

The Virus

Viruses are the scourge of mankind. In the 21st century, with all of his scientific advances, man fears the virus more than anything else. There is good reason for this. Viral genetic adaptation to different hosts and imperviousness to our antibiotics make them public enemy number one.

The following series of articles will discuss what they are, where they may have come from and, most importantly, what dangers they pose to humanity. Any hypotheses which seem outlandish are mine.

I. The Virulent Vagabond

Viruses are different. All living organisms metabolize, have a nucleus within each cell which regulates metabolism, reproduce, and have a cell wall and/or cell membrane surrounding their individual cells. Viruses do and have none of the above in vitro.

A virus consists of nucleic acid (DNA or RNA) surrounded by a protein coat.

When it enters a living cell (host) it becomes active. It sheds its protein coat and induces the host cell's replication machinery to reproduce the viruses DNA or RNA and manufacture vital protein based on instructions from the viral nucleic acid.

The newly created viral bits assemble and more virus is produced which may infect other cells. All this from an entity which can be crystallized and kept in a bottle on a shelf for years.

In biology it is axiomatic that the cell is the basic unit of life. It is the smallest unit of matter of which we can meaningfully say "this is alive."

Usually the largest distinct body in a cell is the nucleus. It is the controlling center. It contains the chromosomes which are the carriers of the cell's heredity. The nucleus guides the development of the cell and of the organism, and is the ultimate seat of the controls that maintain order and organization within the entire living system.

Viruses do not fit into the evolutionary model (unicellular organisms through the complex, such as man and his fellow mammals). They exhibit few, if any, of the properties we use to define life as we understand it. What are they? Where are they from?

Viruses have a genetic program written in the universal language of life. If indeed it is possible for life to develop elsewhere, it makes as much sense to consider viruses "outsiders" as to define them as home-grown.

Most cosmologists agree that the laws of physics are the same or similar in most, if not all, of our galaxy, The Milky Way which contains well over 100 billion stars. It is not inconceivable that conditions on planets circling some of these stars have developed climactic conditions favorable to the genesis, growth and development of life.

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