

Intelligent Design and the Contemporary Christian

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A Modest Idea:

Intelligent Causation

Are biological structures the product of intelligent agency or not? Theorists in the “intelligent design movement” believe there is sufficient evidence to answer in the affirmative. Amazingly, even the suggestion of this idea is enough to set off a “culture war” in many parts of the world.

The notion that biological structures show evidence of intelligent design is as old as human thought. This idea was common to religious theories about the origin of life, but many non-religious thinkers also attributed biological structure to a designer. As we shall see, Plato defended design arguments and until the time of Darwin such defenses were standard in many biological works by eminent scientists.

The first scientists were overwhelmingly believers in intelligent design in nature, a fact that nobody disputes. This is not surprising given the appearance of the biological world. Even a critic of design like Richard Dawkins must concede that the biological world appears designed. Given the intricacy of biological structures, their frequent similarity in appearance to human built machines, and the seeming improbability of their chance construction, the possibility of design is difficult to dismiss.

Intelligent design has a long and respectable history in science, but recently it has fallen on hard times. Of course,

many people are sincerely convinced that design theory is not useful based on their understanding of philosophy of science and the state of scientific evidence. They are opposed to the idea of intelligent design because they think it is wrong.

Sadly, unlike many minority positions in philosophy (one thinks of the idealism of Berkeley) where dissent is tolerated, opposition to design is not confined to modest arguments against its usefulness or plausibility, but comes with cultural and professional sanctions and heated rhetoric as any Internet investigation will quickly demonstrate. Why does the mere mention of design infuriate so many scientists and philosophers?

First, many scientists and philosophers are committed to the worldview of naturalism. One sociological feature of that view in modern times has been a disdain for theists and theistic arguments. Though intelligent design does not necessitate a god, it is congenial to the possibility. The very idea that theism might return to respectability causes a fierce reaction from fervent naturalists.

Second, traditional religious scholars have suffered from “second class” status in the academy for some time. Religion is not considered knowledge and some religious academicians have internalized rules of discourse that do not allow them to argue from the basis of their religious convictions. Many have developed theologies rejecting an active God who leaves “finger prints” that can be detected by

scientists. Such a theological shift has allowed these scholars to operate in a marginal position within the academy. Intelligent design ideas and the fierce reaction to it from naturalists threaten that hard earned respectability.

The larger problem is the inadequate understanding of the development of science and Western culture held by many working scientists (secular or religious). The history of ideas is often presented as a long process of eliminating religious ideas from science. The myth taught is simple: as religious thinking declined, science developed. Science was born out of philosophy. Philosophy, the secular myth claims, favored the elimination of religious explanations in favor of “natural” ones. People used to think the gods did things, but then they began to understand that gods were not needed. Darwin simply finished the long process of getting rid of divine explanations begun by Thales, Anaximander, and the other Pre-Socratic philosophers.

Instead, the move from Thales to Plato can best be understood as removing *unintelligent agency* (the Homeric gods) from explanations. Zeus was too whimsical to be part of any theory of the world. Heraclitus and other pre-Socratics were attacking a grossly inadequate theology that was useless as a knowledge tradition. They did not, for the most part, move to *secularism*, but to monotheism or pantheism. They substituted inadequate personal causal theories from Homer with better ones. For example, Heraclitus fiercely attacked the Homeric idols, but substituted a “divine logos” as the organizing principle of the cosmos.

Early philosophy began to define what could be considered intelligent *effects* and when it was justified to appeal to

intelligent design. Every effect needs an adequate cause and some effects appear to justify an appeal to an intelligent cause.

This process of philosophical development culminated in the work of Plato and Aristotle. Plato in particular appealed directly to intelligent agency in his final work *Laws*. In X, he argues:

Athenian: Quite true, Megillus and Cleinias, but I am afraid that we have unconsciously lighted on a strange doctrine.

Cleinias: What doctrine do you mean?

Ath. The wisest of all doctrines, in the opinion of many.

Cle. I wish that you would speak plainer.

Ath. The doctrine that all things do become, have become, and will become, some by nature, some by art, and some by chance.

Cle. Is not that true?

Ath. Well, philosophers are probably right; at any rate we may as well follow in their track, and examine what is the meaning of them and their disciples.

