

CSFNM Topic: Information theory and Physics do not admit evolution as science.

March 2001

This is Essay 5B (Rebuttal) in the NMSR/CSFNM Debate Series.

Arguing against CSFNM's essay, on behalf of NMSR : John Geohegan

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Creationists hesitate to admit that populations contain large numbers of small mutations just waiting to be acted upon by natural selection. Instead, they like to picture evolution as a process that requires the stepwise appearance of large novel mutations which must occur in a sequence so improbable as to deny believability. The February essay by the Creation Science Fellowship of New Mexico follows the usual plan, but is distinguished by the mangling and misinterpretation of numerical statements. Consider the essay's five-sentence paragraph that sums up the genetics and probability argument:

1. "Fisher's analysis shows that if the SV [selection value] is 1% the probability of survival in a single generation is 2%." Wrong. Fisher says the value is 63.58% for a single generation[1].
2. "Simpson estimated the SV at 0.1% or 1/500 successful selections (births)." Wrong. Simpson explains two pages earlier that a .1% selection value means 1,000 out of 1,999, slightly over 50%[2].
3. "The probability that a trait will survive one generation using evolutionist probabilities is 1/300,000." Wrong. This incorrect figure was obtained by multiplying the incorrect value of 1/500 by 1/600 which assumes that the mutation was not waiting in the wings. This is an example of creationist, not evolutionist, probabilities.
4. "To accumulate the necessary 500 steps results in a probability of $(3 \times 10^{-5})^{500}$, or about 2.7×10^{-2739} ." Wrong. The 300,000 figure is wrong and 3×10^{-5} is not the same as 1/300,000, but most importantly the calculation assumes total randomness, and natural selection is not random. Raising to the 500th power is unjustified.
5. "This of course renders evolution entirely impossible from an information theory perspective." Wrong. The numbers are wrong, the assumption of randomness is wrong, and the analysis has nothing to do with information theory.

The above errors suggest the essay should be consigned to the ash heap.

The "six theorems of information theory" offered toward the end of the essay are merely rhetoric. Claims that mental sources and free will are necessary to generate information can be disproved merely by looking through a spectroscope and seeing bar-coded information coming from the stars telling us of the stars' chemical make-up, their temperatures, and recession velocities. All with no mental sources or voluntary free will.

For those readers trying to make sense of the essay, here are two additional cautions:

1. Fred Hoyle has been misquoted. He said "Astronomers will have a little difficulty," not "Astronomers have little difficulty."

2. Don't look for the referenced Stebbins statement about one small evolutionary step in approximately 50 million births. It's not on page 97 nor apparently anywhere in Stebbins's book. However, Simpson made a similar statement in the context of how slow evolution would be without selection pressure[3].

Perhaps it's best just to forget the CSFNM essay.

REFERENCES (not part of word count)

1. Fisher, R.A., 1930, The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.76.

2. Simpson, G.G., 1953, The Major Features of Evolution, New York: Columbia Univ. Press, p. 117.

3. Simpson, p. 146.

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THIS ESSAY WAS POSTED ON MARCH 7TH, 2001.

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