

## Famous Atheist Changes his Mind

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British philosopher Antony Flew has been called the world's most influential philosophical atheist. As far back as his debates with C.S. Lewis in 1950, he insisted there simply wasn't enough evidence for a creator.

But recently Flew changed his mind.

In an interview with the journal *Philosophia Christi*, Flew noted that even if Darwin's theory of evolution did explain how plants and animals evolved, his theory doesn't explain where life came from in the first place?

Flew insists that the scientific establishment, including leading evolutionist Richard Dawkins, has simply failed to answer this question persuasively: "Richard Dawkins constantly overlooks the fact that Darwin himself, in the fourteenth chapter of *The Origin of Species*, pointed out that his whole argument began with a being which already possessed reproductive powers."

If we trace the Darwinian story backwards, we reach a primitive single cell than which nothing simpler could survive and reproduce. How did it come to be? This first cell must be produced by something other than natural selection—a point Darwin readily conceded.

Those eager to expunge God's fingerprints from nature weren't concerned by this shortcoming in Darwin's explanation for the origin of living things, because Darwin and his contemporaries thought a single cell was little more than a blob of jello. How hard could it be for nature to randomly produce something so simple?

In those days the cell was a black box, a mystery. But in the 20th century, scientists were able to open that black box and peek inside. There they found not a simple blob but a world of complex circuits, miniaturized motors, and digital code. We now know that even the simplest functional cell is almost unfathomably complex, containing at least 250 genes and their corresponding proteins.

New Zealand geneticist Michael Denton notes that each cell "is in effect a veritable micro-miniaturized factory containing thousands of exquisitely designed pieces of intricate molecular machinery, made up altogether of one hundred thousand million atoms."

The odds of a primordial soup randomly burping up even one protein strand of moderate length are dramatically less than 1 chance in 10<sup>150</sup>.

It's hard to grasp how long these odds are—one followed by 150 zeros. We know that a lot of strange things can happen in a place as big as our universe, but as mathematician and philosopher William Dembski explains in the Cambridge University Press monograph *The Design Inference*, the universe isn't big enough, old enough, or fast enough to generate that much complexity, even where one assumes the universe is many billions of years old.

Nor have attempts to explain this complexity as the natural outworking of the laws of nature proven successful. The best explanation? Intelligent design.

Most contemporary biologists will have none of this. Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin is refreshingly open about why. He admits their prior commitment to consider only material causes forces them to "produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated... we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door."

Lewontin's calls that approach science, but it isn't science. It's dogma. Flew's method is more objective. He

has decided to follow the evidence wherever it leads. “It now seems to me,” he says, “that the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design.”

Such evidence has drawn Flew from atheism to a non-specific theism. He isn't ready to accept the God of a particular religion, nor does he believe in an afterlife. The change is, nevertheless, significant. He is now in a position to see the evidence for design that exists at every level of the natural world.

The amazing complexity of even the simplest cell; the information-bearing properties of DNA; the exquisite fine-tuning of the laws and constants of physics that make organic life possible—these signs of intelligence do not compel belief in a God who thundered from Mount Sinai, lay in a manger, or hung from a cross. But the evidence does have metaphysical implications, drawing us to a still place of wonder where such notions can be entertained.