

Darwinism, Evolution and Intelligent Design Continued

William Haines
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William Haines:

Hi Dominic,

Thanks for responding though. I hadn't intended there to be a big debate about this. It was Derek who set it off responding to a throw away sentence of mine.

The reason I referred to Wiki is because that was the link you provided:

>So, here I recommend [Dembski](#)'s notion of "[Specified Complexity](#)" - although his ideas >still need further research and attention.

Of course if people say the changes that arise occur randomly that is a philosophical not a scientific statement.

I have yet to read an ID person who explains how the intelligent designer did the intelligent design. How did God intervene in the natural world? What is the mechanism? What was the process? What is the evidence? Especially as according to DP the natural world is in the indirect dominion of God and is governed by natural laws. The only place I can see for ID is the Big Bang. The interesting pieces of science you talk about - junk DNA as a radio transmitter don't support ID and will be integrated into biological theory as biologists learn more physics. It takes time for people to discover that one field of science may have bearing on another so I can't understand why you seem to think they are the only one's 'not doing their homework'.

Who is trashing Darwin? Well both Derek and yourself were. Derek attacking him on a personal level and both of you blaming him for fascism and communism and other evils.

It is a basic rule of scientific development that new ideas are accepted when the people holding the old ideas die. So I don't think people who hold to Darwin are any more dogmatic than other people. Einstein for example refused to accept quantum mechanics on basically theological grounds.

So all in all I find the vehemence people have towards Darwin and his ideas quite irrational. One never comes across such emotion about other long dead scientists who 'got it wrong'.

William Haines:

Hi Derek,

I didn't really want to have a debate about Darwin and the theory of evolution so I'll limit myself to a couple of points:

As Dominic noted, Darwinism supports/underpins National Socialism and Communism.

This is irrelevant. All kinds of theories can be used to support all kinds of social theories and systems. As far as the history of ideas is concerned, evolution was not Darwin's idea. It has been part of the fabric of English thought and historiography since the time of the Venerable Bede www.jstor.org/pss/3021094 . It was a basic concept of the Scottish Enlightenment too with Samuel Ferguson who said,

"Every step and every movement of the multitude, even in what are termed enlightened ages, are made with equal blindness to the future; and nations stumble upon establishments, which are indeed the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design."

It was from this very widespread way of thinking about the evolution of society that Darwin got the idea and decided to apply it to the natural world. Now the idea of evolution, which is much older than Darwin, supports and underpins liberal democracy and the free market as expounded in the works of David Hume and the American Founding Fathers.

Troubling to me, is the fact that William's posts include inaccurate sources and statements like, "Darwinism defines the principle more adequately than the principle itself."

Nope. I didn't say that or anything remotely like that. Please quote me accurately. I said I think the Principle is more compatible with the theory of evolution than it is with intelligent design. That incidentally is also the position of the Roman Catholic Church with respect to their theology. The Catholic Church has never condemned evolution and over the last few decades has basically accepted it. This includes Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. On the other hand the Catholic Church has rejected intelligent design for a variety of reasons.

In addition he posts, "the Oriental/Korean mind is inadequate to come to terms with the intellectual refinement of the West"

Nope I didn't say that either. Please quote me accurately. I said that Korean Christians who were fundamentalists who took the Bible literally did not have the theological and philosophical resources to deal with the theory of evolution. Hence the way the DP is presented in terms of a debate with literalist Christians. That is because of the kind of Christianity that appeared in Korea and the fact that it was very young having only arrived in the late 19th century. So obviously Korean Christians hadn't had the opportunity to engage with the broader Christian tradition as represented by the Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox churches none of which regard Christianity and the theory of evolution as incompatible.

"the deletion of Adam and Eve from his hypothesis, and other statements made elsewhere which seem to me to point to a broader work of near systematic deconstruction of the principle and its author.

Nope haven't said that. I think Adam and Eve were historical people although I also recognise that the Genesis story can be read as a myth and works that way too. Demythologising and deconstruction is what the DP does to the Bible explaining that it is not necessarily to be understood literally. e.g the chapter on the consummation of human history

If William's work is defined as his own theory this is fine and I would defend his right to say whatever he chooses but if it is presented within the Unification Church and Lancaster Gate as the Principle it poses a significant ethical and intellectual dilemma for me. If it is otherwise, I retract all suspicions and make my apologies.

