

*Péter SZENTPÉTERY*¹:

Some Indispensable Theological Questions about Darwin's Work and Testimony

Abstract.

The author gives a summary based on his habilitation thesis and other works on the origin of Darwin's theory of evolution and the theological questions raised by it. Even if the assumed mechanism of the origin of living beings (and of life) has changed much since the publishing of the *Origin* (1859), the basic theological questions must always be asked anew. Darwin himself was not an atheist but an agnostic, more or less deist according to his own confession. He could not fully explain away the Creator but tried to minimize his role because of the evil in nature, i.e. the problem of theodicy. Ironically, even if certain questions raised by the theory/doctrine of evolution seem quite logical and obvious, they are often neglected or omitted in theological works on creation. It is not enough to say that creation and evolution are compatible because the fact of creation and the method of creation should be discerned: one is a religious belief/testimony and the other a scientific theory. The real question is whether and how the supernatural can be detected. To believe in the resurrection of Christ and humans has any meaning only on condition

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that this present life subject to death is of supernatural origin without any alternative. The whole Scripture teaches this definitely: "Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him" (John 1:3). Christian creation faith must be qualitatively different from "attaching" the Creator to the contemporary majority hypothesis of origin or "fitting" him into its framework. Ultimately, either one likes it or not, in questions of origin, humans are dependent on revelation.

Keywords: creation, Darwin, evolution, humanity, information, origin, purpose, science, theodicy, theology

The following paper, its main statements are based on the habilitation book,² and they have by far not lost their legitimacy since then. In addition, it takes ideas and claims of J. H. Brooke and R. Numbers³ (mostly those of Brooke) and of others into

² SZENTPÉTERY, Péter (2008): *Omnia sunt facta per ipsum. Darwin hatása a teremtetésre – teológiai és emberi kérdések* [Omnia sunt facta per ipsum. Darwin's Impact on the Faith in Creation – Theological and Human Questions]. Budapest, private edition (supported by Evangélikus Hittudományi Egyetem [Lutheran Theological University]). The subtitle is intended to express that the main problem with Darwin's theory is primarily not with (repeatable) scientific observations but with the role of the supernatural in the (living) world and especially with man's place in (and over) it. I am infinitely thankful to Prof. Ferenc Szűcs (1942–2020), professor of systematic theology at the Theological Faculty of Károli Gáspár Reformed University, Budapest, who encouraged me saying there should not be any taboo issues either in theology or in sciences.

³ BROOKE, John Hedley (1991): *Science and Religion. Some Historical Perspectives*. Cambridge University Press. In short: BROOKE, John Hedley (2011): *Modern Christianity*. In: Brooke, John Hedley – NUMBERS, Ronald L. (eds.): *Science and Religion around the World*. Oxford University Press. 92–119; NUMBERS, Ronald L. (2006): *The Creationists. From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*. Harvard University Press. They – reasonably – refrain from any firm theological statement or conviction. They try to be objective, what practically means the acceptance of the evolutionary view of things, more or less respecting different approaches. Brooke does not give a personal statement on his faith, but it is clear from his basic comprehensive work and the later study that the Scripture does not and cannot give concrete impulses or ideas to the research on questions of origin. Although contemporary theories have priority, he agrees that it is not appropriate to make (Christian) faith dependent on certain theories, e.g. the Big Bang. BROOKE 2011, 92, 113. In the introduction of his monumental work, Numbers briefly describes his change coming from "a fundamentalist

consideration. As for the history of Darwin's theory, his/its forerunners, the controversy surrounding it, and the consequences, Brooke and Numbers give a thorough, extensive, and colourful picture inspiring for further research and reflection.⁴ They are, however, not explicitly theological works, although not without theological reflections from a certain position. Therefore, they offer one more reason for theological questions – sometimes in a sharpened formulation. Theological (and, as a corollary, human) questions are asked in four steps, which can only be discerned but not clearly separated:

First: Darwin's (and his forerunners' and contemporaries') controversial relationship to Christian faith that marked and has been marking the whole history of the theory.⁵

Second: the most delicate part of the theory is the relationship/connection between humanity and the animal kingdom.

Third: the main question of the theory has been around since the beginning and long before it – if there is any purpose in the history of life or the whole process of evolution is merely owing to the caprice of blind natural forces.

Fourth: can the supernatural be detected in the living world by signs of intelligent design and by applying the rules of IT to the living beings?

Finally, the – more or less rhetorical – questions shall be summarized and some conclusions drawn. Since Darwin's work was not the result of objective, unbiased research

Seventh-Day Adventist family of ministers" labelled by a creationist lawyer as an "agnostic" in 1982. "The tag still feels foreign and uncomfortable, but it accurately reflects my theological uncertainty." 13. (Numbers's book had already been used to a small extent in the habilitation.)

⁴ Brooke warns that much depends on the definition(s) of "science" and "religion", which play(s) an important or decisive role in trying to take a stand on their relationship. First: they were fully integrated in Newton's natural philosophy. Second: as the border between them has been shifted during the centuries, timeless validity cannot be attributed to modern definitions. Third: both are rooted in human concerns and human endeavour – they should not be treated as if they were entities in themselves. BROOKE 1991, 7–10.

⁵ There is not a linear succession between Darwin and his precursors, and it is often not clear who are to count among them: "Although the idea of organic transformation was by then [1859] familiar, the particular mechanism that Darwin proposed, with its vivid portrait of nature red in tooth and claw, was not only unpalatable to many but also questionable in its pretensions and adequacy. The public debate was particularly animated because it was set within a larger controversy concerning the authority of Scripture." BROOKE 1991, 227–231.

