

A review of the article

## "A Delicate Balance: Teaching Biological Evolution at BYU-Idaho"

by Lynn Firestone of the Department of Biology

Kent Huff

This review is part of a series of articles examining the writings and opinions of BYU employees who support the teaching of the standard secular/atheist dogmas of organic evolution. A brief summary of the prior history may be helpful here:

In 2011 the Religious Studies Center at BYU published a book entitled *Converging Paths to Truth* containing eight essays on the subject of evolution and its relationship to religion at BYU. I think it is fair to say that, to a greater or lesser extent, all of these articles support the concept of organic evolution as correct science and worthy to be taught at BYU with full privileges and with essentially no scrutiny. I consider this uncritical acceptance of this secular dogma to be bad science, bad scholarship, bad pedagogy, and a great source of confusion to BYU students. Finding the Dean of the Religious Studies Department to be an unrestrained proponent of organic evolution, without even a hint of skepticism, indicates how fully and freely this secular/atheist dogma has been accepted at the Lord's University. I believe that the unwillingness to even "teach the controversy," whereby other viewpoints on the validity of organic evolution are given a respectful review, is most regrettable. This monolithic support by Church universities for this secular/atheist philosophical construction is difficult to understand and explain. I assume it would take an entire book to explain how we got here, even if we could somehow actually piece together the hundreds or thousands of small events that happened along the way.

Having written a review of the book *Converging Paths to Truth*, with its eight articles, I then ran across a similar article written by a biology professor at BYU-Idaho. This article offers similar enthusiastic support for the secular/atheist dogma of evolution, although the author appears to be slightly more concerned than others about the potential problems for students of having BYU professors promoting conflicts between science and religion, with religion having to step aside to allow the supposedly much purer "science" to be given precedence. The limp "ways of knowing" dichotomy, or rationalization, between religious experience and "science" cannot be justified on any rational or philosophical grounds except to arrogantly claim that true reason can only function concerning science, and some other, lesser, pseudo-reasoning is all that is left for use in the religious realms of thought. This attempt to divide the very processes of thought into two tiers, with one good and one bad, is an interesting attempt to use pseudo-psychology to convince us that "our thoughts betray us" unless we are thinking about science in the way approved by the evolutionists. This sounds more like a subtle method of thought control, where, as an extension of the old Groucho Marx joke might go, we should listen to and believe what they say, rather than pay attention to what our own lying eyes, brain, or heart may tell us.

Another article on a similar theme was published in *Dialogue* and deserves to be answered. I don't know much about the author, but I am going to assume for the moment that this article probably represents the viewpoints of numerous of the more liberal members of the Church that may have no particular connection with the Church's universities, but which nonetheless are involved in teaching that secular/atheist evolution is compatible with Church doctrine.

There are literally hundreds of major and minor issues touched upon in an article of this sort. It is impossible to cover them all without writing a whole set of books, but I will address a few of these issues as they arise going throughout the article.

### **Title**

For clarity I would rewrite his subtitle as

"Teaching Atheism Creation Myths And Calling It Biological Science at BYU-Idaho."

## Paragraph 1 -- Introduction

Professor Firestone starts out by quoting a famous atheist biologist on the importance of organic evolution to biology. One might guess that this article is not going to be a balanced treatment of evolution. We are not going to be talking about "teaching the controversy" at BYU-Idaho. We have an unabashed evolution supporter who is happy to ignore and even hide the many catastrophic shortcomings of that set of atheist speculations.

At least we can say in his defense that he did not claim at the start that evolution had a controlling influence on all of science, biological or otherwise. That kind of puffery is typical of evolution supporters.

As with most writing on the topic of organic evolution, the beginning paragraph is riddled with incomplete and incorrect assumptions and assertions. It will take some time and effort just to get us started correctly.

His opening statement needs to be rewritten a little bit to be more accurate and comprehensible. "[For an avowed atheist,] 'Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of [atheistic] evolution.'" The various speculations of atheistic organic evolution were invented and written for the very purpose of providing a creation myth for atheists, an alternative to creationism. Therefore, not surprisingly, atheists accept those atheistic creation myths, created just for them. Does anyone feel like we are twirling around in a whirlwind of tautologies? Everyone should feel that way, because that is in fact what is happening in the world of "evolutionary theory."

