

Article On Issues As to The Existence of Life: Yates - "Fantasizing About The Origin Of Life"

Post by "Joshua" of September 8, 2025 at 6:59 PM

I wrote this reply yesterday in response to the article but decided not to post it. But it saved as a draft, and someone might find it interesting, so here it is:

From the article:

Quote

But this says nothing about the origins of such life, either here or elsewhere. The salient question: is it physically or chemically possible for living, self-replicating organisms with internal metabolic processes to come about through entirely naturalistic processes unaided by intelligence?

The evidence seems to say, resoundingly, No.

The evidence is inconclusive. To say that the evidence is inconclusive is not at all the same as saying that the evidence suggests (resoundingly or otherwise) that abiogenesis is impossible.

A relevant example of this principle can be found in astronomy. When in the 16th century Tycho Brahe critiqued the Copernican model of the solar system, his objection was grounded in (among other things) the fact that stellar parallax had never been observed. Attempts to observe this hypothetical parallax had been made, and in the event would go on being made for nearly three hundred years before the phenomena was finally and conclusively measured scientifically by Henderson, Struve, and Bessel in independent experiments in the 1830s.

If Yates were writing in the 1820s, would he have confidently pronounced (resoundingly!) that the measurement of stellar parallax in our cosmos was impossible? Perhaps not. Well, then he shouldn't say it or imply it here. Inconclusive does not mean impossible; it just means inconclusive.

He then delivers himself of the opinion that abiogenesis cannot be tested, on the grounds that the men and women performing the test would themselves be intelligent. Therefore, any proto-organism or self-replicating molecule produced in a laboratory experiment by those men and women would, by definition, have been created by one or more intelligent beings. By this logic we should disregard all laboratory experiments. That legumes fix nitrogen into the soil they grow in in a laboratory experiment would tell us nothing about the nitrogen cycle in nature, but ONLY if we are foolish enough to insist that the cause of their fixing nitrogen is to be found in

the intelligence of the researcher and not in the biochemistry of the legume. The researcher arranges the conditions in which nitrogen is fixed, but he does not fix the nitrogen. Likewise with abiogenesis. Arranging the conditions in which life emerges from non-life would not be an act of intelligent creation.