Cle. By all means.

Ath. They say that the greatest and fairest things are the work of nature and of chance, the lesser of art, which, receiving from nature the greater and primeval creations, molds and fashions all those lesser works which are generally termed artificial.

Cle. How is that?

Ath. I will explain my meaning still more clearly. They say that fire and water, and earth and air, all exist by nature and chance, and none of them by art, and that as to the bodies which come next in order—earth, and sun, and moon, and stars—they have been created by means of these absolutely inanimate existences. The elements are severally moved by chance and some inherent force according to certain affinities among them—of hot with cold, or of dry with moist, or of soft with hard, and according to all the other accidental admixtures of opposites which have been formed by necessity. After this fashion and in this manner the whole heaven has been created, and

all that is in the heaven, as well as animals and all plants, and all the seasons come from these elements, not by the action of mind, as they say, or of any God, or from art, but as I was saying, by nature and chance only. Art sprang up afterwards and out of these, mortal and of mortal birth, and produced in play certain images and very partial imitations of the truth, having an affinity to one another, such as music and painting create and their companion arts. And there are other arts which have a serious purpose, and these co-operate with nature, such, for example, as medicine, and husbandry, and gymnastic. And they say that politics cooperate with nature, but in a less degree, and have more of art; also that legislation is entirely a work of art, and is based on assumptions which are not true.

Cle. How do you mean?

Ath. In the first place, my dear friend, these people would say that the Gods exist not by nature, but by art, and by the laws of states, which are different in different places, according to the agreement of those who make them; and that the honorable is one thing by nature and another thing by law, and that the principles of justice have no existence at all in nature, but that mankind are always disputing about them and altering them; and that the alterations which are made by art and by law have no basis in nature, but are of authority for the moment and at the time at which they are made. These, my friends, are the sayings of wise men, poets and prose writers, which find a way into the minds of youth.

Instead of being the story of secularization, the birth of philosophy could better be presented as the refinement of a better theology and natural philosophy.

Intelligent agency is not, after all, a miracle. Unless one assumes that *human* behavior is the product of purely natural causes (such as brain chemistry), intelligent human agency is something all around. The mere existence within each

one of us of an “I” that appears to be irreducible to matter and energy suggests that naturalism is inadequate as a theory of everything. I am surer that I exist as “I,” than that the external world exists. There seems to be no good reason to explain the thing I cannot doubt (“I”) by something I can doubt (the world of matter and energy).

There is no adequate naturalistic explanation for human agency, but science can still proceed. Any science that deals with humans accepts human intelligence as a possible cause, a brute given. The same general procedures *could* be used when looking at biological phenomena. Was this organism *created* or not? The scientist need not know the nature of the creator to ask this question. Surely he knows what intelligent agency looks like from his own personal experience! If the intervention of a *human-like* intelligence is the best explanation for the existence of a biological structure, then a biologist ought to be able to entertain that possibility.

The advantage to this “open philosophy of scientific causation” is that it does *not* demand that a scientist find intelligent design. If design is not the best explanation or a better natural explanation is available, any scientist is free to propose such a solution. The present naturalistic regime demands, indeed assumes that *nothing* in the cosmos will require an intelligent designer.

One problem with language in this debate is that “creation” is frequently made to sound like a mere gap in the explanation . . . creation is a miracle that only contributes mystery to science. A famous cartoon shows a standard scientific formula with the words “and then a miracle occurs” appearing in the middle of the explanation. This common

conflation of “creation” with “miracle” (where miracle is the mysterious and unexplained) does not seem justified based on our experience with identifying human artifacts. A scientist can sensibly say, “This object shows signs of being created by intelligence. It is an artifact.” This is not invoking a miracle.

There are many questions that can be asked when we know that a man has created a thing. Why did he create it? How did he create it? What is it for? Knowing *that* a thing is a creation of an intelligent being (whoever that being is) does not end investigation—it *guides* it.

Often opponents of intelligent design act as if they already know that all of reality *must* be reduced to physics. But what if this is too simple a picture of reality? Surely it is possible that metaphysics has an irreducible role to play in any full “theory of everything.” Perhaps in areas such as human psychology, science comes to its natural limits and metaphysics plays an essential part in expanding knowledge.