(Theododius Dobzhansky was a geneticist and evolutionary biologist who also married a geneticist. He was born in Ukraine in 1900 and emigrated to the United States. Apparently he considered himself a communicant of the Eastern Orthodox Church, but there are conflicting reports as to whether he believed in a personal God or not. Apparently he had some of the beliefs of a Deist, in the sense that he thought God might have created things through evolutionary means. In summary, he was a functional atheist, as far as evolutionary matters are concerned, whatever he may have thought on other religious topics.)

So the problem for all schools, especially religious schools, is that teaching evolution is teaching atheism. Evolution is an atheist concept, a product of atheist philosophy, so naturally if you teach it, you are teaching atheism. It is a truism, a tautology. For some reason, uneducated parents can sense that, but highly educated professors are basically too dense to understand that simple distinction. We country hicks would call that being "educated beyond their intelligence." They know a lot of things that ain't so, and they believe them because they had to learn and accept them to get their degree (and probably their job). Their ability to think clearly and analytically and objectively has been greatly damaged by their time in college (and probably by their (academic teaching) work experience).

His sentence emphasized in the first-page sidebar should also be rewritten as "[Atheist] evolution theory ties all of the fields of biology together into a unified [atheist] whole." Invented by atheists for atheists, one might expect it to be the accepted explanation for atheists. Surprise, surprise. But that has nothing to do about whether it is true or not. This is an abstract philosophical exercise, not a scientific one.

As a general rule, we might notice that arguments for atheistic evolution, which supposedly has to do with science, are almost always couched in terms of legal, bureaucratic, political, philosophical, theological, and authoritarian terms, and almost never in scientific terms. If they ever do stray into scientific matters, they start saying really stupid things, including outright intentional lies. They seem to do a lot better rhetorically when they completely avoid science altogether. Does that seem absurd? If so, perhaps the reader is starting to grasp the monumental foolishness of the speculations concerning organic evolution.

If one is discussing history, one might say something like "The Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4, 1776 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," and then the person might go on to discuss some specific excerpts from that document. One might expect in a scientific field like evolution that someone might be able to say something like "On December 1, 1970, the first of many new lifeforms were observed creating themselves from raw materials in laboratory conditions at MIT." But we never hear such statements, because those things never happen. That is not to say that after spending hundreds of billions of dollars

on biological research, some lab might not be able to construct the simplest possible of living cells from basic chemical components. However, that very act of constructing such a simple living cell, with man being the creator acting in the stead of God, would prove that it could never have happened spontaneously, as is assumed in atheist philosophy.

Let that settle in for a moment. Evolutionary biologists believe that all life began through spontaneous generation. They really do not like that term, and they will try every verbal trick to avoid it, but there is no alternative in their philosophical construct. It is some ancient magic or a miracle which happened billions of years ago, supposedly, about which they know absolutely nothing, and can only speculate.

So where is this wonderful "science" that they so blithely speak of? There is none. It is nothing but philosophical bluster. It is an argument from necessity, a total bluff: "There is no God, therefore there must have been chemical evolution." That is an interesting speculation, but there is not a scintilla of proof in there anywhere.

I should now rewrite the entire first paragraph inserting new modifiers were necessary, mostly requiring the word "atheism".

"It explains not only why there is so much diversity of life on earth but also why all of these diverse forms of life are so *similar* on a molecular basis and in the attributes which define life itself."

But these wonderful "explanations" are themselves nothing but speculations. First the atheists say that a single cell miraculously brought itself into existence a few billion years ago. That is such a stupendously unlikely thing, that evolutionists can only imagine that it happened once. Therefore, all other life must have descended from that single miraculous event. Therefore, all life today must have great similarities at the molecular level. The problem with that assertion, is that it is nothing but pure speculation. There's no way to demonstrate or prove a single iota of that assumption. Obviously, if one has complete control of all the assumptions, by means of speculation, then one can have complete control of the logical outcome. But the whole construct is nothing but that -- a philosophical construct. There is nothing to tie it to reality.

