

What every theologian should know about creation, evolution and design

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From its inception Darwinism posed a challenge to Christian theology. Darwinism threatened to undo the Church's understanding of creation, and therewith her understanding of the origin of human life. Nor did the challenge of Darwinism stop here. With human beings the result of a brutal, competitive process that systematically rooted out the weak and favored only the strong (we might say it is the strong who constitute the elect within Darwinism), the Church's understanding of the fall, redemption, the nature of morality, the veracity of the Scriptures, and the ultimate end of humankind were all in a fundamental way called into question. Without exaggeration, no aspect of theology escaped the need for re-evaluation in the light of Darwinism.

Well, a lot has happened since the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Theology that is academically respectable has long since made its peace with Darwinism. Indeed, respectable theologians have long since had their understanding of the origin of life thoroughly informed by Darwinism and its interpretation of natural history. Thus when a group of Christian scholars who call themselves *design theorists* begin to raise doubts about Darwinism and propose an alternative paradigm for understanding biological systems, it is the design theorists, and not Darwin, who end up posing the challenge to theology.

As a card-carrying design theorist, I want to examine the challenge that design poses to the contemporary theologian. What continues to intrigue me is that the group of academicians design theorists have the hardest time engaging is not the secular scientists, but theologians and cross-disciplinary scientists whose cross-discipline happens to be theology (e.g., Nancey Murphy and Howard van Till). Why is this? The short answer is that mainstream theologians perceive design theorists as theological greenhorns who unfortunately have yet to fathom the proper relation between theology and science. Of course, design theorists think it is rather the mainstream theologians who have failed to grasp the proper relation between theology and science.

It is ironic that the design theorists have received an even cooler reception from the theological community than from the Darwinist establishment (which not surprisingly isn't well-disposed toward the design theorists either). Yes, a notable design theorist did speak here at Princeton Seminary last spring, namely, Phillip Johnson. But his talk was ill-attended (in marked contrast to the large audiences he attracts at secular universities), with as far as I can recall only one faculty member from this institution in attendance.

Because the design theorists' approach to biological systems is so ill-appreciated within the theological community, my aim in this talk is to make the design theorists' critique of Darwinism intelligible, and I hope even compelling, to the contemporary theologian. In particular, I wish to show that the design theorists' critique constitutes a genuine challenge for contemporary theology, and is not rightly dismissed by a one-liners like, "Design commits the god-of-the-gaps fallacy" or "Design violates the rules of science."

To make the design theorists' critique of Darwinism intelligible to the theological community, I shall need to outline their critique as they direct it first against the Darwinist establishment. Once we understand the design theorists' dialogue with this group, it will be easier to understand the challenge their critique poses to the theological community. Before taking up these tasks, however, I wish to indicate where design fits into the creation-evolution controversy generally.

Setting the Stage

Because it is all too easy to dismiss a position without genuinely understanding it, I want to begin by dispensing with a few labels and stereotypes. First off, design is not young earth creationism. This is not to say that there are no young earth creationists who are also design theorists (Paul Nelson and Siegfried Scherer come to mind). But for the sake of argument design theorists are willing tacitly to accept the standard scientific dates for the origin of the earth and the origin of the universe (i.e., 4-5 billion years for the earth, 10-20 billion years for the universe), and reason from there. The point is that design theory does not stand or fall with what age one assigns to the universe.

Next, the design theorists' critique of Darwinism in no way hinges on the Genesis account of creation. On no occasion do design theorists invoke Genesis 1 and 2 as a scientific text, trying to conform natural history to the Genesis account of creation or vice versa. Design as a theory holds to neither a day-age, nor a gap, nor an apparent age interpretation of Genesis. Thus it is illegitimate to characterize design theorists as old-earth creationists (though there are old-earth creationists who are design theorists, notably Stephen Meyer and Robert Newman). Old-earth creationism holds that Genesis, modulo some exegetical maneuvering, can accurately accommodate natural history. Whether one approaches Genesis in this way is simply irrelevant to design theory.

