

**FEATURE: How Did Life Become Alive? – Antony Flew
(Last in SERIES of 4)**

- PROF.: Someone said a specialist is a person who knows more and more, about less and less. He develops a *deep knowledge* of a *narrow specialty*.
- VOICE: The ultimate specialist would be “a person who knows everything about nothing.”
- PROF.: Many scientists focus so intensely on a narrow field of knowledge, that they sometimes miss the larger context of what their discoveries mean.
- FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT
- VOICE: The upside-down picture on the cover Prof. Antony Flew’s most recent book, symbolizes the total change in his view of the world. His book *There Is a God* has the subtitle, “How the world’s most notorious atheist changed his mind.”
- PROF.: Prof. Flew begins chapter 7 by saying, “When the mass media first reported the change in my view of the world, I was quoted as saying that biologists' investigation of DNA has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved.”
- VOICE: When we see very complex features in nature, it's logical to reason that someone intelligent must have made nature.
- PROF.: Years earlier, his atheism was weakening as he studied the complexity of even the simplest living cell – and how difficult it would have been for natural processes to assemble it from non-living matter.
It was even harder for him to remain an atheist, when he learned that the first living matter already had the ability to reproduce itself genetically. He reasoned that there was no satisfactory naturalistic explanation for such a phenomenon.
- VOICE: When Prof. Flew finally abandoned atheism, atheists immediately denounced him. They accused him of being ignorant of the latest hypotheses regarding how the first living substance might have originated.

- PROF.: Flew answers, “I am myself delighted...that...biologists are now well able to produce theories of the evolution of the first living matter, and that several of these theories are consistent with the so-far-confirmed scientific evidence.”
But he adds an important warning. All current theories that biologists can devise, require more time than the universe has existed. The universe is too young to have originated the first life form in the time that the universe has existed.
- VOICE: Most physicists believe the universe is more than 13 billion years old. Is he saying that's not enough time for “life to become alive” – for non-living substances to evolve into living organisms?
- PROF.: Yes. Most scientists who study the origin of life rarely consider the wider implications of their findings. Flew continues, “The philosophical question that has not been answered in origin-of-life studies is this: How can a universe of mindless matter produce beings with intrinsic ends...?”
- VOICE: Non-living matter doesn't contain purpose.
- PROF.: How can mindless matter produce beings with self-replication capabilities?
- VOICE: ...The ability to reproduce itself.
- PROF.: How can a universe of mindless matter produce beings with coded chemistry?
- VOICE: ...Genetic codes such as DNA or RNA.
So Prof. Flew asked how non-living, non-reproducing matter was transformed into things that live and reproduce.
- PROF.: He explains, “Here we are not dealing with biology, but an entirely different category of problem.” Living matter possesses a goal-centered organization that is not present anywhere in the matter that preceded it. Living matter is built with a complexity that enables it to metabolize and stay alive.
- VOICE: Scientists and philosophers have developed some very elaborate speculations about how life might have originated. But none of their hypotheses about things like Darwin's “warm little pond” really work when they are tested.

PROF.: A second key problem is: After the first living organism originated, how did it get the ability to *reproduce itself*?

Origin-of-life theories merely *assume* that reproduction existed at an early stage of evolution. But Prof. Flew says he has never read a logically convincing materialistic explanation for the very first emerging of living matter from non-living matter. He says, “In being alive, living matter possesses a [purposeful] organization that is wholly absent from everything that preceded it.”

VOICE: Living matter possesses a purposeful organization that is not present in non-living matter.

PROF.: The very earliest life forms were not able to reproduce themselves. Flew asks how life forms originated the ability to reproduce. He pointed out, “Without the existence of such a capacity, it would not have been possible for different species to emerge through random mutation and natural selection.” These issues made him doubt that life could have originated without a wise Creator designing it.

VOICE: So he had two reasons for doubting that life could have originated itself. First, life is too organized to have *originated itself* from lifeless matter. And second, living organisms have the capacity to *reproduce themselves*.

PROF.: Prof. Flew sees a third philosophical dimension to the origin of life. All life-forms contain *coding and information processing*. That is essential to their survival.