– it is simply impossible in questions of origin –, theological questions shall always remain appropriate. The proper theological problem behind them is the real process of the history of salvation.

1. Darwin and God

Changes in living organisms have their (observably strict) limits, so they cannot and should not be extrapolated at one's pleasure. It remains true, even if one cannot forget that Darwin attacked the doctrine of the separate creation of every species and not the idea that the existence of the universe is to be thanked to God.⁶ The question that Brooke poses has not lost and will never lose its validity: "What confidence could one place in a hypothesis that was not directly verifiable?"⁷

Neal C. Gillespie's *Darwin and the Problem of Creation* was revealing for me. In Chapter 7, *Special Creation in the Origin: the Theological Attack*, it reads: "The *Origin* was the work of Darwin the theist as well as Darwin the positivist, and the intermingling of positivism and theology in that great work is one of its most fascinating features."⁸ And later: "The moral problem [of cruelty in nature] was greatly lessened if blind secondary forces were the direct causes of such horrors."⁹ He goes on in explaining Darwin's actual problem: "In spite of his clear attempt to exonerate God from responsibility for the details of creation or to involve the creationists in a moral if His creative will and intention were insisted on, Darwin tried to look beyond the cruel world of natural selection to

⁶ Op. cit. 263.

⁷ Op. cit. 286. Brooke calls attention to the success of the "hypothetico-deductive" method/structure in physics, the wave theory of light, and the kinetic theory of gases. Still, for the living world, the question of the extent of extrapolation endures. 287.

⁸ GILLESPIE, Neal C. (1979): *Charles Darwin and the Problem of Creation*. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 124. "The association of design arguments with creationist presuppositions is inflated into a historiographic principle in Gillespie's *Charles Darwin...*" BROOKE 1991, 384. So, creationist presuppositions have by definition a bad, here "inflating", affect in general. Later it turns out that they are not necessarily in the way of the truth: "The relevance of a residual theism to Darwin's own outlook is explored, against a background of encroaching positivism, by Neal C. Gillespie, *Charles Darwin (...)* 135–145." 394.

⁹ GILLESPIE 1979, 126.

an end promoting the general good”:¹⁰ This general good, or at least positive balance, should be seen beyond all the cruelties of nature: “When we reflect on the struggle [for existence], we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply.”¹¹

It is because of such and similar statements in *Origin* and in *Descent* that one can take them rather for theological than scientific works even if the number of observations and their systemization are amazing today as well and theological inferences only sporadic. Looking back, it does not make much difference if Darwin was mainly motivated by the problem of theodicy when writing the former or if he was confronted with it only during the work of writing.¹² Why is that “we may console ourselves with the full belief” if not because of theological considerations? Darwin wanted to exempt God from the responsibility for evil in the living world by minimizing His role in calling life or, more

¹⁰ Op. cit. 127.

¹¹ Ibid. DARWIN, Charles (1859): *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. London, John Murray. 79. Available at: https://darwin-online.org.uk/converted/pdf/1859_Origin_F373.pdf (last accessed 17.03.2024). See his famous statement on Ichneumonidae: “I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent & omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars...” DARWIN, Charles (1860): Letter to Asa Gray 22 May 1860. Available at: <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/DCP-LETT-2814.xml> (last accessed 17.03.2024); cf. BROOKE 1991, 278. But Darwin made a virtue of necessity for his theory: “The presence of so much pain and suffering in the world Darwin considered to be one of the strongest arguments against belief in a beneficent God. But, he added, it accorded well with his theory of natural selection.” BROOKE 1991, 316.

¹² See e.g. HUNTER, Cornelius (2004): *Darwin's God. Evolution and the Problem of Evil*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Brazos Press. The author argues that Darwin had mainly theological motivations. This is doubted e.g.: “Darwin certainly recognized that his work involved the problem of theodicy, but that is completely different from Hunter's claim that it was consideration of theodicy that led Darwin to advance his theory of evolution.” NIELD, Donald (2008): Darwin's God. Review. In: *Reports of the National Center for Science Education*. 22, 1–2(Oct. 21). Available at: <https://ncse.ngo/review-darwins-god> (last accessed 17.03.2024). Hunter firmly insists on his conviction concerning Darwin's theological motivation: HUNTER, Cornelius (2021): Evolution as a Theological Research Program. In: *Religions*. 12, 9. 694. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090694> (last accessed 17.03.2024).

exactly, real living creatures to existence. It is in this way that the origin of *Origin* could be properly understood and interpreted today – i.e. as an attempt for an always up-to-date, enduring solution (or rather suppression) of the problem of theodicy. Following this view to the descent of *Descent*, its main issue, i.e. purpose, is the rejection of man's (special, separate) creation in the image of God.

Divine providence could be set aside and should be forgotten – but, in reality, the idea, the desire for it cannot be ignored. Still, “we may console ourselves with the full belief” that the Creator is “also” “clear” about the problem of theodicy – clear, not only about the problem but about the solution, too.