Nor can it be said that design theory endorses progressive creation. Progressive creation holds that God intervened at various points in natural history, creating new kinds, as it were, from scratch. Progressive creation can accommodate a considerable degree of evolutionary change once a given kind is in place. According to this view the creation of a given kind induces an evolutionary envelope within which considerable, but not unlimited, variation is possible. For instance, we might imagine God creating an initial pair of dogs, and all subsequent dogs being related to this initial pair by common descent--everything from a St. Bernard to a Chihuahua. Nevertheless, the progressive creationist would be uninclined to

view dogs and amoeba as sharing the same genealogical tree.

Nor can design theory strictly speaking be said to be anti-evolutionist. This may sound surprising, especially since design theorists tend to dislike the term "evolution," viewing it as a weasel word that serves more to obfuscate than clarify. The reason design theorists dislike the word is not because they repudiate every possible construal of it, but because they regard it as a Protean term which, much like the process it describes, adapts itself too readily to any situation. Although design theorists regard the word "evolution" as assuming too many distinct meanings that are too easily confused, the notion that organisms have changed over time hardly upsets them. Design theory places no limits on the amount of evolutionary change that organisms might have experienced in the course of natural history. Consistent with classical views of creation, design allows for the abrupt emergence of new forms of life. At the same time design is also consistent with the gradual formation of new forms of life from old.

The design theorists' beef is not with evolutionary change *per se*, but with the claim by Darwinists that all such change is driven by purely naturalistic processes which are devoid of purpose. Design theorists therefore agree completely with the following statement by the historian of science Stanley Jaki:

As to the claim . . . that the Darwinian evolutionary mechanism (the interplay of chance mutations with environmental pressure) has solved all basic problems, I hold it to be absurd and bordering at times on the unconscionable. While the mechanism in question provoked much interesting scientific research, it left unanswered the question of transition among genera, families, orders, classes, and phyla where the absence of transitional forms is as near-complete as ever. As to the origin of life and especially of consciousness, they are today no less irreducible to physics than they were in Darwin's time.

Though design theorists believe Darwinism is dead wrong, unlike the creationist movement of the 1980's, they do not try to win a place for their views by taking to the courts. Instead of pressing their case by lobbying for fair treatment acts in state legislatures (i.e., acts that oblige public schools in a given state to teach both creation and evolution in their science curricula), design theorists are much more concerned with bringing about an intellectual revolution starting from the top down. Their method is debate and persuasion. They aim to convince the intellectual elite and let the school curricula take care of themselves. By adopting this approach design theorists have enjoyed far more success in getting across their views than their creationist counterparts.

Phillip Johnson, for instance, has debated some of the brightest stars in the scientific galaxy (including Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg). However much the Darwinian establishment would like to ignore him, they simply cannot. This is not to say that the Darwinian establishment is particularly well-disposed toward Johnson. But Johnson and his fellow design theorists have gained a grudging respect from at least some quarters of the Darwinian establishment. Thus when the arch-Darwinist Michael Ruse wants to give the other side a chance in his journal *Biology and Philosophy*, he comes to us. I cannot imagine Ruse making a similar offer to the creationists who opposed him at the Arkansas creation trial. From all that I've just said, it's hard to imagine how design theorists could be identified as narrow fundamentalists. There is nothing in design theory that requires a narrow hermeneutic for interpreting scripture. Indeed, design theory makes neither an explicit nor an implicit appeal to scripture. Nonetheless, design theorists are frequently accused of being, if not fundamentalists, then crypto-fundamentalists. What lies behind this tendency to

lump them with fundamentalism as opposed to placing them squarely within the mainstream of American evangelicalism? The answer to this question is quite simple: *Design theorists are no friends of theistic evolution.* As far as design theorists are concerned, theistic evolution is American evangelicalism's ill-conceived accommodation to Darwinism. What theistic evolution does is take the Darwinian picture of the biological world and baptize it, identifying this picture with the way God created life. When boiled down to its scientific content, theistic evolution is no different from atheistic evolution, accepting as it does only purposeless, naturalistic, material processes for the origin and development of life.

