

THE PROFESSOR'S AUTOMOBILE

In 1968 a noted professor at one of the leading universities in the western hemisphere published a book on evolution. In its first chapter he described in rather satirical language the attitude of those who feel it necessary, in explaining the origin of different types of life, to bring in the assistance of "a deity or some other type of supernatural agency." He then proceeded to give an illustration which, superficially viewed, drove home the point he had in mind, but which, if carefully examined, clearly illustrated the utter fallacy of the attitude that seeks to explain the origin of complicated organisms while ruling out all possibility of purposive activity by intelligent beings.

The illustration was a reference to an automobile. He said that if someone were to assert that "a small invisible daemon" resided under the hood of the machine and provided the power that made it go, there would be no way to disprove it, but that it would be far more reasonable to look for natural forces. Although he disclaimed any full understanding of the mechanism of an automobile, he said that he knew enough about the power of an electric spark and the explosive nature of gasoline to feel sure that all the processes that make the automobile go can be explained in a mechanistic way with no need of assuming the existence of an intelligent or supernatural being.

The trouble with the illustration is that the professor confused science and history and assumed that scientific facts experimentally proven today are sufficient basis for making statements of historical fact as to what has occurred in the past. The fact that the present power of the automobile can be explained on a mechanistic basis does not mean that it came into existence through purely mechanical forces. If someone were to suggest that a volcano had shot into the air molten iron, molten copper, molten glass, molten rubber and other substances, and that as these mingled in the air and while they were dropping to the earth they had been welded together in such a way as to produce the professor's automobile, the inventor of such a