

Book Report
**Genetic Entropy & the
Mystery of the Genome**

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Something that matters!

After wasting most of his life on things that don't matter, Dr Sanford finally discovered something that really does matter—the subject of who and what human beings really are.

Undirected evolution

Amazingly modern thinking assumes that man 'is just the product of a pointless natural process'. We are 'just meaningless 'bags of molecules' - and in the last analysis—nothing matters.' [But in spite of that we continue to behave as though it does—police, anti-terrorism, education, research, health, &c &c—ed].

Primary Axiom

The basic premise of this modern thinking is what Sanford calls 'The Primary Axiom'. This is the doctrine that we are merely the result of accidental genetic mutations + natural selection. It is a doctrine almost universally taught and believed.

Dare any academic question this doctrine? Let him try! And yet this idea is 'the cause of the widespread self-destructive and self-denigrating behaviours we see through our cultures'. [Absolutely. Yet we teach small children *in effect* that they are of no account whatever.]

Questioning the Primary Axiom

Late in his career Dr Sanford—a highly successful evolutionary scientist—began to question this doctrine. He was scared of possible expulsion from the academic world. Yet he had to question a doctrine, which he had always 'accepted by faith alone'. [Isn't that amazing. A geneticist, professor of biology at a prestigious university—yet he had never got to the bottom of the Primary Axiom! What does that tell you about our education-system? Ed.]

The Emperor has no clothes!

What Dr Sanford discovered was that the Primary Axiom is 'an extremely vulnerable theory....in fact...essential indefensible.' [Here is one scientific thinker unimpressed with Dr Dawkins' bluster! ed] The Axiom rests on 'an almost mystical faith, which true believers have in natural selection.' Dr Sanford began to question virtually everything he thought he knew about genetics—'probably the most difficult intellectual endeavour of my life.' He knew that

his academic colleagues would not like it—but he had to do it.

Comment: Are we free?

Isn't it extraordinary that in western society, with its boasted freedom of speech and conscience, a scientist should fear the censures of his colleagues for daring to step out of line and think his own thoughts instead of going along with everyone else? A creationist speaks at a school, and instantly all hell is let loose as academics fall over themselves to abuse and vilify the school and the speaker! Yet the Primary Axiom implies that nothing matters anyway—so why all the fuss, if some of us disagree?

The Mystery of the Genome

Here we come to chapter one of Dr Sanford's book. The genome, he explains, is the 'instruction manual that specifies life' (p1). It is enormously complex. It can be argued that the simplest form of life is more complex than the space-shuttle! (p2). Sanford agrees with Carl Sagan, who in 1974 said that each cell in the human body 'contains more information than the Library of Congress' (p4).

Where did it come from?

Where did all the information of the genome originate? The standard answer is that genetic mutation + natural selection has created biological information. All genomes have evolved from some primitive genome (p5—But if so, the original genome must have arisen in a *different* way. What way? Ed.) by means of 'typographical errors' and 'differential copying'. This is the Primary Axiom of biological science today.

An axiom

Now an axiom is *untestable*. It is a truth which is simply *believed*, because it is clearly true. The Primary Axiom is accepted as Absolute Truth. Nevertheless Dr. Sanford asks why we should continue to regard this doctrine as an axiom, when it can be shown to be wrong?

Can you believe it?

On page 5 Dr Sanford illustrates his thesis. Suppose you have the assembly instructions for a toy wagon. If the instructions are altered, the wagons will turn out differently. If mistakes creep into reproductions of the instructions, then in all probability the results will *not* be improvements. Information is lost, instructions get muddled or degraded, and probably the 'manual will become complete gibberish' (p6).

Natural selection!

However, the 'hero' of the plot is natural selection. Enter the quality-control manager! His job is to see that only good wagons make the grade—despite the copying errors. Just possibly some of the errors turn out to be brilliant innovations, resulting in improved wagons. And eventually—if this Aesopian Fable is to be believed—the wagon becomes an aeroplane and

Dr Sanford GENETIC ENTROPY Chapter 1 (cont)

space-shuttle! Actually, the wagon-space shuttle analogy is poor, because it doesn't go far enough! The human body is 'immeasurably more complex than any human technology' (p8).