Come on Derek. What I teach today is what I taught when I knocked on your door 35 years ago in Inverness. Unfortunately you didn't get the chance to attend my workshops but I think those on this list who have will recognise that what I say teach hasn't changed in 30 years. So apology accepted.

William Haines:

Dear Jonathan,

I know you are busy so thank you for taking the time to reply.

I am still not happy with your argument.

"If God exists then human beings are designed." The second part of the premise doesn't follow from the first. It is possible that God exists but that God did not design human beings. They could have appeared through a different mechanism such as theistic evolution. In that case your statement is a statement of belief or dogma. Just because Newman and others asserted it doesn't make it true. It is a statement of faith. You are assuming the point in contention namely that human beings are designed. In that case although your argument is valid it is still question begging.

Just because it says in Genesis that God created human beings in his image and likeness doesn't mean he designed them. For one thing the Hebrew doesn't support that meaning. For another the image of God is not that specific. It means we have the dual characteristics of internal character and external form; masculinity and femininity; and are individual truth bodies. We are like God because we have the divine character: heart, logos and creativity. To suggest that the image of God is in terms of our biological structure is surely to take theomorphism to another level and certainly not a Judeo-Christian-Muslim one.

Another problem is that "If P then Q" always implies "If not-Q then not-P." Thus if one can show that human beings are not designed, but have evolved through natural processes, then if not-Q then not-P. This means, with this argument, if one can show that human beings are not designed then God does not exist. This of course is why for some people the theory of evolution really is a threat to their faith. But if one doesn't accept the first premise in the first place and is quite relaxed about the idea that while God created the universe and the laws that govern it, he didn't actually micromanage it and design all the nasty diseases, then the theory of evolution isn't a threat. This was the position of Darwin's contemporaries and many other Christians in the UK and US in the 19th century. As Rev. Charles Kingsley, who I quoted before said, "" It is just as noble a conception of Deity to believe that he created primal forms capable of self-development . . . as to believe that He required a fresh act of intervention to supply the gaps which He himself had made."" In 1868, Cardinal Newman corresponded with a fellow priest regarding Darwin's theory and made the following comments:

"As to the Divine Design, is it not an instance of incomprehensibly and infinitely marvellous Wisdom and Design to have given certain laws to matter millions of ages ago, which have surely and precisely worked out, in the long course of those ages, those effects which He from the first proposed. Mr. Darwin's theory

need not then to be atheistical, be it true or not; it may simply be suggesting a larger idea of Divine Prescience and Skill. Perhaps your friend has got a surer clue to guide him than I have, who have never studied the question, and I do not [see] that 'the accidental evolution of organic beings' is inconsistent with divine design—It is accidental to us, not to God."

Many other theologians wrote books showing that evolution and Christianity were not incompatible. The Catholic Church never condemned evolution and since those early days the theory of evolution has gradually come to be basically accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. Pope John Paul II spoke of it favourably and Benedict XVI said,

"In our own solar system and on earth (formed about 4.5 billion years ago), the conditions have been favourable to the emergence of life. While there is little consensus among scientists about how the origin of this first microscopic life is to be explained, there is general agreement among them that the first organism dwelt on this planet about 3.5–4 billion years ago. Since it has been demonstrated that all living organisms on earth are genetically related, it is virtually certain that all living organisms have descended from this first organism. Converging evidence from many studies in the physical and biological sciences furnishes mounting support for some theory of evolution to account for the development and diversification of life on earth, while controversy continues over the pace and mechanisms of evolution."

This is basically theistic evolution. So if you wish to write off the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Communion, Methodist Church and many Orthodox Churches as intellectually and spiritually bankrupt that is your prerogative but please don't pretend that "theological opposition to Darwinism is both older and broader."