As far as design theorists are concerned, theistic evolution is an oxymoron, something like "purposeful purposelessness." If God purposely created life through the means proposed by Darwin, then God's purpose was to make it seem as though life was created without any purpose. According to the Darwinian picture, the natural world provides no clue that a purposeful God created life. For all we can tell, our appearance on planet earth is an accident. If it were all to happen again, we wouldn't be here. No, the heavens do not declare the glory of God, and no, God's invisible attributes are not clearly seen from God's creation. This is the upshot of theistic evolution as the design theorists construe it.

Design theorists find the "theism" in theistic evolution superfluous. Theistic evolution at best includes God as an unnecessary rider in an otherwise purely naturalistic account of life. As such, theistic evolution violates Occam's razor. Occam's razor is a regulative principle for how scientists are supposed to do their science. According to this principle, superfluous entities are to be rigorously excised from science. Thus, since God is an unnecessary rider in our understanding of the natural world, theistic evolution ought to dispense with all talk of God outright and get rid of the useless adjective "theistic."

It's for failing to take Occam's razor seriously that the Darwinist establishment despises (yes I say despises) theistic evolution. They view theistic evolution as a weak-kneed sycophant, who desperately wants the respectability that comes with being a full-blooded Darwinist, but refuses to follow the logic of Darwinism through to the end. It takes courage to give up the comforting belief that life on earth has a purpose. It takes courage to live without the consolation of an afterlife. Theistic evolutionists lack the stomach to face the ultimate meaninglessness of life, and it is this failure of courage that makes them contemptible in the eyes of full-blooded Darwinists (Richard Dawkins is a case in point).

Unlike full-blooded Darwinists, however, the design theorists' preoccupation with theistic evolution rests not with what the term "theistic" is doing in the phrase "theistic evolution," but rather with what the term "evolution" is doing there. The design theorists' objection to theistic evolution is not in the end that theistic evolution retains God as an unnecessary rider in an otherwise perfectly acceptable scientific theory of life's origins. Rather, the design theorists' objection is that the scientific theory which is supposed to undergird theistic evolution, usually called the neo-Darwinian synthesis, is itself problematic.

The design theorists' critique of Darwinism begins with Darwinism's failure as an empirically adequate scientific theory, and not with its supposed incompatibility with some system of religious belief. This point is vital to keep in mind in assessing the design theorists' contribution to the creation-evolution controversy. Critiques of Darwinism by creationists have typically conflated science and theology. Design theorists will have none of this. Their critique of Darwinism is not based on any supposed incompatibility between Christian theism and Darwinism. Rather, they begin their critique by arguing that Darwinism is *on its own terms* a failed scientific paradigm--that it does not constitute a well-supported scientific theory, that its explanatory power is severely limited, and that it fails

abysmally when it tries to account for the grand sweep of natural history.

Michael Denton's critique of Darwinism is a case in point. In his book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, Denton argues at length that the neo-Darwinian synthesis is a failed scientific paradigm. It bears noting that Denton is an agnostic in matters of religious faith--thus in criticizing Darwinism he has no religious ax to grind. The problems facing Darwinism are there, and they are glaring: the origin of life, the origin of the genetic code, the origin of multicellular life, the origin of sexuality, the gaps in the fossil record, the biological big bang that occurred in the Cambrian era, the development of complex organ systems, and the development of irreducibly complex molecular machines are just a few of the more serious difficulties that confront every theory of evolution that posits only purposeless, material processes.

As a post-doctoral instructor in philosophy of science at Northwestern University I taught an undergraduate course on the creation-evolution controversy. I began this course by having my students read Peter Bowler's *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (a generally sympathetic historical account of the concept of evolution as it plays itself out from ancient times to the present-day), and followed it with Michael Denton's *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. Within three weeks no one in the class thought that the fundamental claim of Darwinism, namely common descent through selection and modification, was self-evident or particularly well supported.