2. Animal Origin and a Basic Human Right

Even today, it is not so simple to escape from the main point of Samuel Wilberforce's criticism or just to ignore it: “Man's derived supremacy over the earth; man's power of articulate speech; man's gift of reason; man's free will and responsibility; man's fall and man's redemption; the incarnation of the Eternal Son; the indwelling of the Eternal Spirit, all are equally and utterly irreconcilable with the degrading notion of the brute origin of him who was created in the image of God and redeemed by the Eternal Son assuming to himself his nature.”¹³

As Brooke points out, contrary to possible expectations, Darwin did not argue for the relativity of moral values: that assumption was drawn – let us say, inevitably – by others from his works.¹⁴ The Golden Rule was for him “the highest but *natural*

¹³ WILBERFORCE, Samuel (1860): ART. VII. On the Origin of Species, by means of Natural Selection; Or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life. By Charles Darwin, M. A., F. R. S. London, 1860. In: *Quarterly Review*. 1860. 258. Available at: www.victorianweb.org/science/science_texts/wilberforce.htm (last accessed 22.05.2024).

¹⁴ This is very well illustrated at the end of the last chapter (XXI) of *Descent*. “For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper; or from that old baboon, who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs – as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practises infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted

outcome of the development of social instinct” making the foundation of moral value independent of theology.¹⁵

It always remains a question of conviction or bias as to which one is to be considered of greater importance: our common features with the animal kingdom or the differences from it. In the words of Karl Barth:

The 19th century was one of unparalleled obscurity because it was a time when in the very act of leaping forward to a realization of his possibilities man became unknown to himself. At no time was it more possible or necessary to see what distinguishes him from the animal than in this age of progress (...). It was this very century which had to become that of the anthropoid ape and the ape-like man. Darwin did not make it this. But because it could not see real man for all his possibilities, it had to have its Darwin, and the scientific and theological anti-Darwinians were necessarily powerless against him. (...) If man does not know himself already, long before his attention is directed to these phenomena, he will be blind even though he sees. (...) He will always think he should convince himself that his own reality consists in what he has in common with the animal and the rest of creation generally.¹⁶

So, for the followers of Darwin’s idea, human capability has been proven more important than human identity. God created man, but – once again – is the way in which man *really* got to this planet only the competence of science? Why do we care so much about how we got here? If we knew exactly how we were put here, it would decisively guide us as to who we are and why we are here! If (someday) our being here could be explained

by the grossest superstitions.” DARWIN, Charles (1871): *The Descent of Man or Selection in Relation to Sex*. Volume II. London, John Murray. 404–405. Available at: https://darwin-online.org.uk/converted/pdf/1871_Descent_PC-Virginia-Descent-F937.2.pdf (last accessed 17.03.2024). See also: KOVÁCS, Ábrahám (2009): Intellectual Treasures of Humankind: Religion, Society and László Dapsy’s Translation of *On the Origin of Species*. In: Kovács, Ábrahám – Baráth, Béla Levente (eds.): *Calvinism on the Peripheries: Religion and Civil Society on the Peripheries of Europe*. Budapest, L’Harmattan. 78–88.

¹⁵ BROOKE 1991, 281. So, making a virtue out of necessity once more...

¹⁶ BARTH, Karl (2001): *Church Dogmatics. Volume III. The Doctrine of Creation. Part 2* (Original title: *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik III: Die Lehre von der Schöpfung 2*. 1948). Transl. by H. Kringt – G. W. Bromiley – J. K. S. Reid – R. H. Fuller. Edinburgh, T&T Clark. 89–90.

“completely” without “being there” (i.e. the supernatural), would it matter at all what steps, what number of steps we took from the animal world?

It always remains an assumption that all the differences between animals and humans can be explained on the basis of the similarities; so, as according to Darwin and his followers, the differences developed gradually. Or, more exactly, the essential can be derived from the gradual.¹⁷ In consistent evolutionary thinking, it makes no sense to search for an exact boundary between animals and humans (father and mother were still animals).¹⁸

Why has no transitional “creature” between animal and human survived? Were all of them not “fit” enough? No convincing evidence has been presented since the publication of *Origin* and *Descent*. The human family tree always has to be modified or rewritten with every new find, but the “missing link” is still the dream of the future. Is only the “fact” of evolution from molecule to man “sure”? Why? After more than one and a half century of intensive research, it does not seem that there will be any convincing evidence in the future.

Once again in the wake of Barth: the basic question of the relationship between man and the animal world is the following: What do we consider more important? Are these the anatomical, biological, behavioural similarities or the qualitative difference of thinking and creativity, far beyond those of the animals, ultimately the openness to transcendence and infinity? Is it possible that the differences can be more or properly appreciated against the background of similarities? Living with other creatures in the same ecosystem would be impossible without similar features, structures, and mechanisms.

¹⁷ See chapters 2–4 of *Descent*.

¹⁸ Cf. JUNKER, Reinhard (21994): *Leben durch sterben? Schöpfung, Heilsgeschichte und Evolution*. Neuhausen/Stuttgart, Hänssler. 96. Junker's year of birth is erroneously given as 1942 in NUMBERS 409. The correct date is 1956. As, e.g., for Albrecht Ritschl and his school, religious experience was “the cornerstone of theology. Human feeling and relationships were its subject matter. How humans had come to be humans was neither here nor there. Similarly, those who felt that the essence of the religious life was a sense of contact with a reality beyond the senses were unlikely to be impressed by the claims that Darwin had undermined religion. Because apes and humans had ancestors in common, it did not follow that humans were nothing but apes.” BROOKE 1991, 310. The question is “only” the beginning of being “rather” human than ape-like, the beginning of created (evolved?) in the image of God...

