

The following is the last section of Gunther Stent's obituary of Francis Crick, for *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*.

***Crick and God.*** Crick's attitude towards religion was uncompromisingly hostile. So at first sight it seemed surprising that he prefaced his anti-vitalist *John Danz* lecture entitled *On the Nature of Vitalism*(1966) with this quotation from Salvador Dali: "And now the announcement of Watson and Crick about DNA. This is for me the real proof of the existence of God".

As readers of James Watson's autobiography, *The Double Helix*, know, Watson wrote that he had never seen Francis in a modest mood. But not even Watson would have claimed that Crick really believe that they delivered the real proof of the existence of God. No, Crick considered Dali's statement a tremendous joke, and although Dali's intent was surely serious, Crick was making fun of Dali by according him a place of honor under the masthead of an antireligious tract.

In my opinion, however, Dali *had* sized up the situation correctly: The achievements of molecular biology *did* furnish proof for the existence of God, (or for its atheistic synonym, "Nature"), the single principle which, according to Plato, makes science conceptually possible in the first place. Crick evidently subscribed to this Platonic doctrine as well, because in his *Danz* lecture he pointed out that

"though the three-dimensional conformation of proteins can, in principle, be worked out from the structure of their component amino acids, the necessary computations are almost prohibitively long. But proteins find their conformations all the same because Nature's (*read "God's"*) own computer -- the system itself -- works so fantastically fast. Also she (*read 'He'*) knows the rules more precisely than we do. But we still hope that, if not to beat her (*read 'Him'*) at her (*read 'His'*) game, we can at least understand her (*read 'Him'*)".

Albert Einstein affirmed his unwillingness to accept the epistemological implications of Werner Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle by asserting that "God does not play at dice." By their statements both Crick and Einstein reveal their allegiance to the Platonic doctrine, and Crick probably made the verbal substitution of a personified "Nature" for "God" only to avoid giving the impression that (God forbid!) he is a Christian. Crick may not have known that Niels Bohr suggested a theological solution to Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, namely that there IS no God but He DOES play at dice.

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