

Higher Purposes in the Creation

by Chard Berndt

Those who practice, study, and teach biology observe the same spectrum of Earth's wonderful plants and creatures, yet their observations are interpreted in different ways. We are often led to believe that biology, and any scientific discipline for that matter, is an objective and positive accumulation of knowledge—a knowledge limited to parts and processes, such as the structure and sequencing of DNA, or the cascading mechanisms of blood clotting. Yet there exist underlying questions of greater depth and implication than only “what things are” and “how things work.” Beneath all science are questions of meaning and purpose. These loftier inquiries inevitably surface again and again (they are too important not to), and whether addressed or evaded, they create a necessary tension—for they force one to examine why the field of biology exists at all. Some of those relentless questions are as follows:

- How did living things come to be?
- How can we explain the complexity and diversity of living things?
- How can we account for the unifying themes of life?
- Why are these plants and creatures—and ourselves—here at all?

I believe that a biblical creation perspective on these questions provides an exacting, liberating framework for biology, and a deeper appreciation for living organisms than that garnered by nonbelieving scientists, teachers, and students. In particular, the evolutionism that pervades our culture religiously, whether coming naturally from atheists (who have no other option), or from supposedly biblical theists (who tailor interpretations of God's word to fit popular opinion), misses altogether the higher purposes of creation.

Here I would like to look at one of the above inquiries—why organisms are here at all. Though much could be said about humankind on this matter, I'll frame the question in light of plants and creatures, touching briefly upon its implications for our own existences. In addition to exploring some of these higher purposes, I shall also point out why it is that evolutionists do not recognize them.

Flowering Trees

To begin, let me quote from a typical biology textbook: “Flowers are reproductive shoots usually composed of four kinds of organs....”¹ While it is true that flowers are the reproductive structures of plants, this statement alone, and the discussion that inevitably follows, omits two preeminent purposes of flowers revealed in the Creation account:

And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. – Gen. 2:9a

This passage tells of two original purposes for this major grouping of trees (orchard trees, or trees “of the field” in particular):

1. They are pleasing to the eye, and
2. They are good for food.

What would typical biologists or biology teachers say to these higher purposes? For one, they would reduce beauty to mere function—the conspicuous petals, they’d say, exist to attract pollinators such as bees or wasps. Yet while this is true, do they not also attract us? And is it not also true that many less showy flowers also attract insect pollinators?

What would typical evolutionists say about the higher purpose of a fruit being “good for food”? Again, they would reduce it, emphasizing that the fruit is essentially a ripened ovary, protecting and eventually distributing the plant’s seeds for reproduction. Yet while also true, this reduces the fruit to a mere middle function, rather than a splendid end in and of itself. We should remember that, in addition to our enjoyment of pears, apples, mangoes, peaches, avocados, and the like today, the pre-Flood state of the creation provided vegetation (and in particular, vegetative fruits) as humankind’s *entire* diet; there existed no carnivorous activity until God permitted it after the Flood. Incidentally, I gather that before the Fall, humankind’s diet included fruits and nuts from trees in greater proportion to the staple foods produced by herbaceous plants (which were the only vegetative Kinds specified for land and sky creatures). This distribution was altered largely after the Fall, as evidenced by the fact that although every green plant (both herbaceous and woody) had already been given for food, staple food consumption was mentioned conspicuously as part of the curse:

...and you will eat the plants [herbaceous] of the field [those designed for cultivation]. – Genesis 3:18b

So the primary purposes of flowering trees are to provide beauty and to provide food—both humankind-centered purposes.

In a broader sense, biologists and biology teachers typically do the same reducing when discussing leaves as well. The main purpose of leaves, they say, is to produce food *for the plant*, so it can grow; the liberated oxygen is regarded as a mere by-product of the process of photosynthesis, rather than a purposeful design. But again, the main purpose of leaves is

1. To provided beauty for mankind’s enjoyment, and
2. To produce food and oxygen for creatures, and ultimately for humankind.

It is biblical and right for a biologist or biology teacher to regard the beauty and nourishment of a flowering tree as its main purposes, and then to continue explaining how these features *also* contribute to the plant's survival and reproduction.

The Quintessence of Creature Kinds

Now, let us survey some creatures briefly. I think that although a biologist may know more about the physiology of an animal than a typical breeder or pet owner, he or she, when coming from an evolutionary perspective, knows and appreciates much less about the higher purposes of particular created Kinds.²

Since creatures show many purposes, and dependence upon one another, I will restrict this discussion only to the main *instructive* and *aesthetic* purpose of a few Kinds. This overarching purpose-characteristic has been called the “quintessence”³ of a created Kind, and that is the term I'll adopt, so allow me to define it. According to the American Heritage Dictionary (1994), “essence” is

1. *The intrinsic or indispensable properties that serve to characterize or identify something.*
2. *The most important ingredient; the crucial element.*

The same dictionary defines “quintessence” as

The pure and highly concentrated essence of a thing.

So let's look at the quintessence of three created Kinds.

The Cat Kind

All cats, from the wild tigers and lions of the Serengeti to domesticated kitty-cats, are truly related, sharing a common ancestry.⁴ They, according to the Law of the Kind in Genesis, have reproduced “after their Kind.” But what is the quintessence of this Kind? Despite the wide variety of cats expressed today, the result of over 4,000 years of reproduction since the cat Kind exited Noah's ark—cats as a whole do exhibit a common quintessence. Let's look at a scripture that concerns this:

**There are three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing:
[first:] a lion, mighty among beasts, who retreats before nothing; - Proverbs 30:29-30**

A lion's quintessence is its stateliness, or one might say, its “regality.” This explains why Jesus is called the “Lion of the tribe of Judah.” (Revelation 5:5) It is also why Satan, the great impostor, is regarded as a “roaring lion, seeking whom He may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8) Jesus is the King, while Satan masquerades as one, abusing what power He has acquired.

