

## THE ORIGIN OF LIFE<sup>1</sup>

MALINE ROBINSON  
*Shady Valley, Tennessee*

### 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.

---

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.

(Continued on page 230)