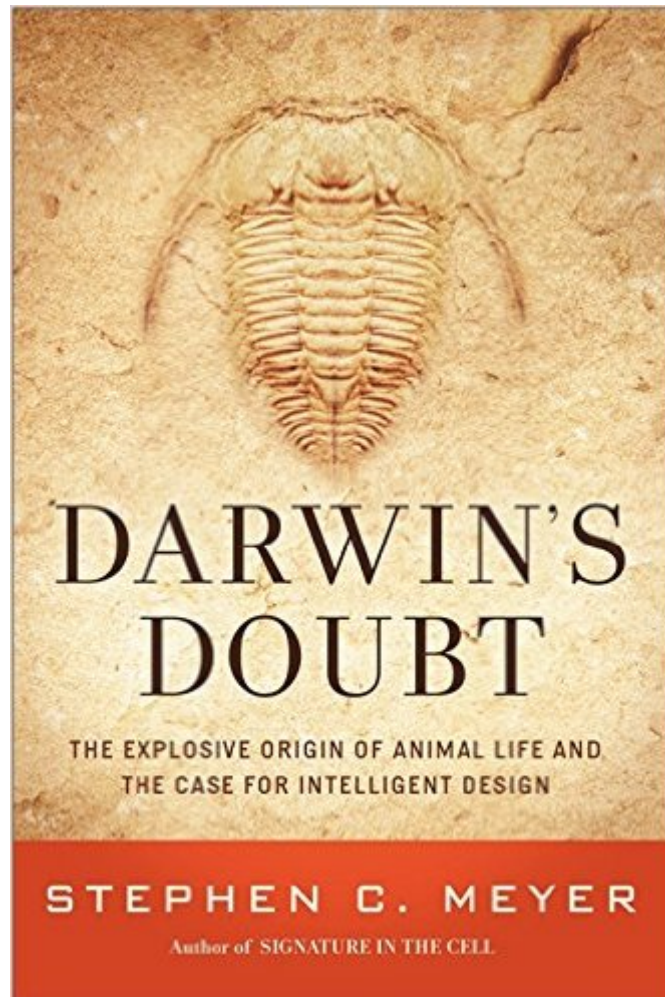


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Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin Of Animal Life And The Case For Intelligent Design



Synopsis

When Charles Darwin finished *The Origin of Species*, he thought that he had explained every clue, but one. Though his theory could explain many facts, Darwin knew that there was a significant event in the history of life that his theory did not explain. During this event, the "Cambrian explosion," many animals suddenly appeared in the fossil record without apparent ancestors in earlier layers of rock. In *Darwin's Doubt*, Stephen C. Meyer tells the story of the mystery surrounding this explosion of animal life—a mystery that has intensified, not only because the expected ancestors of these animals have not been found, but because scientists have learned more about what it takes to construct an animal. During the last half century, biologists have come to appreciate the central importance of biological information stored in DNA and elsewhere in cells to building animal forms. Expanding on the compelling case he presented in his last book, *Signature in the Cell*, Meyer argues that the origin of this information, as well as other mysterious features of the Cambrian event, are best explained by intelligent design, rather than purely undirected evolutionary processes.

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Customer Reviews

I just finished a word-for-word reading of this latest offering from Philosopher of Science Stephen C. Meyer. It's not necessary for me to summarize the book's content here, as that has been done by other thoughtful reviewers. Many accusations have been leveled at this book, which isn't surprising given the controversial nature of its implications. It seems that the word "pseudoscience" is being tossed around a lot. This is incredibly ironic, because the vast majority of the scientific discussion in

Darwin's Doubt is based on scientific literature written by scientists who are not even proponents of intelligent design. Meyer does a tremendous job of outlining paper after paper after paper, and he includes the full citations so that any careful reader can check to make sure that nothing is misrepresented or taken out of context. This is exactly what philosophers of science are highly trained to do. (I don't think many of Meyer's detractors even comprehend what philosophy of science IS.) Philosophers of science do sweeping surveys of the work being done in a particular field, document areas of strong disagreement between the prominent scientists in that field, and locate weaknesses in the over-arching theory or theories. Meyer does an excellent job of this in Darwin's Doubt. Every time I had a mental red flag as I was reading his commentary on a specific bit of research, he would answer my concern within another page or two. He maintains a very professional and respectful tone throughout, to his great credit. Ultimately, Meyer has compiled an impressive amount of peer-reviewed research on the Cambrian phenomenon and the related bio-information problem. He has organized it in a way that flows logically from one chapter to the next.

When I first saw that the new book by Steve Meyer, Darwin's Doubt, centered on the Cambrian Explosion, I was loathe to read it. I had been led to believe over the years that everything that could be said about the Cambrian Explosion has already been said. I was quite happy to believe that the only real discontinuities in the story of life occurred at the origin of life and at the origin of human consciousness. I should have known better; science marches onward, and old arguments get reexamined as new data arises. Steve Meyer's book is a wonderful, comprehensive case that the origin of the major types of animals, namely the phyla, is just as strikingly discontinuous as the the origin of life. As such, it represents a solid second volume complementary to his previous work, Signature in the Cell, which focused on the origin of life. I had come to think that discussing the Cambrian Explosion was misguided because of two arguments: 1) that the explosion was merely an artifact of the fact that organisms before that time did not have hard bones or shells, and 2) that the explosion was short on the geological time scale, but was really quite long on the biological time scale. Meyer disposes of both of these arguments quite handily. On the first, modern science shows that soft-bodied organisms are well preserved in the strata before, during, and after the Cambrian. Also, many of the body types which appear in the Cambrian can't even be imagined without their hard parts to give them structure. An earlier, boneless version could not have had the same body plan at all. On the second objection, Meyer shows that the geological time scale has gotten more compressed over the years, not less; best estimates now are 5-10 million years, which is quite short

geologically.

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