Mathematician David Berlinski highlights the word “code.” He describes a code as a map or a system of linkages between two discrete objects. Drawing a map or writing a code requires intelligence.

VOICE: Geneticist Dr. Francis Collins illustrated the amount of information the human body contains. He pointed out that if we printed onto paper the information in one cell, the stack of paper would be as thick as the tallest monument in Washington – 169 meters high!

- PROF.: This leads to a question that's too big for a specialist to answer: Can we realistically believe that a system of coded information originated by natural processes? Or does our knowledge of how humans write codes, make it logical to believe that God wrote the complex codes that we see in nature, such as RNA or DNA?
- In the journal *RNA*, origin-of-life researcher Carl Woese [rhymes with “rose”] evaluates current knowledge. He says the idea that some fundamental physical principle controls the way genes work, is “gone.” He explains, “Not only is there no underlying physical principle, but the very existence of a code is a mystery. The coding rules...are known. Yet they provide no clue as to *why the code exists* and *why the mechanism of translation is what it is.*”
- VOICE: Is he saying we don't know anything about how genes and the genetic code originated?
- PROF.: Yes. He elaborates, “The origins of translation, ...before it became a true decoding mechanism, are for now lost in the dimness of the past, and I don't wish to engage here in...speculations as to what...processes might have preceded and given rise to it, or to speculate on the origins of...the genetic code.”
- VOICE: Most origin-of-life theories have concentrated on the *chemistry* of life.
- PROF.: But life is more than just chemical reactions. The cell is also an information-storing, information-processing, information-replicating system.
- Dr. Paul Davies says, “We need to explain the origin of this information, and the way in which the information-processing machinery came to exist.”
- VOICE: In other words, we need to explain the *software* – and also the *hardware* that processes the information that the genetic software contains.
- PROF.: That's a good summary. A gene is a set of coded instructions with a precise recipe for manufacturing proteins. Davies says, “The problem of how meaningful...information can emerge spontaneously from a collection of mindless molecules subject to blind and purposeless forces” is hard to imagine.
- VOICE: Biologists do have theories of the evolution of the first living matter.

- PROF.: But they are still a long way from any definitive conclusions.
Dr. Antonio Lazcano, the president of the International Society for the Study of the Origin of Life, reports: “Life could not have evolved without a genetic mechanism – one able to store, replicate and transmit to its progeny, information that can change with time. Precisely how the first genetic machinery evolved, also puts us at an unresolved issue. In fact, the exact pathway for life's origin may never be known.”
- VOICE: If we know so little about how *life* originated, what do we know about how *reproductive processes* originated? One-celled life reproduces by splitting, but sexual reproduction is much more complicated.
- PROF.: Dr. John Maddox, the editor emeritus of the journal *Nature*, writes, “The overriding question is when (and then how) sexual reproduction itself evolved. Despite decades of speculation, we do not know.”
Finally, Dr. Gerald Schroeder points out that the existence of *conditions favorable to life* still does not explain *how life itself originated*.
- VOICE: Just because a climate *doesn't kill life*, doesn't mean that climate is capable of *creating life*.
- PROF.: Exactly!
- VOICE: So how do we explain the origin of life?
- PROF.: Nobel prize-winning physiologist George Wald argued that “...we choose to believe the impossible: that life arose spontaneously by chance.” More recently, after additional research and thought, he concluded that “a pre-existing mind” composed a physical universe that breeds life.
Prof. Flew concludes, “This, too is my conclusion. The only satisfactory explanation for the origin of such end-directed, self-replicating life as we see on Earth is an infinitely intelligent Mind.”
- VOICE: So how did life become alive?
- PROF.: As Lord Kelvin said, “If you think strongly enough, you will be forced by science to the belief in God.”

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

© Copyright notices:

- *There Is A God* copyright 2007 by Antony Flew.
- Balance of script copyright 2008 Trans World Radio.

Contact us:

If you live in India:

E-mail: testtube@radio882.com

Postal address:

Truth in the Test Tube
P.O. Box 4320
Bangalore 560043 India
Telephone: 91-984-561-6412

From other countries:

E-mail: truthtest@truthinthetesttube.org

Postal address:

Truth in the Test Tube
TWR
P.O. Box 8700
Cary, NC 27512-8700
U.S.A.