

The DNA Discovery

Tue, Dec 11, 2001

Sir - I was intrigued to read Kevin Myers's view that "Einstein sits firmly in a scientific tradition which was edging towards a theory that would conflate time, space and nuclear particles, and probably would have got to $E = MC^2$ sooner or later. . .but Crick and Watson, now, their discovery of the secrets of DNA stands apart as a breakthrough almost without scholarly precedent" (An Irishman's Diary, December 4th).

Hmmm. . . Most physicists would argue that, at the time, relativity theory constituted a fairly abrupt and radical departure from the laws of classical physics! Of course it can always be argued that scientific discovery evolves from previous work, but surely this is true also of Crick and Watson? Their discovery of the structure of DNA is viewed by most scientists against a background of research by scientists such as Avery, Pauling, Chargaff, Wilkins and Franklin. In fact, there was quite a competitive race to become the first research group to describe the structure of DNA; Watson himself gives a highly readable and often hilarious account of this competition in his famous book, *The Double Helix*.

I think we can assume that science would "probably have got to DNA" too, and sooner rather than later! - Yours, etc.,

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