Why not to approach the problem from the perspective of the freedom of conscience and religion? Is it not simply a basic human right to say that all of one's ancestors were human?¹⁹ The opposite cannot be proved, only believed based on certain assumptions/axioms.²⁰ If someone is unable to accept his/her animal descent, let that be kept in respect. The infinitely serious question of Phillip Johnson, spiritual founder of the Intelligent Design Movement, should not be overlooked: "For now we see in a mirror dimly' (1Cor 13:12), but in what mirror do we want to see anything at all?"²¹ At the end of the last chapter of his very thought-provoking book, Brooke – arguing with Edward O. Wilson's *Sociobiology* – cautiously points to this direction. He refers to the possible foundation of the concept of universal human rights: In spite of all misuse of religion, "There has (...) never been a simpler way of getting from the brotherhood of brothers to the brotherhood of man than via an affirmation of the fatherhood of God. (...) But whether belief in the supreme worth of every human life, and the action such an ideal requires, can be sustained without reference to the transcendent, is a question unlikely to be laid to rest."²²

¹⁹ In his poem *'Bunk' and the 'Monk'*, Arthur I. Brown (1875–1947), a surgeon, one of the most prominent representatives of the creationist movement in North America, concluded:

"So, we're cousins to moles, to fish and tadpoles,
Don't smile friends, beware, – that's called 'science' today.
We've a 'common ancestor' – You've heard of the quest, sir, –
His old bones they do hunt night and day.
But though hot on the trail of this mystical rail
There's no trace, of poor lost chimpanzee.
And this 'brain-stormy' theory can't answer my query, –
No one ape roosts in my family tree!" NUMBERS 2006, 75.

²⁰ Numbers explains that in the beginning of the last century "conservative Christians who soon marched under the banner of fundamentalism perceived a greater threat to orthodox faith than evolution: higher criticism, which treated the Bible more as a historical document than as God's inspired word." (...) A. C. Dixon, founder and first editor of *The Fundamentals*, "confessed to feeling 'a repugnance to the idea that an ape or an orang-utan was my ancestor' but expressed the willingness 'to accept the humiliating fact if proved.'" NUMBERS 2006, 52–53.

²¹ Cf. JOHNSON, Phillip E. (1997): *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*. Downers Grove (Ill.), InterVarsity Press. 56.

²² BROOKE 1991, 347.

3. Evolution and Purpose

The key question of the whole debate over Darwin's and his followers' work is if there is any purpose in the history of the world, life, and humanity and, consequently, if it can be traced back to the will, the intention of a supernatural intelligence / God. So, for the elementary logic and moral sense, it is a legitimate question on Darwinism and on the present (or any future) standard cosmological model including the origin of life, living beings, and humans: Does the Creator allow men, even those denying his existence or hating him, to make a survey of his creative work to a relatively great exactness? Does it matter that the one takes him for necessary for bringing the world, life, and humanity into existence and the other does not? Even if the Book of Genesis can be interpreted more or less symbolically, it should not automatically mean that any cosmological-biological model of origin not counting on the Creator is preferable. Even if the Earth were 4.5 billion years old without doubt (although doubts are indispensable for any progress in science), should it automatically mean that the origin and the variety of life can be explained simply by blind, purposeless natural causes?

Creation and evolution are (too) often contrasted with each other as (obscure, dark) religious faith/belief versus (reliable, proven) scientific fact. The concept of evolution includes the following:

- Originally unrolling a file-roll, making the scripture visible on it;
- Formation of the living world, “development”, anagenesis;
- Genetic change in a population;
- Abiogenesis is originally not included in it (today, chemical evolution is, too);
- Microevolution: at the level of species, i.e. variety;
- Macroevolution: new structures beyond species.

The key question is a – reasonable, credible – mechanism by immanent causality.²³

²³ Cf. JUNKER 1994, Chapter 2. Strukturen evolutionärer Konzepte. 26–46.

Karl Popper explains in a very simple but ingenious way why we must be careful with observing and explaining unique, not repeatable events:

“...we cannot hope to test a universal hypothesis nor to find a natural law acceptable to science if we are for ever confined to the observation of a unique process. The most careful observation of a caterpillar will not help us to predict its transformation into a butterfly.”²⁴

The same is true vice versa: the observation of a butterfly would never tell us that it was once a caterpillar. Still, we insist on imagining something similar about the universe.

The history of the world, life, and humanity can be reconstructed only in a limited way by empirical sciences. We try to infer from the present to the past by extrapolating contemporary observations and experiments. The question is “only”: what observations, experiments and how far back in time.

The different levels of explanation do not necessarily exclude each other. Let it be enlightened with the help of a famous Hungarian poem:

“Or take the wee blade of grass and consider: why does it grow if it is doomed to wither? Why does it wither if it grows again?”²⁵

The physical and biological causes of the growing and withering of the grass do not exclude at all that grass came into existence with a certain purpose by an infinitely greater intelligence. And as for the poem itself: the laws of physics and chemistry do not tell us either what is written on a sheet of paper, i.e. the origin of the scripture (information; see the next part). A valid explanation can be given only with the concepts of language and authorship. The different levels of explanation are built on one another. Statements like “nothing else but”, “not more than”, or “merely” are in reality “nothing else but” expressions of epistemological and ontological reductionism, conscious

²⁴ POPPER, Karl (2002): *The Poverty of Historicism*. London – New York, Routledge. 100.

