaller than moderns, but not always.) And while Homo erectus tended to have thicker skulls and smaller brains, we now know the human brain's organization is such that small size does not affect intelligence (eg. some Australian aborigines). In fact, the actual range in humans is said to be a remarkable 700 to 2200 cubic centimetres. Lubenow states that other characteristics of Homo erectus skulls can be accounted for by poor diet and disease (especially rickets), inbreeding, and harsh living conditions, and that most, if not all, of these skull-shape characteristics can still be found within the current human population.

Currently, a lively debate between University of California (Berkeley) law professor Phillip Johnson (*Darwin on Trial*) and Kenneth Miller of Brown University, author of a leading biology textbook, is found on [NOVA Online](#).

The December/January issue of the *Boston Review*, offers a review of Behe's *Darwin's Black Box*:

"[Darwin v. Intelligent Design](#)" by H. Allen Orr as well as a review of Richard Dawkins' *Climbing Mount Improbable*:

"[A Feeling for the Organism](#)" by Robert Berwick Discussion Forum including the authors:

The February/March issue includes a [symposium on origins](#). To date there are 11 responses to Orr and Berwick: "[The Sterility of Darwinism](#)" by Michael Behe,

"[Dogmatic Materialism](#)" by Phillip E. Johnson,

"[The Limits of Darwinism](#)" by David Berlinski,

"[More Crank Science](#)" by Jerry A. Coyne,

"[A Delicate Balance](#)" by Russell F. Doolittle,

"[Miracles and Molecules](#)" by Douglas J. Futuyma,

"[Where's the Evidence?](#)" by Robert DiSilvestro,

["Enough Speculation"](#) by Michael Ruse

["A Third Way"](#) by James A. Shapiro

["Errors of Omission"](#) by Richard Dawkins

["A Scientific Snow Job"](#) by Daniel Dennett

H. Allen Orr [responds](#).

Robert Berwick [responds](#).

Debates have an important role to play in discussions of origins, for if science is not permitted to testify against the evolutionary paradigm, then perhaps evolutionary speculation should be restricted to classes in philosophy.

From February 20-23 the University of Texas at Austin plays host to a landmark conference: *Naturalism, Theism and the Scientific Enterprise*, sponsored by the university's Department of Philosophy. The plenary speakers include [Phillip Johnson](#), [Michael Ruse](#) (Philosophy, University of Guelph; author of "Darwinism Defended"), [Frederick Grinnell](#) (UT Southwestern Medical Center; author of "The Scientific Attitude") and [Alvin Plantinga](#) (Philosophy, University of Notre Dame; author of "Warrant and Proper Function")

From the NTSE web page:

"The conference is dedicated to fostering dialogue between naturalists and theists on the impact of social and philosophical predispositions on the development, interpretation and presentation of scientific knowledge. Our goal is to have a program balanced between defenders and critics of naturalism in science."

Conference speakers will present papers from a wide variety of disciplines, including philosophy, history of science, biology, geology, anthropology and mathematics. To view and download abstracts and papers from the conference, go to: [Conference web site](#).

On the PBS documentary "In the Beginning: The Creationist Controversy" [May 1995] Phillip Johnson commented: "Darwinian theory is the creation myth of our culture. It's the officially sponsored, government financed creation myth that the public is supposed to believe in, and that creates the evolutionary scientists as the priesthood... So we have the priesthood of naturalism, which has great cultural authority, and of course has to protect its mystery that gives it that authority---that's why they're so vicious towards critics."

In the not-so-distant future, when someone of the stature of a Stephen Jay Gould or the late Carl Sagan holds a press conference to announce he has finally reached the conclusion that evolution is scientifically bankrupt, other scientists will quickly follow suit. It'll resemble rats deserting a sinking ship. And with the publication of Behe's book, Berlinski's articles, and December's stunning announcement that Homo erectus and Homo sapiens may have lived at the same time, I think I'm beginning to hear the sounds of tiny feet scampering over the decks. Can you?

David Buckna