Nor would anyone in my class have agreed with Richard Dawkins that to deny this central thesis of Darwinism one has to be either *stupid* or *wicked* or *insane*. No, one can be reasonably well-adjusted, remarkably well-educated (as many design theorists are), and still think Darwinism is a failed scientific paradigm. Let me stress that my students represented quite a cross section of opinion. I had two or three who were conservative Christians actively involved in Campus Crusade. I also had a few who were staunch Darwinists and came to love Richard Dawkins when later in the term we read Dawkins' book *The Blind Watchmaker*. Yet none of my students left the course thinking that the debate over Darwinism was like arguing over whether the earth is flat. Wherever they stood, they realized there were serious difficulties which needed to be resolved. In short, they realized that there is a genuine critique of intellectual merit against Darwinism.

The strength of the design theorists' critique against Darwinism, however, rests not in the end in their ability to find holes in the theory. To be sure, the holes are there and they create serious difficulties for the theory. The point, however, at which the design theorists' critique becomes interesting and novel is when they begin raising the following sorts of questions: Why does Darwinism, despite being so inadequately supported as a scientific theory, continue to garner the full support of the academic establishment? What is it that continues to keep Darwinism afloat despite its many glaring faults? Why are alternative paradigms that introduce design or teleology ruled out of court by fiat? Why must science explain solely by recourse to naturalistic, materialistic, purposeless processes? Who determines the rules of science? Is there a code of scientific correctness which instead of helping to lead us into truth actively prevents us from asking certain questions and thereby coming to the truth?

These questions are not merely hypothetical. Dean Kenyon, a fellow design theorist, is professor of biology at San Francisco State University. In one of his introductory biology courses Kenyon presented the standard neo-Darwinian theory and then pointed to some difficulties in it, stating that he himself holds to a design hypothesis. Mind you, Dean Kenyon is not a rube or ignoramus. Kenyon received his Ph.D. in biophysics from Stanford

University. In the late 60's he himself firmly held to the neo-Darwinian synthesis, even writing a seminal book on the topic of prebiotic evolution. The book was entitled *Biochemical Predestination*. Yet by the late 70's he began to entertain doubts about his views. When he changed his position, not for religious but for scientific reasons, he found that research moneys dried up and that a not-so-subtle persecution had began.

Thus when not so long ago Kenyon explained his views on design to his introductory biology course, his department used this as a pretext to remove him from teaching introductory biology and to relegate him to supervising lab experiments--this even though he was a senior faculty member. Every review committee confirmed that Kenyon's department had violated his academic freedom. It took three meetings of successively more weighty academic review committees at his institution to lean on the biology department sufficiently to reinstate Kenyon's right to teach introductory biology, and this only after another design theorist, Stephen Meyer, wrote an op-ed piece for the *Wall Street Journal* detailing Kenyon's treatment at the hands of his department.

To reiterate, What keeps Darwinism alive? Why is it so difficult to debate its merits fairly? In so pluralistic a society as ours, why don't alternative views about life's origin and development have a legitimate place in academic discourse? It's not enough to say that the young earth creationists have left too bad a taste in the mouth of the academic world about creationism. For Dean Kenyon has never been associated with the young earth creationists. Indeed, he has always been a full-fledged member of the scientific establishment.

When Stephen J. Gould, the dean of American evolutionists, wrote a scathing review of Phillip Johnson's book *Darwin on Trial* for *Scientific American*, why did *Scientific American* refuse to print Johnson's response to Gould's review? Does it serve the furtherance of academic discourse for *Nature*, the premier science periodical of Great Britain, to contact David Hull, a philosopher of biology at Northwestern University, and ask him point blank to write a negative review of Johnson's book, as it were commissioning Hull to do a hatchet job (I have this story from David Hull's own lips)?