If naturalists wish to say “intelligent design” is by definition unscientific (since science is, on their view, limited to natural causation), this is no real attack on intelligent design *as an idea*. Naturalism cannot explain everything, therefore science cannot explain everything. Intelligent agency would be part of a different field (philosophy?) and not science.

The discipline label should be no deterrent to finding the truth. If the goal of human investigation is to find the truth, and it is *possible* that biological entities were created, then humans will develop a discipline to discover that truth or expand their definition of an old one. This is not surprising since naturalistic science is blind to certain things. The very language of science and mathematics contains enti-

ties (numbers) that cannot be reduced to matter or energy. If metaphysics is not reducible to physics, then science is not all of knowledge. Science would be unable to explain human agency if something like the *human soul* exists as an immaterial entity.

Naturalists should not demand that everyone must limit themselves to naturalism and then become offended when non-naturalists (such as theists) do not listen, but this is often what happens. Having defined science as “applied naturalism” and having limited acceptable causes to natural causes, the naturalist is pleased to discover the theories produced by such scientists support metaphysical naturalism.

Defining terms is crucial to shaping philosophical debates. Terms such as “creation” or “design” have been hollowed out by naturalists for some time. Charles Darwin desired to remove all non-natural “final causes” from biology and dismissed “creation” as a vacuous explanation. Darwin could not imagine design as anything but fruitless terminology that explained nothing. Picturing the word “creation” as a pious platitude was good Victorian rhetoric and Darwin made strong use of it. To cite but a few examples from *Origin of the Species*:

He who believes in separate and innumerable acts of creation will say, that in these cases it has pleased the Creator to cause a being of one type to take the place of one of another type; but this seems to me only restating the fact in dignified language.

Nothing can be more hopeless than to attempt to explain this similarity of pattern in members of the same class, by utility or by the doctrine of final causes. The hopelessness of the attempt has been expressly admitted by Owen in his most interesting

work on the “Nature of Limbs.” On the ordinary view of the independent creation of each being, we can only say that so it is;—that it has so pleased the Creator to construct each animal and plant.

Although I am fully convinced of the truth of the views given in this volume under the form of an abstract, I by no means expect to convince experienced naturalists whose minds are stocked with a multitude of facts all viewed, during a long course of years, from a point of view directly opposite to mine. It is so easy to hide our ignorance under such expressions as the “plan of creation,” “unity of design,” etc.

Darwin prefers any natural theory to any appeal to intelligent agency. This makes sense if “creation” and “design” are defined as “ignorance of natural causes.” There are good reasons to doubt this definition.

First, if biological entities are the product of intelligent design (“creations”) then the search for unintelligent causation is futile. Design is *not ignorance of natural causes, but knowledge (based on observation) of an intelligent cause*. Is scientific observation the search for truth or naturalistic answers? If naturalists assume such an answer *must* exist, then they are likely to find clever answers, but not the truth. I fail to see how a classification system based on ancestry (like those of Darwinists) is more robust as an explanation than a classification system based on design patterns. Only if natural accounts (such as descent) are always preferable to non-naturalistic accounts (such as mathematical modeling to find body patterns) can one make this claim.

Second, modern design theorists like William Dembski and Stephen Meyer are attempting to provide robust definitions of design and then examine the implica-

tions of such definitions. At think tanks like the Center for Science and Creation or in graduate programs in science and philosophy at Biola University, such work is on-going.

The Idea of Design and Creationism

Critics of the idea of design try to dismiss it as a form of “creationism.” This is only possible because in popular usage the word “creation” refers to the handiwork of a god. The broader convention is still around, since the work of any intelligent human agent can still be called his creation. One can say that Joss Whedon is the *creator* of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* without becoming a creationist!

Intelligent design scientists observe the biological world and believe the evidence points to a “creator.” This is a “creator” in the broad sense (“intelligent agent who makes things”) and not in the restricted sense of “the deity who makes things” The broad sense is useful in any design theory while the narrow sense is a term needed for a creationist explanation of things.