Absolutely stupid!

But does it seem likely that genetic misspellings and selective copying could really do all this? Remember that at no point is any intelligence involved. [Amazingly the intelligent scientists who defend evolution attack the very idea of 'intelligent design'! They stoutly insist that intelligence has a totally stupid origin!! - See the book report on this website on C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*. Ed]. Sanford asks, 'Do you find this concept credible?'

Dawkins' 'false picture'

Dawkins, in his much admired *Blind Watchmaker* (1986), gave a totally false illustration of genetic error and natural selection at work. He gave the computer a pre-specified message ('me thinks it is like a weasel'), which was then systematically uncovered—as in some children's game! Obviously Dawkins' model was 'intelligently designed and purposeful' (p9). He used an intelligently designed computer, used his own intelligence to programme it, and employed Shakespeare's intelligent phraseology (from *Hamlet*) - to model a process which is totally devoid of intelligence. [Where is the common sense in such a strategy? Ed] Sanford says, 'Dawkins' argument cannot honestly be applied....to defend the Primary Axiom.'

ARE RANDOM MUTATIONS GOOD?

Dr Sanford begins chapter 2 with the words, 'Random mutations destroy information'. (See Lee Spetner's, *Not by Chance*, for a biophysicist's view of mutations!). A large amount of disease—including cancer—is connected with mutation. 'Mutations are more than just an academic concern!' (p15) Genetic mutations are almost invariably harmful, yet the Primary Axiom says they are good, because they create the diversity which feeds selection!

Decay

Over the years your car deteriorates—rust, scratches, dents, worn-out parts. Such 'mutations' certainly create 'variety' in our cars—but they never improve them!

Information-loss

There is an 'incredible scarcity of clear cases of Information creating mutations' (p17. If you saw AiG's *From a Frog to a Prince*, you will recall Dawkins absolutely stumped by the question, 'Do you know of any mutation which has created Information?') Dr Sanford, a professor of genetics,

says, 'I am still not convinced there is a single, crystal-clear example of a known mutation which unambiguously *created* information.' [That's like saying that he doesn't know of single random, accidental change in the design, which improved the machine or whatever. Ed.] Random mutation means information-loss.

Aircraft assembly manual

Imagine a highly technical manual. Random errors are somehow introduced through carelessness. Is it likely that they would improve the aircraft? Any major design-change would require intelligence and knowledge. [p19. That is common sense, Ed] Of course small mistakes—misspellings, words left out, things wrongly numbered, &c—might not have disastrous effects, but some errors would be catastrophic. But the question which Dawkins must answer is this: How often do these random errors prove to be highly beneficial?

Kimura

Kimura [in 1979] showed that most mutations are negative, and though deleterious, *not* subject to selection. So how does evolution progress? Theorists reckon that there is enough time and enough selection-power for *rare beneficial mutations* to function as the building blocks for new species. Strangely, however, Kimura didn't include beneficial mutations in his 1979 graph. Why not? It seems that nearly all beneficial mutations are 'unselectable' (p24) 'The very strong predominance of deleterious mutations...absolutely guarantees net loss of information' (p24). Selection cannot eliminate all the deleterious mutations, and there are too few beneficial mutations to make any real difference. No wonder evolution cannot get going!

Bergman

Jerry Bergman—a scientist with umpteen Ph.D's—made a special study of beneficial mutations. Out of 453,732 mutations, only 186 were found to be 'beneficial' [about 4 in 10,000]. Almost all of these were beneficial only in a very restricted sense, and consistently involved *loss-of-function changes* [hence loss of information, p26]. 'He was unable to find a single example of a mutation which unambiguously created new information'. Sanford says in conclusion that though he does not doubt that *rare* beneficial mutations may occur, but that they are *too rare* to build the new genomes required by new species.

Decay

Genetic mutation is the breakdown and erosion of genetic information. It is the basis of the ageing process and leads eventually to death. Ultimately it will lead to the death of the human species. Natural Selection has far too much work on its plate to enable it to prevent genomic degeneration.

This book can be obtained from AiG. Use the link from this website. Reports on other chapters will follow from time to time. Keep looking!