

Lenses Beyond Compare

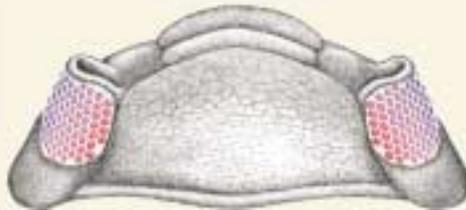
Brad Harrub, Ph.D.

Many young men have experienced it at one time or another—the fear and excitement of walking into a jewelry store and picking out an engagement ring. Somewhere amidst all that nervous excitement, the jeweler hands the prospective buyer a loupe. A loupe—commonly used for grading diamonds—normally has a double or triple lens system (i.e., two or three lenses joined together to make a single compound lens). Jewelers’ loupes are achromatic (i.e., they are corrected so that all lenses focus at the same place) and aplanatic (corrected so that there is no distortion of the images). Aplanatic lenses consist of two lens elements—flat on one side and convex on the other (plano-convex)—so that the curved surfaces face each other with an air space in between. As such, aplanatic lenses provide a flatter field of view and less distortion. International agreement has declared that a loupe-clean diamond is one that will not show any carbon inclusions using a ten-power loupe. While humans have a single refractive lens, the trilobite’s aplanatic lenses employ a dual lens system, thereby providing much less distortion, and allowing even the smallest flaw to be observed.

A LIVING APLANATIC LENS

Enter the trilobites—hard-shelled, segmented creatures possessing an exoskeleton. They somewhat resembled horseshoe crabs, and often are heralded as the first arthropods—a phylum consisting of hard-shelled creatures with multiple body segments and jointed legs. The smallest known trilobite species is just under a millimeter long, while the largest include species from 30 to 70 cm in length (roughly a foot to two feet long!), and new species are being unearthed and described almost every year.

Trilobites are believed to be extinct, having once flourished in the oceans. According to evolutionary theory, they evolved at the beginning of the Paleozoic Era (over 500 million years ago), and became extinct during the late Permian period (248 million years ago)—long before dinosaurs or men are alleged to have lived on the Earth. In fact, the Cambrian Period is known as “The Age of Trilobites,” and these fascinating creatures have become



known as “index fossils.” Evolutionists use the widely distributed index fossils to assist in dating other fossils found in the same sedimentary layer. For example, if you found a fossil (from an unknown era) near a trilobite, evolutionists suggest you could assume that the two species existed around the same time.

Since trilobites are considered to have been one of the first creatures to have evolved, it would make sense (from an evolutionary perspective) to suggest that they possessed fairly primitive features. **Yet the eye of the trilobite is anything but primitive!** Paleontologist Niles Eldredge of the American Museum of Natural History commented:

These lenses—technically termed aspherical, aplanatic lenses—optimize both light collecting and image formation better than any lens ever conceived. **We can be justifiably amazed that these trilobites very early in the history of life on Earth, hit upon the best possible lens design that optical physics has ever been able to formulate** (as quoted in Ellis, 2001, p. 49, emp. added).

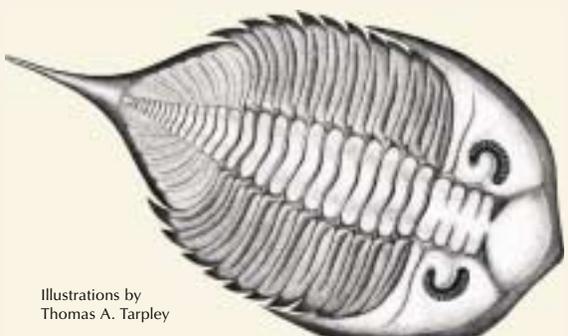
Riccardo Levi-Setti, one of the world’s most renowned trilobite experts, remarked: “In fact, this optical doublet is a device so typically associated with human invention that its discovery in trilobites comes as something of a shock. ...**The design of the trilobite’s eye lens could well qualify for a patent disclosure**” (1993, p. 54,57, emp. added). Evolutionist David Raup admitted: “The trilobites used an optimal design which would require a well-trained and imaginative optical engineer to develop today” (1979, 50:24). Science writer Lisa Shawyer concluded: “Trilobites had “the most sophisticated eye lenses ever produced by nature.” Ian Taylor asked: “If Darwin turned cold at the thought of the human eye at the **end** of the evolutionary cycle, what, one wonders, would he have thought of the trilobite eye near the **beginning?**” (1992, p. 169, emp. added). What indeed?

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RESOURCES



Illustrations by Thomas A. Tarpley

The title of the *Reader's Digest* article appeared alongside an image of his cheerful-yet-insistent face. It read simply: "Cure Me If You Can" (Kinsley, 2003). The author of the article, writer Michael Kinsley, was diagnosed in November 1993 with Parkinson's disease—a neurodegenerative disorder characterized by a selective loss of a specific group of (nigrostriatal) nerves that release dopamine. Judging from the photograph accompanying his article, it is obvious that this progressive neurodegenerative disease struck Mr. Kinsley at an unusually young age. He understands that his condition will worsen with each passing year, and that ultimately it will "take away most of what makes life enjoyable" (p. 104).