²⁵ BABITS, Mihály, *Esti kérdés / An Evening Question*. Transl. by István Tótfalusi. Available at: https://www.magyarulbabelben.net/works/hu/Babits_Mih%c3%a1ly-1883/Esti_k%c3%a9rd%c3%a9s/en/28992-An_Evening_Question?tr_id=545 (last accessed 17.03.2024).

restrictions.²⁶ There is a self-contradiction in claims like that: to take one step back, one has to transgress, exceed themselves first. László Boda illustrates the indefensibility of reductionism with a very spectacular example: The Mona Lisa was painted by a brush – but let us not stop at the level of material/instrumental cause.²⁷

Alfred North Whitehead points to the contradiction given by the ability of declaring something purposeless:

Many a scientist has patiently designed experiments for the purpose of substantiating his belief that animal operations are motivated by no purposes. He has perhaps spent his spare time in writing articles to prove that human beings are as other animals so that “purpose” is a category irrelevant for the explanation of their bodily activities, his own activities included. *Scientists animated by the purpose of proving that they are purposeless constitute an interesting subject of study.*²⁸

The Hungarian Stanley L. Jaki, Templeton-Prize winner (1987) was one of the most ardent and sharpest critics of Darwin, Darwinism, and Darwinists alluding to the last sentence above from Whitehead. The main problem is their denial of purposefulness leading to naturalism, materialism, atheism.²⁹ – So, the explanation (away) of purpose by purposelessness serves a certain purpose, too. Or purposelessness can only be purposefully explained.³⁰ – But creation science is a “strategic error” because it excessively engrosses the question of *how* to the detriment of uniqueness of the doctrine of creation out of nothing.³¹

²⁶ Cf. LENNOX, John (2009): *God's Undertaker. Has Science Buried God?* Oxford, Lion. 53–56.

²⁷ BODA, László (2008): *A programozott evolúció 1. Az ember megjelenéséig* [The Programmed Evolution 1. Until the Appearance of Man]. Budapest, L'Harmattan. 173. (László Boda (1929–2014) was professor of moral theology at the Theological Faculty of Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Budapest.).

²⁸ WHITEHEAD, Alfred North (1929): *The Function of Reason*. [emphasis added]. Princeton University Press. 12.

²⁹ JAKI, Stanley (1988): *The Savior of Science*. Washington, D. C., Regnery Gateway. 128. He says that the sharpness of the last phrase is “aimed more at Darwin and the Darwinists than at Darwinism itself”.

³⁰ Cf. JÁKI, Szaniszló (Stanley) (2000): *Miért él a kérdés: Van-e Isten?* [Why Is the Question Alive If There Is a God?]. Budapest, Az Igazságért Alapítvány. 34–35.

³¹ JAKI 1988, 198–199.

If "...with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light" (Ps 36:9) – does not it mean at first hearing that seeing light begins with regarding the Lord as the fountain of life? Can seeing light involve minimizing the role of the Lord in bringing life and living creatures into existence as Darwin meant – not being able to push him totally away from the world? Let us assume that the present (cosmological-) biological model of mainstream science is very close to reality. However, Christians must regard the Lord logically as the most important factor of evolution including the origin of life.

As a result, most theologians agree today on the following points:

- God used the method of evolution in creating the world, life, and humanity.
- There is no opposition between the testimony of the Scripture and the scientific theory of evolution because they are two separate areas or levels.
- The Holy Scripture does not want to give a scientific description, only says that God is the Creator.
- The questions of "how" belong to the natural sciences.
- It is much more beautiful or more elegant if God made/makes his creatures make themselves than if he had made a complete world in the beginning.³²

But consequent thinking points to problems with these views:

- God always created/has always been creating along the most popular current theory...
- There are points of contacts, friction surfaces, especially relating to the human being as seen above.
- The authors of the Holy Scripture did not separate the fact and the method of creation.

Either one likes it or not, the way of creation is "also" or "partly" a theological question with regard to the simple fact that it is only the Creator who is fully aware of it!

³² With reference to Charles Kingsley, one of the first followers of Darwin from the clergy: "Instead of a God who created as if by magic, Kingsley embraced a God so wise that He could make all things make themselves." BROOKE 1991, 293–294. "Such a God was more deserving of admiration..." BROOKE 2011, 108.

Since we cannot (re)create a world, life, and man (the latter two only from “brought material”, i.e. with an already existing programme), the actual process of creation is “ex officio” the “most beautiful”, “most elegant”, regardless of one’s taste and ideas.

The question is at what point(s) God’s role, i.e. divine purpose, can be detected – providing it can be detected at all. There is no escape from the basic dilemma concerning the relationship (if there is any) between God and evolution: If evolution can be explained without God, is there any necessity for God? If evolution cannot be explained without God, is there any necessity for evolution?³³

Two extreme forms of border crossing are possible between scientists and theologians. By scientists: proclaiming naturalistic, atheistic philosophy – or at least practical atheism under the guise of science (too often). By theologians: rejecting the truly measurable, observable under the guise of theological considerations (today very seldom).

In the traces of Darwin, Jürgen Moltmann takes into consideration that evolution, development, and amendment assumes the death of the less fit. He expresses his refusal to Teilhard de Chardin’s idea that the invention of the A-bomb meant an important step in human evolution. But evolution has no redeeming force:

Not even the best of all possible stages of evolution justifies acquiescence in evolution’s victims, as the unavoidable fertilizers of that future – not even the Omega Point, with its divine fullness. There is therefore no meaningful hope for the future creation unless “the tears are wiped from every eye”. But they can only be wiped away when the dead are raised and when the victims of evolution experience justice through the resurrection of nature. Evolution in its ambiguity has no such redemptive efficacy and therefore no salvific significance either. If Christ is to be thought of in conjunction with evolution, he must become evolution’s redeemer.³⁴

As for the criticism on Teilhard, one can only agree with Moltmann. But mostly the last sentence is very problematic. The Holy Scripture does not claim anywhere that man and the world with him are already in need of redemption just because of the

³³ Cf. JUNKER 1994, 67–68.