To avoid popular confusion, some design theorists avoid the words “create” or “creator” and prefer “intelligent agent” or some other term. However, other design theorists continue to use the words in the broader sense. Ill informed or hostile people can use public confusion about word usage to conflate intelligent design theory with “creationism.” But what *is* a creationist? Creationists are (generally) defending a particular *religious* theory about the identity and methods of the creator. For example, I am a Christian and a young-earth creationist. Based on my reading of the Bible, philosophical arguments, and some scientific evidence, I believe that the earth is roughly ten

thousand years old, much of the fossil record should be explained by a global flood, and the phyla (at least) were created as we find them today. This is a *creationist* theory about the origin of the design in the world.

Design theorists who are *not creationists* make much more restricted claims. Biology cannot possibly yield such a rich theory of reality as young earth creationism by itself. The design biologist can only extrapolate to the existence of a designer (intelligent agent). This designer may or may not be the God of the young earth creationist. As a result of this distinction, design theorists need not be creationists. Design is not “weak creationism” or “sophisticated creationism.” Design theory is the sort of supporting idea that must be true if creationism is true, but design theory could still be true if every form of creationism was false. If aliens from Vulcan seeded our planet with life they designed, then a design hypothesis would be true, but all forms of creationism would be false.

There are good rhetorical and political reasons for critics of intelligent design to associate it with creationism. Though creationism is very popular in the general population, it is very unpopular amongst intellectuals. Associating intelligent design with “creationism” also makes it “religious.” In the United States, courts *cannot* forbid legislation mandating merely foolish ideas in schools, but it can ban religious instruction from the classrooms. Calling intelligent design “creationism” helps suppress discussion of design theories (or advocacy by individual teachers) in government schools.

The modern intelligent design movement is not religious, but it does have implications for religious people. An idea can be important

to the truth of a religion without itself being religious. If ancient Israel did not actually exist in the past, this would have serious ramifications for traditional Christians. Fortunately archeology discovers that Israel did exist in Palestine which is good news for the Christian. Does this mean archeology is a form of Christian apologetics? In the same way, the usefulness of design concepts to Christian theists does not make intelligent design religious!

Concerns about getting this distinction right must not produce an even worse error in Christians. Some Christians end up treating religious knowledge as if it is unfit for public consumption! Just as design theorists are free to be atheists, so some design advocates should be free to become creationists and free to pursue their studies using all their sources of knowledge. Fundamentally, intelligent design or the notion that intelligent agency could have played a role in biology, is compatible with theism, but is not necessarily theistic.

Why are so many leading design theorists Christians? Since there are millions of Christian theists in the United States (over eighty percent), it is sensible to assume that most design theorists will be theists. One assumes that a huge percentage of most activities in the United States contain overwhelming numbers of Christian theists!

Creationism is a religious idea that utilizes some design theory. It claims to know the designer based on philosophical and theological grounds. Christians are free to use all our knowledge to assert that the creator of all life is the God of the Bible. To do this, we will have to develop a more flexible philosophy of science than that given to us by our culture.

Christians and Creationism: A New neo-Platonic Philosophy of Science

In his dialogue *Timaeus* Plato says,

If we can furnish accounts no less likely than any other we must be content, remembering that I who speak and you my judges are only human, and consequently it is fitting that we should, in these matters, accept the likely story and look for nothing further.

Here is the start for a solution to endless debates of the roles of “religion” and “science.” One should read Plato for his own sake, not just to proof-text him for answers to contemporary problems. However, it is appropriate after reading Plato and trying to understand him in his own context, to see if his ideas can be helpful in solving modern debates. I believe Plato can help reframe the questions in religion and science discussions in the conservative Christian community.

Sadly, Christians have not benefited from this friendly philosophy of science. Creationists have not spent much time developing a philosophy of science. Those creationists who have thought much about the nature of reality have tended to be simple Baconians. Too often creationism has been merely a hermeneutic in search of an apologetic. Too few creationists have given themselves the intellectual freedom to examine their own point of view critically. Ironically many creationists have more in common with David Hume than with such religious figures (and neo-Platonists) as A. E. Taylor or George Berkeley. This is not surprising in a movement dominated by scientists and pragmatic Americans. I believe such a blind commitment to certain naïve Enlightenment forms of realism is not beneficial. At the very least, it prevents Christian scientists from exploring the world around them

with the freedom a different philosophy of science might allow. Plato was the first great creationist, if one means by that term a thinker who accepts that the universe began with a creator.