I myself have written on aspects of the evolution-creation controversy. When I went on the job market in philosophy a few years back, I was urged to delete some of my published work from my Curriculum Vitae because, and this is a verbatim quote from the placement officer at my department, "all the analytic philosophers are atheists and they don't want to see that." Most of us who work in the creation-evolution debate have long since discarded the notion that there is anything like academic freedom in this affair, nor do we delude ourselves with the thought that a critique of evolutionary biology will be heard simply because of its inherent intellectual merit. It's unfortunate, but warfare is all too often the most appropriate metaphor for describing this debate.

Clearly something more than an honest concern for responsible scientific inquiry is at stake when individuals of Dean Kenyon's caliber are prevented from even so much as expressing doubts about a scientific theory, especially when they are acknowledged experts in the field. We are dealing here with something more than a straightforward determination of scientific facts or confirmation of scientific theories. Rather, we are dealing with competing world views and incompatible metaphysical systems. With the creation-evolution controversy we are dealing with a naturalistic metaphysic that shapes and controls what theories of biological origins are permitted on the playing field in advance of any discussion or weighing of evidence. This metaphysic is so pervasive and powerful that it not only rules alternative views out of court, but it cannot even permit itself to be criticized. The fallibilism

and tentativeness that are supposed to be part and parcel of science find no place in the naturalistic metaphysic that undergirds Darwinism. It is this metaphysic, then, that constitutes the main target of the design theorists' critique of Darwinism, and to which we turn next.

"Creation" and "Evolution"

The design theorists' critique of the naturalistic metaphysic that undergirds Darwinism can be reduced to an analysis of three words. The three words are *creation*, *evolution*, and *science*. Let us start with the words "creation" and "evolution." Suppose you are up on a witness stand and required to respond yes or no to two questions (if you refuse to answer yes or no, you will be taken out and summarily shot). The questions are these: (1) Do you believe in creation? (2) Do you believe in evolution? Could you respond to these questions with a simple yes or no, and still feel satisfied that you had expressed yourself accurately. Probably not. The problem is that the words "creation" and "evolution" both have multiple senses.

For instance, creation can be construed in the narrow sense of a literal six day creation as presented in Genesis 1 and 2. On the other hand, creation can also be construed in the broad sense of simply asserting that God has created the world with a purpose in mind, where the question of how God created the world is simply set to one side. Similarly, evolution can be construed as a fully naturalistic, purposeless process which by means of natural selection and mutation has produced all living things. On the other hand, evolution can mean nothing more than that organisms have changed over time.

Depending on how one construes the words "creation" and "evolution," one's answer to the question *Do you believe in creation?* and *Do you believe in evolution?* are likely to show quite a bit of variability. For myself, Yes, I believe that God created the world with a purpose in mind, and No, I don't believe that God created the world in six 24-hour day periods. No, I don't believe in fully naturalistic evolution controlled solely by purposeless material processes, and Yes, I do believe that organisms have undergone some change in the course of natural history (though I believe that this change has occurred within strict limits and that human beings were specially created).

Now it is the design theorists' contention that the Darwinian establishment, in order to maintain its political, cultural, and intellectual authority, consistently engages in a fallacy of equivocation when it uses the terms "creation" and "evolution." The fallacy of equivocation is the fallacy of speaking out of both sides of your mouth. It is the deliberate confusing of two senses of a term, using the sense that's convenient to promote one's agenda. For instance, when Michael Ruse in one of his defenses of Darwinism writes, "Evolution is Fact, Fact, Fact!" how is he using the term "evolution"? Is it a fact that organisms have changed over time? There is plenty of evidence that appears to confirm that this is the case. Is it a fact that the panoply of life has evolved through purposeless naturalistic processes? This might be a fact, but whether it is a fact is very much open to debate.

Suppose you don't buy the Darwinian picture of natural history, that is, you don't believe that the vast panoply of life evolved through purposeless naturalistic processes. Presumably then you are a creationist. But does this make you a young earth creationist? Ever since Darwin's *Origin of Species* Darwinists have cast the debate in these terms: either you're with us, or you're a creationist, by which they mean a young earth creationist. Darwin made this move in his *Origin of Species*. Philip Kitcher makes this move in his book *Abusing Science*

(publication date 1982). When I debated scientists from the faculty of SUNY Stonybrook last April, they refuted not my actual position, but a caricature which they preferred to attribute to me. It is amazing what you can refute when you deliberately refuse to understand something.