³⁴ MOLTSMANN, Jürgen (1990): *The Way of Jesus Christ. Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (Original title: *Der Weg Jesu Christi. Christologie in messianischen Dimensionen*. 1989). Transl. by Margaret Kohl. London, SCMP Press. 296–297. This view is in sharp contrast to that of David Strauss’s claim in the wake of Darwin that man had risen, not fallen. BROOKE 1991, 271.

method of creation, and, as a corollary, sin is “only” an additional evil!³⁵ In other words, evolution seems purposeless because of the huge number of its victims. Thus, we can regard it as imperfect even if it is *the* divine method of the creation of a “very good” world. This is a border crossing by a theologian – but in what direction?

4. Design and Information

Purposefulness involves a clear intention, i.e. to be clear about possibly all the information to the realization of that purpose, including the design of the necessary means. Therefore, the idea of “God of the gaps” has never had to be taken seriously, simply because it contradicts to the Jewish-Christian concept of God: God is the origin, the basis, and the structure of being, so He cannot be the “god of the gaps” by definition because, as stated above, He is the only one who knows the whole world process.³⁶

Only God can know all the “gaps” – they exist exclusively for us. Consequently, all that is was and will be necessary to bring everything into existence. As long as we do not know everything that “was” necessary for the “production” of the world, life, and the human being, the world, life, and the human being are the “gaps”. We can come upon much between the centre and the edge of the Milky Way, but the pieces of the puzzle will never all fall into their right place. One can entertain the rhetorical question: when will just one piece be left? God cannot be only an appendix, a decoration, or a wrapper of the current theory(ies) of origin. The history of Darwinism / the theory of evolution – even if always updated – has testified that the Creator cannot be explained away.

³⁵ Brooke formulates the problem in full depth: “If man had risen, not fallen, what would be left of the scheme of redemption? How could Christ be the second Adam if there had never been a first? If human beings had been created by natural evolutionary processes, would this not place upon the divine author of those processes (rather than humankind) the responsibility for their sinful state?” BROOKE 1991, 313.

³⁶ Cf. BROOKE 2011, 95. A god of the gaps is “not the God of Christian theology on whom the whole universe, or indeed all universes, are deemed to depend for their being and continuing existence”.

The Creator cannot be explained away because as the fountain of life He is the fountain of all the necessary information for life. Darwin wanted to refute William Paley all his life by trying to attribute the features of design in living beings and their organs to unguided natural processes – but he did not succeed. The same has been true since then, too, for the followers of Darwin. As we have seen and shall see, they simply neglect(ed) the question of the origin of information. A stone on the ground got there by chance, but this cannot be true for the watch.³⁷

The problem of naturalism in the well-known words of C. S. Lewis: “It is by inferences that we build up the idea of Nature at all. Reason is given before Nature and on reason our concept of Nature depends. Our acts of inference are prior to our picture of Nature...”³⁸ So, Nature is not all, and it can only be an assumption or rather an attempt to escape claiming that (our) reason should also be part of Nature.

Let us continue this argumentation with Balázs Mezei: The fact that we think something regarding Nature says that we think something and we think of Nature only inside of that [framework]. So: “Everything is natural” (Nature is everything) – except stating that: “everything is natural” (Nature is everything).³⁹ Once again: Nature is not everything because our thinking – simply by its mere existence – does not fall under its (her) “jurisdiction”.

³⁷ PALEY, William (1803): *Natural Theology. Evidence of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity Collected from the Appearances of Nature*. London, R. Paulder. 1–2. Available at: <https://appearedtoblogly.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/paley-william-natural-theology.pdf> (last accessed 18.02.2024). Brooke underlines the contrast between Aquinas's *via negativa* and Paley's claim of God's caring nature. The former “was a far cry from that position to Paley's claim that God's caring nature could be discerned in the hinges on the wings of an earwig”. Aquinas rejected the practice of inferring to God's attributes from nature independently of revelation. BROOKE 1991, 195. But one can say that Paley did his work with regard to revelation – the design (and caring) inference does not contradict it at all.

³⁸ LEWIS, C. S. (2009): *Miracles*. Harper Collins, Adobe Digital Edition. 24. Available at: http://www.basicincome.com/bp/files/Miracles-C_S_Lewis.pdf (last accessed 18.02.2024).

³⁹ Cf. MEZEI, Balázs (2010): *Mai vallásfilozófia*. [Contemporary Philosophy of Religion]. Budapest, Kairosz. 107–110, 117–124. (Balázs Mezei, b. 1960, is professor of philosophy at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University and professor of Corvinus University, both in Budapest.)

But let us go back further – as far as possible – in the distinction/opposition of Nature and (our) reason, i.e. to the basic question of philosophy with Leibniz: “...the first question we can fairly ask is: Why is there something rather than nothing? After all, nothing is simpler and easier than something. Also, given that things have to exist, we must be able to give a reason why they have to exist as they are and not otherwise.”⁴⁰ What is “nothing” at all? The empty space? It is something already. So, “nothing” must be “somewhere” “outside” of it... Can the idea of the possibility of non-existence be explained by immanent causes?