It is easy to derive some important principles for a creationist philosophy of science founded in Platonism. Creationists should take as their goal the sort of “likely account” of the origins of the world that Plato places in the mouth of the wise Timaeus. The freedom that young earth creationism can potentially give the philosopher of science is an important reason for my embracing young earth creationism. Traditional science is locked into an established Darwinian view that does not allow for such freedom of thought.

Oddly, creationists have, by and large, adopted methodological naturalism while rejecting philosophic naturalism. No creationist believes that “nature is all there is, was, or will be.” But too often, he acts as if naturalism were true in his research. He will not allow a “miracle” or consider evidence for divine intervention any more than his secular peer. The difficulty is that methodological naturalism closes the door to God’s detectable action in nature. Too often it leads creationists to make fruitless attempts to falsify some particular notion that naturalists currently maintain, using naturalistic assumptions, while failing to develop their own model of the world. Creationists forget that a fully naturalistic flood model might be as destructive to theism as Darwinism.

What is truth? Since Pilate asked that question of Truth Himself in the Gospels men have puzzled to find a resolution. The full answer is beyond the scope of this or any article. It is sufficient for this article to make a small distinction in the way we normally use the term “truth.”

The first way is a term to describe what Francis Schaeffer called, "True truth." These are truths that are logically necessary and I would include in this category mathematical concepts, logical relationships, and facts about the past. The second category of "truths" are things for which we have good reasons to justify our belief, but which might still be false. Confusion between the two categories leads to problems, as we shall see.

Scientists often sound as if they are expounding some necessary truth about the cosmos. Plato would caution moderns that such truth is hard to find. Platonism suggests that stories are all one can tell about the cosmos. It is simply a subject about which developing orthodoxy is impossible.

Theories about gravitation are often held to be descriptions of necessary relationships in this or any other universe. In the same manner, theologians often make the same sort of claims. Theological descriptions of the Universe, like Arminianism or Calvinism for example, often claim to be necessary because they are rooted in the unchanging nature of God. The problem is that both sorts of theories may be claiming too much, if this is indeed their claim. As descriptions of reality developed by human minds, they are always incomplete. Our knowledge of their truth is under-determined by the evidence.

Scientists can never have all the facts about any matter. Scientists must, therefore, be somewhat skeptical about any idea in science. No theory, no matter how secure, is beyond the reach of some theoretical bit of new evidence. Every theory is subject to modification and so none fits our earlier definition of True truth. One adopts these theories, not because one is

compelled to do so or by logical necessity, but for other less secure reasons. A theory may be adopted, for example, because it is the best answer available at present. Fully natural incompatible theories that both fully explain the data are possible. If one allows for a broader view of science, with supernatural explanations allowed in some manner in one's meta-commitments, then the possibility of logically incompatible but working theories is even greater. Divinity is a powerful, indeed at times too powerful, explanatory tool.

This does not mean that some theories are not very secure. Many, like theories about gravitation for example, are very secure indeed. It is not my intention to suggest that one can discard very secure theories at will or on a whim. Such theories are very important human artifacts that should only be abandoned for good and sufficient reasons. They may come very close indeed to fully describing some necessary truth about the universe. But at the end of the day, unlike mathematical relationships discovered by humans, scientific theories are human artifacts after all. Mathematical relationships are necessary relationships. No mathematician will discover that $2+2$ is not 4. On the other hand, it may be hard to imagine certain scientific theories receiving large scale modifications, but our experience with Newton and Einstein's physics should help us see that such modifications are possible, if unlikely.

The same thing could be said about theological systems. No matter how complete or how profound they might seem to be, theological systems are human artifacts based on divine revelation. Is there any theologian so bold as to claim a complete and perfect systematic theology? All such theories are open to modifica-

tion or falsification with the passing of time. Once again, this is not to introduce some sort of cheap relativism. Certain formulations, like the "Apostle's Creed," would seem to be very secure indeed. It is unlikely that much modification will ever be needed to such creeds. In some religious traditions within Christianity, such creeds are, of course, felt to be part of the Divine revelation or deposit of necessary truths. This only removes the problem to another level, however. Such Christians would still have some theological system based on the Creeds that would not be necessarily true.