But to return to the point at hand, of course it doesn't follow, logically or otherwise, that by rejecting fully naturalistic evolution you automatically embrace a literal reading of Genesis 1 and 2. Rejecting fully naturalistic evolution does not entail accepting young earth creationism. The only thing one can say for certain is that to reject fully naturalistic evolution is to accept some form of creationism broadly construed, i.e., the belief that God or some intelligent agent has produced life with a purpose in mind. Young earth creationism certainly falls under such a broad construal of creationism, but is hardly coextensive with creationism in this broad sense.

Let us now assume we've gotten our terms straight. No more terminological confusions. No more fallacies of equivocation. No more straw men. From here on in we're going to concentrate on the essence of the creation-evolution debate. Henceforth this debate will be over whether life exhibits nothing more than the outcome of fully naturalistic purposeless material processes, or whether life exhibits the purposeful activity of an intelligent agent--usually called a designer--who in creating life has impressed on it the clear marks of intelligence. Phillip Johnson has dubbed the first view the Blind Watchmaker Thesis--BWT. We'll call the second view the Intelligent Design Thesis--IDT. BWT and IDT are mutually exclusive and exhaust all possibilities. According to Johnson the key problem to be resolved in the creation-evolution controversy is deciding which of these theses is correct, BWT or IDT. How then shall we reach a decision?

The first thing to notice is that BWT and IDT both make definite assertions of fact. To see this, let's get personal. Here you are. You had parents. They in turn had parents. They too had parents. And so on and so on. If we run the video camera back in time, generation upon generation, what do we see? Do we see a continuous chain of natural causes which go from apes to small furry mammals to reptiles to slugs to slime molds to blue green algae, and finally all the way back to a pre-biotic soup, with no event in the chain ever signaling the activity of an intelligent agent? Or as we trace back the genealogy do we find events that clearly signal the activity of an intelligent agent?

There is a legitimate distinction here. Whole branches of science presuppose that features of the world can display unequivocal marks of intelligence and thereby clearly signal the activity of an intelligent agent (e.g., anthropology, archeology, and forensic science). Nor need the intelligences inferred in this way necessarily all be human or even earthbound (consider, for instance, NASA's Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence program--SETI for short--in which certain radio signals from outer space would with full confidence be interpreted as signaling the presence of an extra-terrestrial intelligence). There are reliable criteria for inferring the activity of an intelligent agent. Does natural history display clear marks of intelligence and thereby warrant such a design inference, or does it not? To answer this question one way is to come down on the side of IDT, to answer it the other way is to come down on the side of BWT.

Now Darwinists are very clear in asserting that natural history does not underwrite a design inference. They are quite explicit in affirming that BWT is correct and in rejecting IDT as incorrect. George Gaylord Simpson, one of the founders of the neo-Darwinian synthesis, in his book *The Meaning of Evolution* leaves us with no doubts about the matter:

Although many details remain to be worked out, it is already evident that all the objective phenomena of the history of life can be explained by purely naturalistic or, in a proper sense of the sometimes abused word, materialistic factors. They [that is, the objective phenomena of the history of life] are readily explicable on the basis of differential reproduction in populations [that's natural selection], and the mainly random interplay of the known processes of heredity [that's random mutation, the other major element in the Darwinian picture]. Therefore, man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind.

But Phillip Johnson, Michael Denton, Hubert Yockey, Lecomte du Noüy, Freddy Hoyle, and even Francis Crick have all shown glaring weaknesses in the very theory to which Simpson is referring. Where then does Simpson get his confidence that BWT is right and IDT is wrong? How can Simpson so easily elide the glaring weaknesses in his theory, and then with perfect equanimity assert "it is already evident that all the objective phenomena of the history of life can be explained by purely naturalistic factors"? And how does Simpson know that when the "many details that remain to be worked out" actually do get worked out, that they won't overthrow BWT and instead confirm IDT? Science is after all a fallible enterprise. Whence does Simpson derive such certainty?

