

Letter

Life: a Defunct Scientific Theory?

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Abstract

The following is correspondence letter on the issue irreconcilabilities of attempts at a definition of life in the context of molecular evolution tables, sent from American chemical engineer Libb Thims to Russian physical chemist Georgi Gladyshev dated January 2nd, 2009.

Letter

I am under the view, that the term 'life' is a defunct scientific theory.

You agree with me that the single atom is not alive. What about two atoms? What about three? Does a bound state of atoms have to have a certain movement to be considered alive? What if we heat a system of four atoms, do they suddenly become alive? What if we subject a system of atoms to both gravitational and electromagnetic forces, does that suddenly make them alive? What if the two forces act to move smaller atoms through the cavities of larger atoms on a cyclical basis, thus activating reactions in the process, does that make them alive? What if the two forces begin to arrange the atoms into hierarchies, and that smaller atoms and bundles of atoms begin to move between the hierarchies, does that make them alive? What if a structure of atoms, begin to turnover their internal atoms, with those of the surrounding space, on a cyclical basis, does that make it alive?

It is very obvious that one atom is not alive. It is very obvious that two atoms are not alive. It is very obvious that three atoms are not alive. It is very obvious that four atoms are not alive. If we

continue this logic onward, it should be very obvious that no matter how many atoms one adds to the argument that an atom or a structure made of two or more atoms cannot be alive.

It is my view that one cannot define an atom or two or more atoms structured as a bound state to be alive. The word itself and baggage of theory surrounding the word is meaningless. It is akin to the words: vitalism, élan vital, hylozoism, panpsychism, etc.

From the point of view of the molecular evolution table:

<http://www.eoht.info/page/Molecular+evolution+table>

According to current views, rows 1-10 are considered to be not alive, rows 11-28 are considered to be *alive*, and rows 30 and above are not alive.

Because of our anthropocentric biases, we continue to believe that we are unique among molecular structures, in that those much smaller or much bigger than us are not alive, whereas we are. It is a grave mistake to believe in this fallacy.

I am not quite sure what the alternative theory is; but from the point of view of atoms, molecules, and the logic of the chemistry textbook, the theory of the conception an atom, or two or more attached atoms, being alive is absurd. This is my view.

Notes

1. In the month prior to this, a buildup of tension had existed in the mind of Thims on the issue of the term “life”. In particular that (a) Russian physical chemist Georgi Gladyshev was trying to argue to Thims that his hierarchical thermodynamics theory “mandated life”, (b) that American chemical engineer Ted Erikson was trying to argue to Thims for a thermodynamic explanation of panpsychism, postulating that everything is alive (from the hydrogen atom to the universe), having a consciousness or awareness, and (c) that Indian chemical engineer DMR Sekhar was trying to argue to Thims that, based on the second law, DNA is self-acting, with a consciousness, via his theory of genopsych.
 2. See also: Brooks, Michael. (2008). *13 Things That Don't Make Sense: the Most Baffling Scientific Mysteries of Our Time* (ch. 5: “Life”, pgs. 69-82). Double Day.
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