

FROM OUR READERS

I read with great interest Craig DeRousse's excellent article *Past, Present, Future: A Look at Creation, Evolution and Buddhism* (October '96). I would like to add another aspect to the discussion of evolution and creation, that of "complexity theory" [which] I happened to be reading [about in] Stuart Kaufman's book *At Home in the Universe — The Search for the Laws of Self-organization and Complexity*.

To make a long story short, Mr. Kaufman argues that science in focusing excessively on Darwinian selection, has given society a distorted view of life, one that views evolving life on this planet as a mere accident. He postulates that behind the process of selection, profound laws of spontaneous order are working and that life on Earth was generated spontaneously (as in Buddhist theory) rather than being an accidental product of chemistry.

To illustrate the improbability of accidental generation of life, scientists use the example of estimating that the chance generation of life on earth is roughly the same as the probability that a tornado sweeping through a town in Kansas will happen to assemble a 747 aircraft!

To date, Kaufman and others have simulated the conditions for spontaneous generation of life on computer models — Kaufman believes that actual "test-tube" verification of these models will occur in the not-too-distant future. Kaufman is not attempting to debunk Darwin, only to balance the focus on selection with "the rest of the story," a shift he believes would have profound benefit for society. He also mentions that it may only be natural that the Catholic Church and the Creation science movement would react negatively to the dehumanizing aspects of scientific progress. To quote:

Creation science is no accident in late twentieth-century America. Its proponents adhere to it in an ardent effort to forestall the feared moral implications of humans as descendants of a haphazard lineage branching from some last common ancestor more remote in time than the Cambrian explosion some 500 million years ago. The science in creation science is no science at all, but is the moral anguish so foolish? Or should creationism be viewed rather more sympathetically — misguided, to be sure, but part of a broader quest to reinvent the sacred in our secular world?

As scientists like Kaufman continue to make progress in understanding the physical universe, one can see clearly that Buddhism must play a pivotal role in the "broader quest" of humanity to rediscover its "home in the Universe."

Sincerely,
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