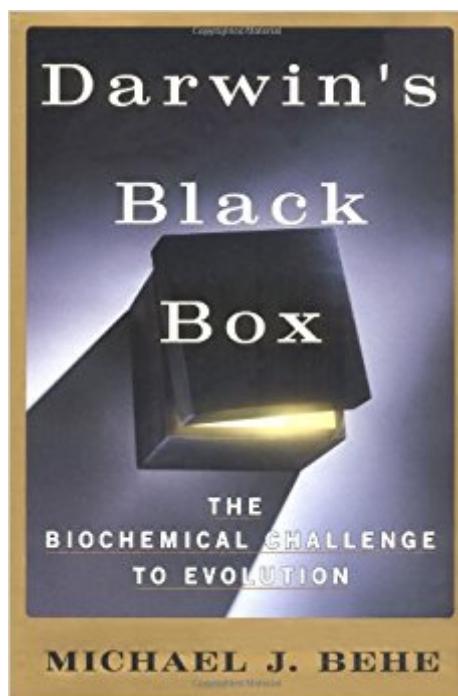


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DARWIN'S BLACK BOX: The Biochemical Challenge To Evolution



Synopsis

Virtually all serious scientists accept the truth of Darwin's theory of evolution. While the fight for its acceptance has been a long and difficult one, after a century of struggle among the cognoscenti the battle is over. Biologists are now confident that their remaining questions, such as how life on Earth began, or how the Cambrian explosion could have produced so many new species in such a short time, will be found to have Darwinian answers. They, like most of the rest of us, accept Darwin's theory to be true. But should we? What would happen if we found something that radically challenged the now-accepted wisdom? In *Darwin's Black Box*, Michael Behe argues that evidence of evolution's limits has been right under our noses -- but it is so small that we have only recently been able to see it. The field of biochemistry, begun when Watson and Crick discovered the double-helical shape of DNA, has unlocked the secrets of the cell. There, biochemists have unexpectedly discovered a world of Lilliputian complexity. As Behe engagingly demonstrates, using the examples of vision, bloodclotting, cellular transport, and more, the biochemical world comprises an arsenal of chemical machines, made up of finely calibrated, interdependent parts. For Darwinian evolution to be true, there must have been a series of mutations, each of which produced its own working machine, that led to the complexity we can now see. The more complex and interdependent each machine's parts are shown to be, the harder it is to envision Darwin's gradualistic paths. Behe surveys the professional science literature and shows that it is completely silent on the subject, stymied by the elegance of the foundation of life. Could it be that there is some greater force at work? Michael Behe is not a creationist. He believes in the scientific method, and he does not look to religious dogma for answers to these questions. But he argues persuasively that biochemical machines must have been designed -- either by God, or by some other higher intelligence. For decades science has been frustrated, trying to reconcile the astonishing discoveries of modern biochemistry to a nineteenth-century theory that cannot accommodate them. With the publication of *Darwin's Black Box*, it is time for scientists to allow themselves to consider exciting new possibilities, and for the rest of us to watch closely.

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Customer Reviews

Michael J. Behe, a biochemist at Lehigh University, presents here a scientific argument for the existence of God. Examining the evolutionary theory of the origins of life, he can go part of the way with Darwin--he accepts the idea that species have been differentiated by the mechanism of natural selection from a common ancestor. But he thinks that the essential randomness of this process can explain evolutionary development only at the macro level, not at the micro level of his expertise. Within the biochemistry of living cells, he argues, life is "irreducibly complex." This is the last black box to be opened, the end of the road for science. Faced with complexity at this level, Behe suggests that it can only be the product of "intelligent design."

Charles Darwin's theory of life's evolution through natural selection and random mutation fails to account for the origin of astonishingly complex biomolecular systems, argues Behe, associate professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University. In this spirited, witty critique of neo-Darwinian thinking, he focuses on five phenomena: blood clotting; cilia, oar-like bundles of fibers; the human immune system; transport of materials within the cell; and the synthesis of nucleotides, building blocks of DNA. In each case, he finds systems that are irreducibly complex?no gradual, step-by-step, Darwinian route led to their creation. As an alternative explanation, Behe infers that complex biochemical systems (i.e., life) were designed by an intelligent agent, whether God, extraterrestrials or a universal force. He notes that Francis Crick, co-discoverer of DNA's double-helix structure, proposed that life began when aliens from another planet sent a rocket ship containing spores to seed Earth. Perhaps Behe's plea for incorporating a "theory of intelligent design" into mainstream biology will spark interest. Illustrated. Translation and U.K. rights: Simon & Schuster. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Thoroughly investigated and incredibly detailed. A must in any serious discussion. The author also manages to explain complex mechanisms in a manner that increases your knowledge so that when

you read the technical portions the average reader can appreciate the majesty of the complexity of systems he explains.

It must have been a shock to learn that the world is not flat and it is not the pivotal center of the universe. now we see that Darvon's theory is only partially correct k

Written for those outside the field and done so very well. A revealing insight into a miniature wonder world. Many thanks.

Behe stirred up a hornet's nest when he wrote this excellent book. As one professor of biochemistry (a client of mine) once said to me "it is a polarizing subject." Still, Behe's science, logic and presentation are all sound. Verbal and mental gymnastics are required to dance around his persuasive arguments yet some have tried and the reason that they've tried is obvious to this observer: their ideology will not allow them to accept the facts presented. I highly recommend this read to those interested in truth.

Well worth the time to read. It is a bit technical at times but gives good background material in the God verses atheism debate.

Informative, really like his descriptive analogy that helps a layman understand.

Behe is obviously a competent scientist, and he does a good job describing some very complicated procedures. I do not have the biochemical background to read all of the science, but his analogies proved helpful. Ultimately, he does a good job showing that gradual evolution of complex interdependent systems seems impossible to contemplate, and therefore the best explanation is intelligent design of these systems. I also appreciated his review of the current research (or lack thereof) in these areas. He adequately proves that no one really has any idea what the mechanism of evolution is or was. This is the original reason that I reject evolution, and I still have not found any reasonable mechanism to explain it.

As you can tell by the large number of reviews, Behe's book is very thought-provoking. I liked it best as a damaging critique of generally accepted ideas of evolution by natural selection. Behe points out that 100 years of biochemical research has raised questions that natural selection theory shows

no signs of being able to answer. I personally don't agree with Behe's idea of Intelligent Design. At least, such a radical idea is only one hypothesis to answer the lingering questions about complex biochemical systems. Whether you like intelligent design or not, the burden now rests on neo-Darwinists to start explaining how natural selection can produce complex biochemical systems. And so far they HAVE NOT done this.

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