What does this imply? This means that in both science and theology it is logically possible that two logically incompatible theories may be developed that both (even fully!) explain the evidence. This does not mean that two such theories currently exist. In science, one is hard pressed to think of any particular example. In theology, any such example would be hopelessly controversial. However, the logical possibility of such theories existing has profound implications for the creationist.

First, it means that naturalistic theories and theistic theories of origins will always be adopted for reasons independent of necessity. It will never be logically necessary to be an evolutionist. Once again, this does not mean that it might not be sensible to be an evolutionist and not a creationist given the state of the evidence or conversely that some theory of creation might be preferable to some theory of evolution. It might be that the only reasonable thing to do given the evidence as it stands at present might be to choose some particular theory of origins over another, but it is not ever a compulsion laid on a rational soul. Rational dissent is always

a theoretical possibility, even within the Church. Theories about the physical world will always be under-determined by the evidence.

It will be claimed of course that to dissent from a theory that was very well established would require an alternate theory to already be in place. This is not the case, however. Since theories always carry the logical possibility of logically incompatible alternatives being developed, a person might seek out another explanation for a phenomenon because the current theory fails on some scientific or metaphysical grounds for that person. A person could also seek a new scientific theory for the sheer joy of developing new theories. To deny the human joy of seeing things from a new perspective is to develop anti-intellectualism in the name of scientific orthodoxy. So long as the person deals fairly with the evidence and the rules of rational discourse, he should be free to pursue other research vantage points.

Yet in the case of human origins, it is clear that large numbers of people have powerful and rational reasons to seek a new scientific theory. The conservative Christian, for example, has a powerful and satisfying set of religious experiences to explain. He is perfectly rational to seek to preserve those experiences if he can. Preserving those experiences and the belief systems that support them at the cost of reason and honest dealings with the data would be to go too far. Exploring openly and honestly for some theory of science in order to preserve his functional and elegant epistemology is a reasonable action. Why should a person not value his metaphysical orthodoxy over a scientific one? If no scientific theory can be developed to account for his view,

then he should abandon that view in the end. Meanwhile, he should be free to pursue his vision of science without harassment.

I am not saying that any old scientific theory will do. There are many theories that are not possible. A Platonic philosophy of science says developing incompatible theories is possible, not that any given theory is possible. Creationism may be a dead end. I do not believe it is. In any case, it is sensible to explore the intellectual avenues opened by a creationist world view if for no other reason than that such intellectual exploration is good for its own sake. The “story” of Genesis is a powerful one that has had a great hold on the minds of humans for many ages. To explore that view and to show that it cannot be made to accord with the facts of the universe would be a great service to science, theology, and philosophy. The careful creationist researcher stands, therefore, in the very highest intellectual tradition.

The second implication of these general concepts is the attitude that non-creationists should adopt to those pursuing this, to their minds, fruitless task. The naturalist or the theistic evolutionist should welcome the creationist into their midst with joy. Even if the creationist is chasing down the wrong track, if he is working carefully, his failure should be illuminating. Creationist critiques of current theories and reformulation of current data can only enable the members of the academy to see that data in a new light. Imagine for example the opportunity for biologists to examine a completely creationist biological classification scheme. Even if the creationist view fails in the end, such a scheme would have enabled the non-creationist to examine relationships from a new point of view. In some ways, it would simulate the contact

between two radically different cultures! Both groups would benefit from the cross-fertilization.

If all sides of the origins debate admit that they are at best telling “likely stories,” then they can, in humility, continue to use their metaphysical assumptions to spin new theories to explain the ever-increasing amount of data collected in our universe. In fact, philosophy of science is beginning to come to the conclusion that this is what they are doing whether they admit it or not. This has been the great lesson taught to us by feminist philosophers of science. Feminist philosophers and scientists have shown that science is value laden and value driven. Ideology does make a difference in how we interpret the data of the world. Each person, to use Quine-like language, has a web of belief. The individual is willing to modify outer strands of that web in order to preserve the more central aspects of her world view.

