

Question

I have been reading The Urantia Book for over 25 years; and, as a biologist, I was originally entranced by its chapters on paleontology, until I could not accept some of its contradictions to science. Because of these inconsistencies, I have rarely shared the book with scientific colleagues. Can you help me to understand the problems with the science in The Urantia Book?

For example, I cannot excuse the unorthodox statement that fish (59:4.10; and their swim bladders, 59:5.5) evolved from crustaceans. Using my imagination, I might see some connection between eurypterids (technically not Crustacea) and early armored fishes, but this is a hard sell to my colleagues who are convinced that early jawless fishes evolved from hemichordates. Furthermore, crustaceans don't have swim bladders.

Answer by Chris Halvorson

Let me try to help you take a fresh look at the revelation.

In regard to telling other scientists about The Urantia Book, it is indeed a difficult problem that many do not "assume that the universe is mind made and personality managed." (1:6.7) As the rest of this quoted paragraph reminds scientists, this assumption is inherent in the initial assumption of the scientific endeavor, namely, "that the universe can be known, that it is intelligible" (ibid.). The notion of a universe without God is simply illogical, which is why so many current scientific theories are predicated on magical assumptions. Such so-called science may be rational, but it cannot be logical: it does not depict the objective nature of reality. The totality of reality is inherently logical, because there is one First Source and Center of all things and beings. Since "the universe of universes 'in toto' is mind planned, mind made, and mind administered" (42:11.2), scientific calculations must be limited to those domains wherein mindal overcontrol can be neglected without any significant consequences--unless the fifth epochal revelation supplies the necessary information about the impact of the overcontrol on the physical system under consideration.

It is very important to understand that the revelators were not allowed to present factual information if humans could and would discover those

facts in the not-to-distant future. Therefore, if the revelators made a statement about an issue that humans believe they basically understand, don't be surprised if that revelatory statement is in conflict with current human ideas. Sometimes, for example, the revelators had to use now-outdated measurements of physical quantities; but they did so because they wanted to reveal certain truths in spite of the imprecision of the related facts. If the conflicting statement does not have such technical issues, then the revelators were allowed to make the statement only because there is at least one significant aspect of the issue which humans cannot know, or will not discover on their own for a very long time. The Urantia Papers are a "revelation", not an "affirmation" of current human ideas. Humans have reached false conclusions about many issues, because they either started with a false assumption or did not include the significant effects of unrecognized mindal overcontrol.

In regard to the above issues of arthropods, fishes, and amphibians in sections 4 and 5 of Paper 59, first of all, the most significant false assumption that corrupts current ideas about evolution is the notion that the process has no overall purposing by external influences. The initial overall purpose of biologic evolution was to produce and sustain creatures of will dignity. Evolution "is creativity in time." (105:6.5) All of biologic evolution prior to the appearance of Andon and Fonta was "prehuman evolution" (59:4.9); that is, the process of producing all of the plants and animals over those 550 million years was, in truth, the evolution of humans. So, for example, when "the trilobites were the dominant living creatures" (59:1.15), that is what "humans" looked like way back then.

When scientists try to "connect the dots" of the evolutionary history of the plants and animals on this planet, that is literally what they do. They figuratively lay out in front of themselves all of the past and present known species and then try to connect them together in a complex branching sequence (cladogenesis); and the overall notion that guides them as to how to connect the dots is that evolution is a purposeless, gradual accumulation of characteristics, with each new species basically building upon the accumulation of some previous species. Gradual change within the biologic system does not explain the origin of species. The gradual change of a given species through a sequence of relatively small modifications is adaptation--horizontal evolution. The adaptation of an organism to other organisms and to the environment is possible because: (1) living matter has the potential of variability, as a product of both its design and the presence of life animation in that matter; and (2) all living matter is engaged by mind energy, which adds the potential of adaptability--organismal response to external influences.

As the revelators repeatedly stress, new species do not result from the gradual accumulation of small variations (e.g., see 58:6.3-4). All new species result from phase changes of the biologic system, and these natural phase changes are similar to the phase changes of all physical systems that are under the influence of some external forcing. The creation of most species is the "progression of the system", not the adaptation of former species: it is true anagenesis--vertical evolution. The prefix "ana-" means "upward"; true anagenesis is saltation--sudden upward transformation. There are also limited cases of retrogression--catagenesis--for example, the "renegade parasitic fungi" (65:2.3) that resulted from the loosened constraints on our experimental world.

Now, regarding your specific questions, one of the main points of the sections about the Devonian and the Carboniferous periods is the transition of prehuman evolution from the sea to the land during those times, and the key role in that shift of the variability of arthropods. Arthropods spanned the sea-land divide, and from them both fishes and amphibians suddenly evolved. The first true fishes suddenly evolved as a radical transformation out of the crustaceans; that is, certain crustaceans laid eggs, but fishes hatched from them. Much of the vertical evolution of fishes was completed during the Devonian. Their long-term relatively horizontal evolutionary nature indicates that they play a foundational, sustaining role as a seat for the adjutant mind ministry that stably engages humans on this planet.

Lastly, your statements about swim bladders do not accurately represent the statements of the Life Carrier who is the author of Paper 59. He does not say that crustaceans have, nor ever did have, swim bladders. The ray-finned fishes, with their swim bladders, probably evolved from earlier fish species, such as the placoderms, which are apparently the predator fishes in paragraph 59:4.10 (which you referenced above). In paragraph 59:5.5, the Life Carrier reveals that amphibians were another radical (and parallel) transformation out of the arthropods--but not the crustaceans, as with the fishes. These certain arthropods did have swim bladders, which suddenly evolved into the simple, swim-bladder-like lungs of those amphibians that have lungs. The lungfishes also have simple, swim-bladder-like lungs; but lungfishes, and other lobe-finned fishes, were not directly part of the evolutionary chain that eventually produced the first two humans. The entire biologic system was being driven toward the production of humans; and on a life-experiment planet like ours, many superfluous species were also produced (see 65:4.10-12).