I cannot remember the name of the ID advocate I met in Oxford. When Midgely's book was being released there was a prominent proponent of ID on the platform as well as an atheistic Darwinian and an advocate of mainstream theistic evolution. All I remember is the ID man couldn't answer my questions about specified and irreducible complexity. It struck me as merely a variation on the God-of-the-gaps approach. Design appeared to be imputed whereas the pattern, or appearance of design, could be explained in other ways. Even if it couldn't be explained today it would probably be explained in the future as scientific knowledge expands. Midgely herself took what I regard as a sensible position critical of the dogmatism of both atheistic Darwinists and proponents of creationism and intelligent design.

It is clear that complex spontaneous or self-generated orders come about neither through random chance nor through design. The choice is not between random chance and design. And I think it is this alternative, spontaneous order, that is grounded in the Principle:

"The human mind imparts to every person a natural inclination to join with others in harmony. Likewise, positive and negative ions come together to form particular molecules, because within every one of them exists a rudimentary internal nature that guides them towards that end." EDP, 18

And,

"The direction and goal of all give and take actions are controlled by Universal Prime Force. Give and take action exists not only so that a subject and object can fulfil their individual purposes, but also for the greater purpose of unifying all things. The ultimate purpose of give and take action is to have subject and object unite and develop to a greater and higher dimension." Unification Thought

The social and economic order, following Hume and Hayek, is an example of a spontaneous order which is not designed. Hayek in particular gave a lengthy critique of rationalist constructivism. I would suggest that the natural world in like manner organically and naturally also evolved. I think God created everything with an IDN such that through natural process greater and greater order and complexity would automatically happen such that one day beings would appear with consciousness with which God can interface or indwell. This of course is different to the Greek idea of hyle which is inanimate and which therefore does require a designer, the demiurge.

Dominic:

Hello Colin!

Thanks for the suggestion. I didn't say I am committed to Dembski's ideas, but towards objectivity, fairness and the progress of science. I do believe he asks important questions that are often being ignored or ridiculed these days - although we are far from providing the answers...

*Dogmatism vs the natural evolution of science
(Or: "Only the dead fish swim with the stream")*

Any dogmatism is bad for science, whether it may be Creationism (a fanatical view misusing scripture for pseudo-scientific claims) or Darwinism (in its extreme versions even more fanatical

and its consequences fatal). ID is largely misrepresented in the media (even in Margarete's well-balanced article) as a camouflage of Creationism and its basic features are usually oversimplified ("life is too complex, therefore a designer is needed"). Of course, if they wish to establish their science, ID-researchers will absolutely have to omit any subjective elements. And most of them do - contrary to hard-core creationists.

Possibly, the outset of the ID-hypothesis simply is a **teleological argument** rather than a mathematical one (just as the random-hypothesis in Darwinism has a philosophical origin). But it nevertheless is an important attempt to phrase the problem of recognizing design in mathematical terms. I am well aware that Dembski's ideas are still new, perhaps unfinished and unrefined and surely not widely understood. Yet ultimately, the Eifel-tower, a BMW or the Taj Mahal are designed objects, whether one is aware of the mathematical blueprint behind them or not. I don't see a reason why we cannot apply this logic to biology or to its gentic foundation, the DNA.

Evolution isn't (and not even life is) a necessity. We have bacteria around on our planet that are already 250 mil years old. There were long eras when our planet was only inhabited by simple unicellular organisms (back then what was the "need" of horses, butterflies, trees or birds?). The challenge is to translate terms such as necessity, chance and "design" from mathematical abstraction to concrete biological application.

What keeps the evolution of science alive is the **give-and-take between thesis and anti-thesis**. I see that ID could bring a very fruitful discussion into science, but at the moment it is being ridiculed and underestimated - quite similar to Einstein's new ideas or quantum mechanics at the beginning of the 20th century... (Einstein never received a Noble Price for his Special or General Theory of Relativity: Those ideas weren't fully accepted by the "community" until its applications became more & more convincing.)

ID surely is a new (and immature) kid on the block. If it manages to imply the findings of quantum mechanics, it could have the potential to bring about a similar revolution that shocked Physics in the first half of the 20th century. (I do see a future in the notion of **protoconsciousness** embedded in a QM context.) Biology needs to evolve from the classic-mechanical "lego-concept" of matter and embrace the intuitive, immaterial and non-local principles of QM.