Kinsley pointed out that medical research is making great progress, but noted that the real "kicker" is that "government has entered the race—on the side of the disease" (p. 104). He remarked: "It is frustrating to know that scientists believe important breakthroughs or even a cure could be just over the horizon, but the way is being blocked" (p. 105). He went on to write:

Fetal tissue research, which also has shown promise for Parkinson's, uses dopamine-producing brain cells from aborted fetuses. They are implanted in patients' brains, in the hope that they will replace dopamine-producing brain cells that have died. Cells from several fetuses are needed for each Parkinson's patient who gets the treatment (p. 105).

In trying to argue his case for the use of stem cells and therapeutic cloning, Kinsley admitted: "None of these distinctions [between stem cells, fetal tissue, cloning, etc.—BH] matters, of course, if you believe that full human life and rights begin at the moment of conception.... None of this matters if you actually believe that destroying an embryo is morally just like murdering your next door neighbor" (p. 106).

As tragic as Mr. Kinsley's situation is, it does not change God's position regarding human life. Some forty times, the Scriptures make reference to women conceiving. It certainly is no accident that the inspired writers mention this extraordinary moment in which the sperm and egg come together—for it is at that very instant that their chromosomes join to form the full complement of chromosomes that is capable of producing human life. James wrote: "The body apart from the spirit (*pneuma*) is dead" (2:26). But the opposite of that statement also must be true; if the body is living, then the spirit must be present. Thus, upon conception—when that full complement of chromosomes is actively metabolizing and living—God already has placed a soul within the embryo. Consider also the fact that the prophet Jeremiah stated that the word of the Lord came unto him, saying: "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (1:5). The prophet Isaiah confirmed it this way:

Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken ye peoples, from afar; Jehovah hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.... And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant (49:1,5).

Jehovah not only viewed Isaiah as a **person** prior to his birth, but also **called him by name**. It is obvious from the text that God considers life to begin at conception. Thus, as Christians, we must not support research that would compromise His view.

But what about Mr. Kinsley's suggestion that scientists are on the brink of "important breakthroughs?" Do aborted fetuses and "leftover" embryos from *in vitro* fertilization procedures offer **so much hope** that Christians should support this form of killing in favor of curing humankind of these horrendous diseases? The truth is, we have been fed a lie—a lie that the media continue to use to justify the 1.2 million infants killed by abortion each

year (see <http://www.apologeticspress.org/rr/rr2002/r&r0207a.htm>), as well as the 400,000 embryos that have been plunged into the icy depths of liquid nitrogen (see <http://www.apologeticspress.org/inthenews/2003/itn-03-17.htm>). We are told repeatedly about the "potential benefits" of these embryonic tissues. Yet science has shown otherwise—not once, but twice!

In a telling article titled "Strike Two for Transplants," Gretchen Vogel lamented: "For the second time, cells transplanted from fetuses into brains of Parkinson's patients have failed to show a significant effect." She went on to note that the double-blind study "failed to produce significant improvements in patients' movement, **but caused serious side effects in more than half the patients**" (2003, emp. added). Not only did the aborted fetus tissue not help, it actually hurt in some cases! C. Warren Olanow and his colleagues conducted the collaborative study (which consisted of thirty-four patients), in an effort to determine the effects of transplanting fetal nigral neurons (nerve cells) into Parkinson's patients. Parkinson's patients, ranging in age from 30 to 75, received tissue transplants that were obtained from one to **four** aborted fetuses. Thus, in twelve cases, the tissue from **four** aborted fetuses was required to try and "cure" one Parkinson patient. I wonder if Mr. Kinsley would condone the murder of four human beings in an effort to save one (i.e., him)? All told, **59** aborted fetuses were used in this study.

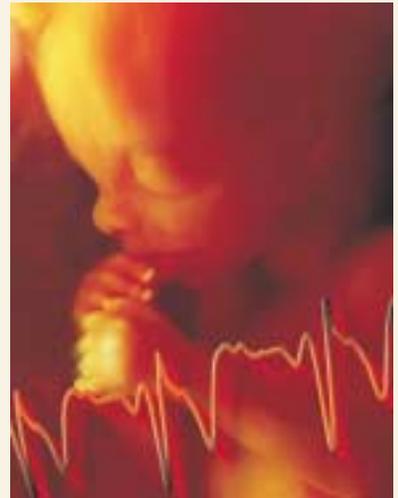
So what was the end result after using the nigral cells from **59** aborted babies? The authors observed that "there was no overall treatment effect" (2003, 54:405). They then concluded: "Furthermore, unanticipated and potentially disabling off-medication dyskinesias [difficulty moving—BH] developed in greater than 50% of the patients. **We cannot therefore recommend fetal nigral transplantation as a therapy for PD** [Parkinson's disease—BH] at this time" (p. 413, emp. added). As Ms. Vogel noted, however, this was not the first time this type of procedure has failed.

She wrote: "The first major study of the technique, led by Curt Freed of the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver, ended in controversy when it failed to help patients overall, and left some with frightening uncontrollable movements" (as reported in *Science*, March 16, 2001, p. 2060) [Vogel, 2003]. So we now have multiple clinical trials that show conclusively no effect (and even detrimental effects) of having used fetal tissues.

Why haven't *Time* and *CNN* announced this as a lead story? The media parade every scientific "breakthrough" that might be of potential benefit to patients with Parkinson's or Alzheimer's, yet when these breakthroughs are shown to be "potential killers," nary a word is said. How terribly unfortunate. And how very wrong!

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