

## **Realism matters**

**Post by “Cassius” of December 28, 2019 at 4:34 PM**

Oscar I may eventually move this thread to Physics or epistemology, but I bet it would be helpful for someone coming across this to have a quick and dirty explanation for what "magical thinking" means. Is the context of this discussion whether a "supernatural" exists, or is this more of a mathematical / logical theory discussion?

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**Post by “Cassius” of December 28, 2019 at 7:37 PM**

Very good point as to the need for an evolution subforum. Will set up now.

Edit: Done, and I moved this thread to that location.

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**Post by “Elayne” of December 29, 2019 at 2:39 PM**

Love it, Oscar! The weeds of magical/idealistic thinking are hard for people to get off their feet. I would love to find a way to do that-- to free people from getting stuck in them.

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**Post by “Charles” of January 4, 2020 at 12:53 PM**

Interestingly enough, Mettrie has quite a few quotes on the subject, decades before Darwin.

"The first generations must have been very imperfect. Here the esophagus will have been lacking; there the stomach, the vulva, the intestines, & so on. Obviously the only animals that will have have been able to live, conserve, & perpetuate their species, will have been

those who have been provided with all the parts necessary for reproduction, & which in a word no essential part will not have been missed. Conversely those who have been deprived of some part of a necessity absolute, will be dead, or shortly after their birth, or at least without reproducing. Perfection was no more the work of a day for nature than for art."

"People say that all eyes are made optically and all ears mathematically! How do they know that? Because they have observed nature; they were astonished to see that its productions were so equal, and even superior, to art. They could not do otherwise than suppose that it had some aim or enlightened purposes. Nature thus existed before art, which was created following in her steps and came from her as the son comes from his mother. And a chance arrangement, providing the same privileges as an arrangement made on purpose by all possible hard work, earned our common mother an honor which is due only to the laws of movement."

"By what an infinite number of combinations matter must have passed before reaching the only combination which could result in a perfect animal, and through how many others before reproduction reached the degree of perfection it enjoys today!"

"Everything doctors & physicists have written about the use of the parts of the animated bodies, always appeared to me unfounded. All their reasoning on the causes finals are so frivolous that if Lucretius had refuted them so wrongly then he must have been a bad physician as he was a great poet"

"The elements of matter, by dint of twitching &

mingling, having managed to make eyes, it was  
impossible not to see, as not to see oneself  
in a mirror, either natural or artificial. The eye has found itself  
the mirror of objects, which often serve them in turn.  
Nature did not think more of eyeing to see, than  
water, to serve as a mirror for the simple shepherdess. The water is  
found suitable for returning the images; the shepherdess saw there  
with pleasure, her pretty face. This is how the author of the *Machine Man* thinks."

Mettrie made sure to reject all of the supernatural and to stay firmly within a naturalistic and material view of the world, often conceding to Lucretius and disagreeing with his former Cartesian colleagues .

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### **Post by "Cassius" of January 4, 2020 at 3:47 PM**

We probably need a separate forum on theories about the mechanics of evolution. I will set one up and link here. This comes to my mind because there are no doubt lots of interesting theories on how far things go by "chance" combination until something else kicks in. For example a 1969 Dodge Charger, or a Great Pyrenees dog, doesn't just spring out of the ground by chance. Something happens at early stages without any guidance at all, and then at some point (in at least some parts of evolution) intelligent selection takes over. I am by no means up to date on all the various theories about how gradual things are, or how "leaps" take place, but I bet over time some people will want to post about things like that.

Edit: Well duh, that's exactly where we are, aren't we? 😊 I was thinking we were in one of Charles' threads on pas Epicureans but i see we are in exactly the right place. Although, if someone expands too far on the mechanics of evolution, it would be a good idea to start a separate thread in this same forum.

[Origin of Life / Development of Life / Evolution](#)