Design-Thinking and consciousness

I would agree with Colin's point that design itself is not a category of Mathematics. Mathematics can be used as a **tool for designing** structures. One may create/design mathematical algorithms that will produce certain (designed) objects. There is no common definition for what design is or isn't and design varies according to specific fields, so any construction (e.g. in architecture, engineering, management structure, arts, etc.) may be understood as "design". On the other hand, the **most prominent features of "good" design** can be specified as FUNCTIONALITY & AESTHETICS. (Well, we find those a lot in biology... magnificent aesthetics, going far beyond the functionality that is necessary for mere survival. E.g. The golden section and the human body: golden ratio, golden section, human body and Fibonacci)

It is commonly agreed that the term "**design thinking**" (prominently used in engineering and architecture) requires sensitivity/empathy [emo] to the aim of a task or the context of a problem, creativity [will] in producing new solutions, rationality [intel] to analyze and adapt to new problems in the context of solution-finding. [Words in brackets for those who recognize a certain pattern here...] These three requirements are attributes of *consciousness*.

Philosophical extrapolation from the Darwinian dogma

One main problem of Darwinism lies in its **potential scientism**, narrowly assuming that mathematical principles create natural law. Natural law suffices for the emergence of life. Life eventually leads to higher forms of consciousness. Consciousness produces mind. Therefore, mind simply is the product of a complex chain of chemical reactions. Nothing more, nothing less.

However, this simplistic statement goes already far beyond the scope and authority of natural science. And the belief/assumption that first life could originate from purely abiotic conditions is an important hypothesis (it spurs research and new ideas), but finally will need approval through a reproducible experiment... All in all we touch upon a question that - going beyond biology - probably cannot be explained by natural sciences alone: "What is life?"

(Nevertheless, that's exactly the title of an excellent book by quantum physics co-architect Erwin Schroedinger... and we are still waiting for the answer, after many philosophical, scientific and theological approaches.) **Subjectivity and consciousness** are and will remain the biggest challenges to the natural sciences (most prominently neuroscience).

Turning the page from "Where are we from?" to "How shall we live?", Darwinism's **fatal influence** on communist/Nazi thinkers remains fact. Usually this fact is relativised by adherents of Neo-Darwinism. But who will clean up the mess after all the bloodshed caused by the relativism of morals - the logical consequence of undirectional, purposeless, random mutation? (Humans as the better apes...) Responsibility after all is an arbitrary construction of the mind, isn't it?

"The meaning of relativity has been widely misunderstood. Philosophers play with the word, like a child with a doll . . . It does not mean that everything in life is relative." Albert Einstein. [The outset of his Special Theory of Relativity was the proposal of the absoluteness of the value of light's velocity c for any system of reference.]

I'll close with Benjamin Franklin: "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." When are we learning to see the bigger picture?

Colin Turfus:

Hi Dominic,

A brief riposte (my last on this thread): I definitely agree with you about the ID-hypothesis being fundamentally a teleological argument rather than a mathematical one. But there remain serious obstacles preventing it from ever becoming science. The problems stem from both "intelligence" and "design", which have definition only in relation to *human* behaviour and thought. In relation to "design", I think you've already conceded the point below. Re "intelligence", the standard AI test for detecting it is that of Alan Turing, whereby a machine must successfully impersonate a human being. Ultimately, we have no working definition of non-human intelligence and struggle even to define (and measure) human intelligence.

The anti-thesis that ID offers to the Darwinian thesis that species evolved under natural selection is to say that the explanation is inadequate in the light of the evidence. Where ID would become scientifically interesting is if it offered an alternative mechanism as a counter-explanation. But the main thrust of ID appears to be to say that *no* naturalistic explanation can ever suffice and we must ultimately invoke the hypothesis of an "intelligent designer." But without fleshing out the fundamental concepts of intelligence and design in a mathematical/scientific way, the ID hypothesis remains no more nor less than a claim that the evolution of species cannot be explained by science. My personal view would be to say that the hypothesis in that form has been neither proved nor disproved. But I could fully understand ID advocates taking a more robust position.

Bottom line: if ID wants to claim something more and to be conferred a proper scientific status it needs to refine its hypothesis and do a lot of tightening on its definitions. At the moment, Dembski's work is only serving to illustrate how far ID is from that point.