"Science"

To answer this question we need to examine how the third word in our trio gets employed by the Darwinist establishment, namely, the word "science." Although design theorists take the question *Which is correct, BWT or IDT?* as a perfectly legitimate question concerning certain facts of the natural world, it is not treated as a legitimate question by the Darwinist establishment. According to the Darwinist establishment BWT poses a "scientific" question whereas IDT poses a "religious" question. Thus, as far as the Darwinist establishment is concerned, IDT is a non-starter. Yes BWT and IDT taken together may be mutually exclusive and exhaustive, but BWT is the only viable scientific option. IDT must therefore be ruled out of court from the start.

Why is this? The answer is really quite simple. Science according to the Darwinist establishment by definition excludes everything except the material and the natural. It follows that all talk of purpose, design, and intelligence is barred entry from the start. To see that I am not making this up one has only to consider the following remark by the author of *Chance and Necessity*, Jacques Monod:

The cornerstone of the scientific method is the postulate that nature is objective. In other words, the *systematic* denial that "true" knowledge can be got at by interpreting phenomena in terms of final causes--that is to say, of "purpose."

Of course, the only way even to begin to justify a negative principle like this is to argue that science has uniformly failed to make headway when it has employed the notion of an intelligent or purposeful cause. And even this sort of argument cannot preclude the possibility that for all its past failures, a concept may yet prove useful in the future.

But back to the point at hand. By defining science as that form of inquiry restricted solely to what can be explained in terms of naturalistic, purposeless, material processes, the Darwinist establishment has ruled IDT out of science from the start. But suppose now that a

design theorist comes along, and like most Americans thinks IDT is correct and BWT is incorrect. (According to a Gallop poll close to 50% of Americans are creationists of a stricter sort, thinking that God specially created human beings; another 40% believe in some form of God-guided evolution; and only 9% are full-blooded Darwinists. It's this 9%, however, that controls the academy.) The design theorist's first inclination might be to say, "No big deal. IDT is at least as good an answer to the origins question in biology as BWT. Science just happens to be limited in the questions it can pose and the answers it can give." Fortunately, design theorists are not so naive.

The problem is this. As Phillip Johnson has rightly observed, science is the only universally valid form of knowledge within our culture. This not to say that scientific knowledge is true or infallible. But within our culture, whatever is purportedly the best scientific account of a given phenomenon demands our immediate and unconditional assent. This is regarded as a matter of intellectual honesty. Thus to consciously resist what is currently the best scientific theory in a given area is, in the words of Richard Dawkins, to be either stupid, wicked, or insane. Thankfully, Richard Dawkins is more explicit than most of his colleagues in making this point, and therefore does us the service of not papering over the contempt with which the scientific community regards anyone who questions scientific assertions for other than scientific reasons (theological reasons being of course the worst offender here).

It bears repeating: the only universally valid form of knowledge within our culture is science. Within late 20th century western society neither religion, nor philosophy, nor literature, nor music, nor art makes any such cognitive claim. Religion in particular is seen as making no universal claims that are obligatory across the board. The contrast with science is here blaring. Science has given us technology--computers that work as much here as they do in the third world. Science has cured our diseases. Whether we are black, red, yellow, or white, the same antibiotics cure the same infections. It's therefore clear why relegating IDT to any realm other than science (e.g., religion) ensures that BWT will remain the only intellectually respectable option for the explanation of life.

But something isn't quite right here. IDT and BWT both inquire into definite matters of fact. If each of the cells that make up living things were to have emblazoned on them in clear script the phrase "made by Yahweh," there would be no question that IDT is correct and BWT is incorrect. Don't let the science-fiction character of this example distract you. The point is that IDT and BWT are both real possibilities so long as one doesn't impose any a priori conditions that restrict in advance what can count as a viable option in the explanation of life. Granted, cells don't have emblazoned on them the phrase "made by Yahweh." But we wouldn't know this unless we actually looked at cells under the microscope.