The design (or purpose) argument as said above cannot be refuted convincingly. The features of design are the following:

- Contingency: it did not come about automatically; it cannot be reduced to physical necessity – such as writing on a paper, chess figures on the board, or the sequence of bases in DNA.

- Complexity: not so simple that it could be explained by chance. It is inversely proportional to probability, to be compared with a sample.

- Specification: wears a pattern characteristic of intelligence.

Based on these, Complex Specified Information (CSI) can be established. Its method is reverse engineering: inference from a product to its master.⁴¹

As for the controversy on ID, if it is legitimate to teach it as science, Numbers gives a very well compiled survey of its main proponents, their work, and the main events until the publication of his book. In all his thorough investigation, it is only the basic question he refrains from thinking it over in depth. What if life is the result of design, regardless of ACLU’s or Judge Jones’s concept of science, religion, and the separation of state and church? If the world, life, and the human being are designed by a Supreme Intelligence, does it matter in what part(s) of the curriculum this option is

⁴⁰ LEIBNIZ, Gottfried Wilhelm (1989 [1714]): *Principles of Nature and Grace Based on Reason*. Transl. by Roger Ariew – David Garber. Indianapolis – Cambridge, Hackett. 210.

⁴¹ Cf. DEMBSKI, William (1999): *Intelligent Design. The Bridge between Science & Theology*. Downers Grove (Ill.), InterVarsity Press. 105–115. Henry Newman stated in a sermon in 1839 that design arguments would convince only those who had believed in them before. BROOKE 1991, 224. Even if this is true in most cases, it does not say anything about their truth content.

recommended? Of course, no one can or should be forced to accept it, yet teaching it should not be ruled out at all.⁴²

In his Theory of Universal Information (TUI), Werner Gitt has done a pioneering work in trying to formulate the laws of information at the level of natural laws:

In the theory, as for the definition of information, there is a code system based on agreement.

It cannot resemble the thing/subject to be communicated (such as a photo or painting) – to exclude doubtfulness with contingency and specification as to CSI.

Information is not a material quantity. Matter is necessary only to store it.

Information always assumes a sender and a receiver, so it comes from an intelligent source and the sender has some purpose with it.

According to our general experience, a material quantity cannot create a non-material quantity – thus life as such including man (as an information-processing system) either.⁴³

In summary: No programming is known without a programmer. A programmer is not obliged to introduce himself to every user of his programme. This must be logically true for the living beings instead of claiming – from the perspective of any naturalistic, atheistic philosophy – that they make an exception.⁴⁴

⁴² NUMBERS 2006, 373–398. Chapter 17. ACLU: American Civil Liberties Union. 13, 319, 387, 392. The first major legal test was the Kitzmiller–Dover trial in Pennsylvania in 2005. The Dover Area School District Board called the attention of biology teachers on the problems and gaps in Darwin's and other theories of evolution and recommended ID as an alternative. One of the parents asked the ACLU to intervene on their behalf against the Board. The six-week trial ended on 20 December 2005. Judge Jones III described the school board's action as a "breathtaking inanity". "Although a conservative Republican (...) and a practising Lutheran, Jones ruled that ID was 'not science' because it invoked 'supernatural causation' and failed 'to meet the essential ground rules that limit science to testable, natural explanations'. The board's promotion of it thus violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, requiring the separation of church and state." 391–394.

⁴³ Cf. GITT, Werner (2023): *Information – The Key to Life*. (Transl. unknown). Green Forest (AR 726), Master Books. Chapter 3: 73–110, 154–158, 166–168, 208–212; Chapter 8: 221–249. Not mentioned in the English translation, but see: GITT, Werner (⁴2016): *Information, der Schlüssel zum Leben*. Bielefeld, Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung.

⁴⁴ "Where is the sender of the information in the DNA molecules? A sender cannot be identified at all. So, is this information somehow created by molecular biology? The answer is the same as in

Again, with Balázs Mezei: “Is the ability to think about infinity just a correspondence to a brain event? But every set of physical events is finite by definition. However, the idea of absolute infinity is infinite. Therefore, this thought cannot correspond one-to-one to any set of physical events in the brain.”⁴⁵ Let us add: Even the finite can only be thought of in relation to the infinite. So, this ability of thinking is an extreme, perhaps the most extreme example of the fact that information is a non-material quantity and matter is only needed to store it.

5. Summary and Conclusions – Questions Are Often More Important Than Answers

Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made. So, those people have no excuse at all (Rom 1:20). Keeping that in view, let us go through the more or less rhetorical questions asked in the respective parts of the present study. First of all: Is the apostle’s warning just an (outdated) opinion among many others?

As for *Darwin and God*: “What confidence could one place in a hypothesis that was not directly verifiable?”⁴⁶ This is not a direct theological question, but theological considerations played an inevitable, decisive role in the birth of that not directly verifiable hypothesis; its emblematic figure originally wanted to become a priest. Why is, e.g., that “we may console ourselves with the full belief” if not because of theological considerations?⁴⁷

the following cases: • If we look at the wealth of information recorded in Egyptian hieroglyphics, there is nothing of the sender on any stone. We only find his traces carved in stone. But no one would claim that this information was created without a sender and without a mental/intellectual concept. • If two computers are connected to each other and exchange information and initiate certain processes, then nothing of the sender can be recognized. All the information, however, has nonetheless been thought up at some point by one (or more) intelligent programmer(s).” Op. cit. 244–245.