It is just as plausible that a creator, who understands biology perfectly, would be able to choose the right structures and proteins in quickly designing any number of creatures from scratch. There is no reason at all in that scenario to have there be any historical evolutionary connection between one species and another. The "best practices" bag of tricks of the creator would allow him to start from scratch in every case and quickly get the desired results.

Here is the complete text of that first paragraph with a few extra words inserted to add clarity:

"Nothing in [atheistic] biology makes sense except in the light of [atheistic] evolution." This statement was made in 1973 by [atheist] Theodosius Dobzhansky, a prominent [atheistic] evolutionary geneticist, in an article written for the American Biology Teacher. Perhaps no statement has been quoted more in the discussions which arise in the war that rages over the teaching of [atheistic] evolution in America's schools. I can think of no better way to emphasize the importance of teaching [atheistic] evolution in all biology classes, at all educational levels, than to point out its central role in [atheistic evolutionary] biology. [Atheistic] evolution theory ties all of the fields of biology together into a unified [atheistic] whole. It explains [in speculative atheistic terms] not only why there is so much diversity of life on earth but also why all of these diverse forms of life are so similar on a molecular basis and in the attributes which define life itself.

## **Paragraph 2 -- Microevolution versus macro evolution**

Here the author has everything backwards. He speaks as though there were some kind of deductive reasoning going on here, arguing from the general principles of organic macroevolution which can then help us in the specific cases of microevolution. But that is not what is happening. Since we can actually

observe so-called microevolution, as in the case of the rapid changes to the HIV virus, we can then learn something about the possibilities for macroevolution, which is something we cannot observe in nature -- macroevolution is nothing but a speculation derived from observed microevolution.

Here we have another philosophical argument from necessity: to make macro evolution work, we must try to show that observable microevolution can be extended to the larger sphere of macroevolution, the development of new species from existing species. But this never happens, and recent microbiology studies have shown that it cannot happen beyond a certain very limited range. Nonetheless, the grand philosophy must be maintained, so any real science to the contrary must be rejected and ridiculed. These kinds of rejection and ridicule are very unscientific and unphilosophical processes, and themselves tend to show the propagandistic nature of what is happening here.

No serious medical or agricultural researcher would rely on nebulous speculation about the nature of biological change over eons to guide his work. Medical people and other practical people such as farmers will only rely on the carefully documented outcomes of very specific experiments. The truth is, those experiments provide more disproof of these evolutionary speculations than they provide proof. No one has seen an HIV virus turn into a malaria parasite, and no one has seen a malaria parasite turn into a tapeworm, and no one ever expects to see such major species changes. As far as anyone can tell, these things never happen, however much that distresses the theoretical evolutionary people. No one has been able to document a bear walking into the ocean and turning into a whale, however good a fairytale story that may be. Good science only deals with what we can observe and test. Evolutionary theory, as a philosophy, not a science, can generate speculations all day. But practical people, especially including biologists, do not plan their work and their investment on such ephemeral imaginations.

In other words, we learn about microevolution by studying microevolution, not by deducing needed results by starting with macroevolution theories. (In truth, the evolutionists extrapolate from micro to macro, so it usually pointless to try to go the other way.) We operate at "The Edge of Evolution," and that is unlikely to change. All the real evidence indicates that there is no such thing as the macroevolution required by the creation myths of atheism.

#### **Clarification on accurate biological science**

I want to make it clear that it is perfectly possible to teach accurate and valuable biological science without all the overlays and assumptions of atheistic philosophy. One "merely" needs to separate the atheist assumptions from the actual scientific observations and experiments which have been done and recorded. However, in the current secular/atheist intellectual climate, it is probable that no one will be able to do that, simply because they will instantly be labeled anti-evolution and be considered heretics in the [atheistic] science community for their enforcement of strict scientific rules and procedures.