What should be central to our view of the world? To some rational men and women, the area very near the center touches on naturalistic explanations of the cosmos. Any belief is altered to preserve that view. This is a rational thing for that person to do if naturalism is a core commitment. Assuming that a conservative Christian point of view is also rational, it is equally sensible for a person to modify their scientific theories (so long as they do so honestly) in order to preserve that precious set of commitments. In short, a naturalist will prefer a less robust metaphysics that is being worked upon, if he gets a fully naturalistic theory of everything. A conservative Christian theist will prefer a less robust (at least in its early stages) scientific account of the world, if it preserves his metaphysics. Neither is acting

irrationally, unless conservative Christian theism or naturalism can themselves be shown to be irrational.

The colleges and universities should, therefore, free individual scientists, philosophers, and theologians to work on their own individual theories about the way that the world works. Scientists with new or relatively weak scientific general theories should not demand equal time in-class in talking with students. Scientists teaching the dominant paradigm should point out that some significant group of scientists are disturbed by certain scientific problems with the “orthodox” point of view and by some metaphysical implications of the same. While the students master the “orthodox” theory as the best available at the time, they are also taught the open-minded approach to ideas that all true students require for their growth. Of course, in the case of scientists who challenge areas of overwhelming consensus, like that in the area of origins or relativity for example, funding should not be expected. The scientist might be free to teach “orthodoxy” in the mainstream university or college while pursuing their more “eccentric” views on their own time. On the other hand, these persons should receive the same general use of the facilities available to all members of that particular academic community. (Their freedom to develop alternatives as part of their regular personal research responsibilities should not be impaired. A creationist scientist should be free to publish in creationism and such work should be considered legitimate science.) Of course, any scientist who misuses or abuses data to support any position is guilty of a crime against reason! No argument justifies such behavior.

Many anti-creationists are likely to

react that creationism cannot ever be a candidate for “alternative theory status” because creationism cannot be science. They have a methodological naturalism built into their view of science. This is a hollow victory, however. Even if the point is conceded (and I do not think it needs to be), the creationist can simply say that he is involved in a bold project to develop a view of the universe combining both the “facts” explained by religion and the “facts” explained by science.

The naturalist of course (and not all who use the natural method in science are naturalists) does the same thing. He attempts to explain both sets of data using only “science,” as science has been defined. If the creationist can develop a new approach to knowledge, and after all the majority of early scientists knew no formal “natural method” as a limitation of science, such a new epistemic research program would not be harmed by the fact that it was not “science.” If my theory explains the natural world in a rational, interesting, productive, manner, then what difference does it make if it does not fit into semantic classification schemes? Let the creationist say that he is involved in “natural philosophy” if the naturalist prefers. If he develops a view that explains the facts of the world, then he is not harmed by his exclusion. In fact, given certain psychological tendencies toward theism that humans have shown, “science” may someday want to claim that it can expand to do “natural philosophy.”

Let me stress that I am not suggesting that creationists import religious explanations for natural events in an ad hoc manner. Nor does scientific Platonism lead to a “relativistic” post-modernism. There are sound philosophic reasons for being

wary of such ideas. Creationism has built in religious metaphysical commitments. These commitments have implications in the natural world. The limitation of the impact of these implications would be a chief problem of a creationist philosopher of science. In so far as a creationist does day-to-day research, his technique and methodology would not (as it was not historically) be much different from that of his natural method colleague.

Plato believed in truth. He was even open to the possibility that some kinds of truth were knowable. More importantly, stories can be *likely* or *unlikely*. While the Christian and the Platonist are never certain of the truth, in a Cartesian sense, they can still find good reason to prefer one answer to another. Theories should be internally coherent. Given Christian and Platonist views about the nature of God, the creator should have made the most beautiful of all possible worlds. The Christian Platonist will prefer the elegant theory to the clumsy one.

The final implication to the suggestions based on the advice of Plato is that creationists should quit spending all their time criticizing evolutionary theories. Plato criticized the *unlikely* stories of his day, but that is not all he did. Philip Johnson has sufficiently shown, to any open-minded person, that a rational person need not accept evolution. The creationist has been given good reason to look around for another point of view. It is a waste of time to repeat that effort. If Johnson has set us free to speculate, then it is time to begin the theorizing.

