THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

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Prologue

In the beginning
if there was a beginning
God created the heavens and the earth
if there was a god
And he brought forth life
if life was brought forth
And he created in his own image, man
if man was created
was man created
or did man create?

I
It is an inalienable fact
that the earth is flat
and rests upon the back of a turtle.
maggots are born of meat
and worms of mud
and aphids from bamboo
and lice from human sweat
these things are observed
And seen to be obviously true.

II
We are philosophers
Concerned with materialism and matter
Matter is always living
Always changing
Life in matter being inherent
Self-created
We do not concern ourselves with mysticism.
Being practical people.
Matter the basis of the universe
Consists of very small particles
Constantly in motion
Separated by space.

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1. Editor's note: Miss Robinson is a University of Tennessee student. This poem was written as a term paper for a freshman Honors course taught by Dr. Isabel Tipton.
And life appears as a process of Nature
God not being life-giver
   Nature conjures
   Particles of earth
   Atoms of fire —
The moist heat of the sun and rain
bring forth a multitude of creatures

Plato, savior of God-creation
with the infusion of Psyche into matter.

Such are the facts:
   animals mate
   and decay and earth mate
to form new animals
Life is formed by the
   active and passive
   form and matter
Matter is infused with Psyche
   Earth is plant-mother
   Water is sea life-mother
   Fire is celestial life-mother
Sun, giver of psychic warmth, giver of life,
father of life from mother-earth.

III
The spontaneous generation of life
Is a living truth.

The church is God
There is to be no question of the church
ancilla theologiae supreme
   philosophers:
   avoid reason
   theology is ultimate
not science
your task:
   Marry Aristotle to Christianity
Thank you Thomas Aquinas; you are kind.
We defend our reasoning —
Noah did not take on the ark those animals
capable of arising from the earth.
(Here we go round the prickly pear
Mice and maggots from everywhere)

The fingers of Catholicism grasp tightly on
the throat of science
preventing speech —
(Mice and maggots from everywhere
And ducks and geese from trees)

It is possible to produce artificially
the phenomenon of birth
by placing human sperm
sealed in a gourd
in the stomach of a horse
to form a small living child.

The life force can be controlled only by magic

CAULDRON BUBBLE

IV

The age of science!
Life is generated spontaneously
(unquestionably,
with spontaneity)
Redi says that maggots are larvae of flies
and Redi supports his statement
But, being scientific, of course,
Only generation of maggots has been disproved
So, in other cases
Spontaneous generation is possible,
Scientifically speaking, of course.

This is the age of reason.
We have discovered microbes.
Microbes are found where decay is found.
Life arises from decaying matter.
Therefore microbes arise from decaying matter.
This is a logical scientific fact.
The question proposed:
Is creation of life
Spiritual?
or
Material?

I am a philosophical scientist from an age of reason. Matter
is inherently passive. Only the spirit is capable of uninterrupted
activity. Thus life cannot be explained on the basis of physical
forces. Development of living things is the evolution of existing
germs. Life being inherent in matter, living things are formed
from the development of the germs which compose matter.

Spallanzani:
"And out of the ground
the Lord God formed
every beast of the field
and every fowl of the air . . ."
—supernaturally.

Needham:
"Let the waters bring forth abundantly
the moving creature that hath life . . ."
—spontaneously.

There is this theory
and there is no theory
and is this theory
better than no theory

V
Attention: Pasteur disproves spontaneous
generation of microbes!

Humanity: Your proven facts are being drowned
in a test tube.

Materialists: turn to evolution of matter for
emergence of life.

Idealists: Darwin’s pen is mightier than
mighty man.
(philosophize
compromise)

VI
This is the age of coffee spoons
The age of science and skepticism
We believe
Beyond a reasonable doubt
The conception of spontaneous
generation
slowly . . .

By the process of unconquerable chance
Life has emerged
From inanimate matter
Chance becoming probability
the salts of the sea
molecule-broth
molecules tending toward
crystallinity and
order
even becoming
reproductive

and somewhere
in the sea-broth
of aggregates
the miracle
of chance
or God
of life
energy from fermentation
photosynthesis —
lasting
flourishing
life.

Epilogue
This is infinity . . .
In this the age of the mind
The time of the ultimate truth?

NEWS OF TENNESSEE SCIENCE

Wendell Holladay, of the Department of Physics and Astronomy, Vanderbilt University, spent last year (1959-60) in Madison, Wisconsin, as a staff member of the Department of Physics of the University of Wisconsin while on leave from Vanderbilt.

Robert Lagemann of Vanderbilt University has recently returned from a one-semester leave of absence spent in Austria and Germany where he visited various research laboratories of physics, libraries, and museums of science. During a part of his stay in Europe he represented the National Science Foundation at an international conference on the teaching of science, sponsored by the Organization for European Economic Cooperation.

Dr. F. Douglas Shields, formerly of Middle Tennessee State College, is now Associate Professor of Physics at the University of Mississippi.

Dr. Frederic L. Conover has retired as professor of Chemistry at Vanderbilt University.

Dr. Samuel P. Massie of Fisk University will spend a year beginning August 15, 1960, with the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C., as Associate Program Director in the Division of Special Projects in Science Education. In particular he will supervise the programs concerned with visiting scientists, research participation for high school teachers, and supplementary programs for college teachers.

A seven-story addition to the A. B. Learned Graduate Science Laboratory is nearing completion at Vanderbilt University. This fully air-conditioned building is to provide additional research space in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and pre-clinical medical sciences.

Dr. Robert Rowe will assume the deanship of the Vanderbilt University School of Engineering on September 1, 1960. He comes from Duke University where he was Professor of Civil Engineering and Chairman of the Department.

Dr. J. Gordon Carlson, head of the Department of Zoology and Entomology at the University of Tennessee, spent July 31 through August 5 in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he had been invited to present a paper at a symposium of the Third International Congress of Photobiology. The title of his paper was “Mitotic Effects of Monochromatic Ultraviolet Microbeam Irradiation of the Nucleolus.” While abroad, Dr. Carlson visited laboratories in Paris, Heidelberg, Lund, Stockholm, and Edinburgh, and gave a seminar at the University of Heidelberg.

Dr. James N. Liles is a new member of the staff of the Department of Zoology and Entomology at the University of Tennessee. Dr. Liles received his Ph. D. in Entomology at Ohio State University and has taught at the University of South Carolina. For the past two years he has been engaged in research on insect physiology at Ohio State with the aid of a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

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