⁴⁵ MEZEI 2010, 144–145, note 83.

⁴⁶ BROOKE 1991, 286.

⁴⁷ GILLESPIE 1979, 127.

Since Darwin, there has been a shifting of accent in the relationship of science and faith/religion claiming that science can (fully) explain the questions of origin, too. So, is science omnipotent or “only” almost omnipotent? How much is left for God in case of “almost”? Did he really create us in the way we assume by hypotheses that are not directly verifiable? Is the way in which man got to this planet exclusively the competence of science? Why do we care so much about how we got here? The answer is very simple: If we knew exactly how we were put here, it would decisively guide us as to who we are and why we are here! If (someday) our being here could be explained “completely” without “being there” (i.e. the supernatural), would it matter at all what steps, what number of steps we took from the animal world?

As for *Animal Origin and a Basic Human Right*: one does not need to believe firmly in the doctrine of the *imago Dei* by asking with common sense: Why has no transitional “creature” between animal and human survived? Were all of them not “fit” to survive? Did they have anything to do with being created in the image of God? There has not been presented any convincing evidence for the transition between animals and humans since the publication of *Origin and Descent*. The human family tree always has to be modified or rewritten with every new find, but the “missing link” is still the dream of the future. Only the “fact” of evolution from molecule to man is described as unshakably “sure”. Why?

One cannot emphasize enough in the wake of Barth:⁴⁸ What do we consider more important? Are these the anatomical, biological, behavioural similarities or the qualitative difference of thinking and creativity, far beyond those of the animals, ultimately the openness to transcendence and infinity? Is it possible that the differences can be more or properly appreciated against the background of similarities? Living with other creatures in the same ecosystem would be impossible without similar features, structures, and mechanisms.

Why would it not be quite legitimate to approach the problem from the perspective of the freedom of conscience and religion? Is it not simply a basic human right to say that all of one's ancestors were human? The opposite is – also – a hypothesis not directly verifiable.

⁴⁸ BARTH 2009, 89–90.

As for *Evolution and Purpose*. Taking seriously that “Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him” (John 1:3) makes it a bit strange that the following questions can hardly be found in theological works, although they are raised by elementary logic and moral sense. Does the Creator allow men, even those denying his existence or hating him, to make a survey of his creative work to a relatively great exactness? Does it matter – and if does, how much if not all – that the one takes him for necessary for bringing the world, life and humanity into existence and the other does not? Is the question of *how* not at least a somewhat theological one just because of the simple fact that only the Creator can be fully aware of it?

If “... with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light” (Ps 36:9) – does not it mean at first hearing that seeing light begins with regarding the Lord as the fountain of life? How much light was necessary to minimize the role of the Lord in bringing life and living creatures into existence as Darwin meant – not being able to push him totally away from the world?

On the basis of Rom 1:18 ff., it is a legitimate question on what point(s) God’s work, i.e. divine purpose, can be detected – providing it can be detected at all and not only assumed by those who would like to assume it. The basic dilemma concerning the relationship (if there is any) between God and evolution: If evolution can be explained without God, is there any necessity for God? If evolution cannot be explained without God, is there any necessity for evolution?⁴⁹ Today’s science searches for natural causes in questions of origin, too – but when and where are they exhausted?

Why is humanity, together with the world, in need of redemption? The Holy Scripture does not claim anywhere that man and the world with him are already in need of redemption just because of the – apparently or obviously imperfect – method of creation and, as a corollary, sin is “only” an additional evil! Should Christ really be besides *redemptor hominis*, *redemptor evolutionis*, too?⁵⁰

Last but not least, *Design and Information* continuing the previous point: As for design arguments, one can take them for either apparent or obvious. Those who take them for apparent try to explain away the imperfections of their argumentation by

⁴⁹ Cf. JUNKER 1994, 67–68.

⁵⁰ MOLTSMANN 1989, 296–297.

gaps that shall be filled with the progress of science. But it follows simply from the concept of God that “gaps” in knowledge exist exclusively for us. As long as we do not know everything that “was” necessary for the “production” of the world, life, and the human being, the world, life, and the human being are the “gaps”. We can come upon much here between the centre and the edge of the Milky Way, but the pieces of the puzzle will never all fall into their place. One can entertain a rhetorical question: when will just one piece be left?

What if life is the result of design, a design using the necessary information for it, regardless of any concept of science, religion, and the separation of state and church? If the world, life, and the human being are really designed by a Supreme Intelligence as the source of all the necessary information, does it matter in what part(s) of the curriculum, science, or religion this option is recommended?⁵¹ What can prevent anyone from applying informatics, IT asking something self-evident: Where is the sender of the information in the DNA molecules? Nowhere, because he cannot be identified at all?⁵² Why is the denial of the sender of information for life favoured so much by mainstream science?

Finally, all the above (and who knows how many other) questions point to one direction. Darwin's work was not the result of objective, unbiased research – it is simply impossible in questions of origin. Christianity is about the history of salvation: from the very creation of the world, life, and human being with the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ in the centre. The Holy Spirit testifies him until his second coming, which shall be followed by the creation of a new world. It is only the *real* history of the world, life, and us that matters, not any “not directly verifiable hypothesis” of us. These may contain more or less elements of truth, even if not counting on the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. However, just “only” the history of salvation cannot be redrawn or rearranged.

⁵¹ Cf. NUMBERS 2006, 391–394.

⁵² Cf. GITT 2023, 244–245.

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