It's here that we come to the heart of the design theorists' critique of Darwinism. Logically, BWT and IDT are real possibilities. What's more, as mutually exclusive and exhaustive possibilities, one of these theses has to be correct (I'm sorry, but at this level of discourse the law of the excluded middle definitely holds). The Darwinist establishment has so defined science that BWT alone can constitute an appropriate scientific answer to the question *How did life originate and develop?* Nevertheless, when Stephen J. Gould, Michael Ruse, Richard Dawkins, George Gaylord Simpson, and their many disciples assert the truth of BWT, they purport that BWT is the conclusion of a scientific argument based on empirical evidence. But of course it is nothing of the sort. The empirical evidence is in fact weak, and the conclusion follows necessarily as a strict logical deduction once science is as a matter of definition restricted to purposeless, naturalistic, material processes. BWT is therefore built into the very premises with which we started. It is a winner by default.

Logicians have names for this--circular reasoning and begging the question being among them. The view that science must be restricted solely to purposeless, naturalistic, material processes also has a name. It's called *methodological naturalism*. So long as methodological naturalism sets the ground rules for how the game of science is to be played, IDT has no chance Hades. Phillip Johnson makes this point eloquently. So does Alvin Plantinga. In his work on methodological naturalism Plantinga remarks that if one accepts methodological naturalism, then Darwinism is the only game in town.

Okay, since BWT is so poorly supported empirically and since the scientific community is telling us that IDT isn't science, what's wrong with a simple profession of ignorance? In response to the question *How did life originate and develop?* what's wrong with simply saying *We don't know?* (Such a profession of ignorance, by the way, was the reason Michael Denton's book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* was panned by the Darwinist establishment.) As philosophers of science Thomas Kuhn and Larry Laudan have pointed out, for scientific paradigms to shift, there has to be a new paradigm in place ready to be shifted into. You can't shift into a vacuum. Napoleon III put it this way: "One never really destroys a thing till one has replaced it." If you're going to reject a reigning paradigm, you have to have a new improved paradigm with which to replace it. BWT is the reigning paradigm. But what alternative is there to BWT? Logically, the only alternative is IDT. But IDT isn't part of science. This is a case of Hobson's choice. There's no pleading ignorance and no shifting away because BWT is the only game in town.

Note that I'm not saying BWT is a tautology. The tautology criticism has been a long-standing criticism offered against Darwinism. Accordingly, Darwinism is tautologous because it asserts the survival of the fittest, but then turns around and identifies the fittest with those who survive. This sort of tautology is not what we've been talking about here. BWT has genuine content. It sets definite limits on the type of world we inhabit. BWT is not true simply as a matter of linguistic convention. The problem is that BWT purports to be the conclusion of a scientific argument based on empirical evidence, but is actually a strict logical consequence of a prior assumption about how to do science, namely the assumption of methodological naturalism.

In the words of Vladimir Lenin, *What is to be done?* Design theorists aren't at all bashful about answering this question: *The ground rules of science have to be changed.* We need to realize that methodological naturalism is the functional equivalent of a full blown metaphysical naturalism. Metaphysical naturalism asserts that the material world is all there is (in the words of Carl Sagan, "the cosmos is all there ever was, is, or will be"). Methodological naturalism asks us for the sake of science to pretend that the material world is all there is. But once science comes to be taken as the only universally valid form of knowledge within a culture, it follows at once that methodological and metaphysical naturalism become for all intents and purposes indistinguishable. They are functionally equivalent. What needs to be done, therefore, is to break the grip of naturalism in both guises, methodological and metaphysical. And this happens once we realize that it was not empirical evidence, but the power of a metaphysical world view that was all along urging us to adopt methodological naturalism in the first place. Yes, the heavens still declare the glory of God, and yes, God's invisible attributes are clearly seen from God's creation. But to hear what the heavens declare and to see what the creation makes manifest, we need to get rid of our metaphysical blinders.

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