Platonism is also not particularly triumphant in its expectations. Plato had a modest view of human ability to pursue truth for very long. Most people will prefer to cling to the dogmas of natural-

ism. They appear safer. Plato points out in *Republic* that handing out opinions is much more attractive than following the argument wherever it leads. He thought this especially true of the intellectual leaders of the city of his day.

Therefore, Christians should not expect evolutionists to give up. Evolutionists will be able to expand or change their view to handle any new bit of evidence. Large scientific and metaphysical theories about the world are very flexible. It is difficult to imagine what sort of data could force a committed individual to abandon them altogether.

Having shown that it is rational to look around, the creationist should begin to construct a sound and equally powerful theory about the cosmos. Plato has shown naturalism to be largely indefensible. Christianity shows it to be the product of man's desire to be God. We must leave the spiritually and intellectually dead to bury their own dead and move on to living lives in the light of what we believe, based on best reason and experience, to be the nearest approximation of the truth. Creationists must begin to theorize unconstrained by defensiveness.

The lack of such a theorizing is the great weakness of any "creationist" worldview. This world-view must be free to grow as the evidence demands. We must not force creationist scientists to enter the lab with any theoretical constraints. A creationist scientist must be free to falsify a creationist view. He must be free to develop data that helps the other point of view, if that is where his research leads him. He must not be forced into an intellectual straight jacket in our desire to develop a creationist worldview. If his best reason shows that evolution theory is the best result or that creationism is most unlikely to develop

a fruitful alternative, then creationists should publish his results. No one should tie scientists to particular Flood mechanisms or hermeneutic techniques.

Intellectual freedom and the free market place of ideas will leave Christians with nothing to fear if our hermeneutic has allowed us to divide rightly the Word, which is Truth. No likely story could ever defeat the Greatest Story Ever Told. Having nothing to fear, therefore, creationists should pursue their intellectual quest for another (and we think more biblical) view of the world secure enough in our God and faith to allow our doubts to freely surface. It is that freedom of thought, grounded in the nature of God Himself that is the best reason to dare to be a creationist.

Christians and Creationism: Incarnational Science

Plato and his disciples did not produce the scientific revolution. Later Greek philosophers took Plato's work and abused it. They veered between a worship of nature as god and a denigration of nature as worthless. Both extremes made science difficult to sustain since one does not study a god or spend time on a worthless thing.

Intelligent design is a useful first step. Christians expected something like it to be true, but the traditional Christian has additional sources of information (such as the pages of sacred Scripture). We have more knowledge than the knowledge that can be gained from the design theorist alone. Knowledge of design, seeing finger prints in creation, is just a clue to the nature of reality.

There is even richer information to be gained from divine Revelation. Phillip Johnson was right when he suggested that

the key passage in the debate about Christianity and Darwinism was not Genesis 1, but John 1. The divine Word became flesh and so brought reason down to Earth and clothed it in humanity. The incarnation of the Word made science possible, because it ennobled matter without divinizing it. Even the fallen world became very good, because it clothed the God-Man Jesus Christ.

The Incarnation also suggests a God who is involved in His creation. The Word made everything that was made. He then came and lived among His human creations. This suggests an active and involved creator God and not the distant God of deism.

The Incarnation story is not over. Cosmic history does not *just* have a meaningful *beginning* for a Christian theist, but an end. History is going someplace and Creator God will personally bring the End of the cosmos by His own mighty hand. His plans for the End suggest a God who is not distant, but one who is involved in every facet of cosmic history. Surely the Savior whose eye is on the sparrow cares about the details of His creation! His care and compassion suggest that He would minimize animal pain and suffering in every possible way. Human pain is difficult enough to understand, but animal pain that cannot teach the animal anything is even more difficult. One reason to prefer a younger to an older earth is to minimize this problem of animal pain.

Divine revelation teaches us that God continues to "intervene" in a creation He loves. Every human conception is also a singular creative act as a soul is placed within each new body. God "intervenes" in history millions of times each year! This does not suggest a God who is distant, but one who is involved. A Christian is justi-

fied to look for the fingerprints of God in all of creation, because of what he discovers about God's nature through biblical revelation of the Incarnation. The fact of the Incarnation and God's revelation of Himself as Trinity through it changed everything. Plato could not imagine this and Judaism missed it.