Even kitty-cats show this regality, though one must admit it can be comical to see diminutive, domesticated stateliness on display! (Incidentally, there may be a biological explanation for why adult domesticated cats exhibit the juvenile-type regality found among young large cats; it is known as pedomorphy.⁵) Cats are creation's picture of regality—the indication that some things are indeed made for display, and that yes, there is a proper place for pride, self-confidence, and regal authority. Have we learned to regard and respect authority? Do we revere that which is regal? Daniel and Esther regarded authority properly, even while God was working to shape the very authorities to which they submitted.

The Dog Kind

What is the quintessence of the dog Kind? (These too are all ancestrally related, though separate from the cats and other created Kinds.) We can observe plainly the complex social behavior of a wolf pack, the lonely cry of a coyote, the undivided loyalty of a Golden Retriever, or the indispensable support of a Labrador seeing-eye dog. What is the common thread, or quintessence? It is companionship. It is by no accident that dogs are regarded as “man's best friend.”

Since we see alterations in the display of a quintessence when a population is domesticated, a point of clarification should be made: There is nothing inherently wrong about domesticating creatures, because humankind has been given full dominion over them all (Genesis 1:26,28). When domestication is not productive, or taken to extremes, the negative results speak for themselves and become protocols for care and restraint in such practices. In a broad sense, domestication reveals the essential purposes of larger groupings of Kinds: higher hoofed beasts, when successfully domesticated, typically become beasts of burden; lower hoofed beasts (those with completely divided hoofs, that chew the cud), when successfully domesticated, typically become useful for food products; unhoofed beasts, which include the dog and cat Kinds, typically domesticate as household pets.

The Lizard Kind

Let us move to our last example. This one is a bit harder to nail down, and I have been tempted to regard lizards' comicality as a primary essence. Yet one particular Scripture suggests a higher, more instructive quintessence:

A lizard can be caught with the hand, yet it is found in kings' palaces. – Proverbs 30:28
In considering this Scripture, consider first that the lizard is among the “unclean” land creatures specifically mentioned in Leviticus 11. In fact, in this regard, the Hebrew people were to consider it

detestable, which actually strengthens the Proverb's message. A small, creeping, unclean creature, which can be caught by the hand, finds relatively easy access to king's palaces. Even today, lizards—climbing around autonomously, even to where they are accepted as wall decorations—occupy fine manors in desert climes!

So, I would have to say that the quintessence of the lizard is accessibility. And not just access, but access *to that which is seemingly out of place*. It paints a picture for us of something very wonderful: our access to God Himself:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. – Romans 5:1-2

Surviving vs. Thriving

So, we have looked at flowering trees in general, and three creature Kinds in particular, noting each quintessence: beauty, dietary provision, regality, companionship, and accessibility. Now I'd like to conclude by once again looking at the issue of scientific perception. Why is it that evolutionary biologists, students, and teachers do not see—or at best, grossly downplay—the higher purposes and instructive values of the living creation? Evolutionists believe that living organisms are merely the product of competition, death, and natural selection (despite that fact that these things cannot account for the complexity of even the simplest bacteria). The highest purpose that an evolutionist can muster is this: survival. And survival is their quintessence not for any one type, but for all living things taken together. Yet would God have us regard survival as the highest principle? Consider this: if we ever feel like all we are doing is working, eating, and sleeping, day-in and day-out—“just surviving”—do we not regard that as an empty existence? Of course! Because we know intuitively that our lives, and all life, has a greater meaning and purpose than just *to be*.

When we approach biology from a creationist perspective, however, an excitement comes over us; we realize that every living thing has a purpose, and that a Grand Designer has given us all a meaningful place in His grand design. We—and all living things—are not created just to survive, but rather, to thrive! We aim not just to be, but to be *at our best*—at our quintessence. For humankind, this quintessence discovery is a remarkable journey, and one that I will not elaborate on here. But I am compelled to mention its first two steps:

1. Understanding that we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27)—that we have a quintessence like no other living thing, and

2. Becoming a “new creature” in Christ through faith in Him and His death and resurrection. I conclude with two Scriptures concerning this second step:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! – 2 Corinthians 5:17

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. – John 10:10

The higher purposes in Creation, when acknowledged, open up the book of the Creation further. In addition to instilling wonder in what has been artfully and purposefully created, these purposes instruct us about our own lives and purposes. May the discovery of these higher purposes become the meaningful foundation of our biology.

© 2002 Chard Berndt

Reproduction for educational, non-commercial use permitted.

Available at: www.creationbydesign.com/articles

Biblical Classification of Life: www.creationbydesign.com

¹ Solomon and Berg, *The World of Biology, Fifth Edition* (Saunders College Publishing, 1995), 563.

² For a look at the concept of “Kind”, see “The Fundamental Unit of Biological Taxonomy” at <http://www.creationbydesign.com/articles>, and also Don Batten, “Ligers and Wholphins? What Next?” *Creation Ex Nihilo* 22(3):28-33, June-August 2000, Available online: http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/magazines/docs/v22n3_liger.asp

³ Nigel Crompton, representing Dr. Siegfried Sherer at the 2001 Discontinuity Conference, presented this concept of a unique “quintessence” for each Kind, and the importance of appreciating it.

⁴ The extinct saber-tooth cat, according to some, may be of a separate lineage, and thus a separate Kind. All of today’s cats, however, share a common ancestry. See “Ligers and Wholphins?” article in entry above.

⁵ The concept of pedamorphy was also an emphasis of Nigel Crompton’s discussions at the 2001 Discontinuity Conference.