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Why Evolution is First and Foremost a Religious Belief — Part 1

Junk science guru Dan Agin provides us with a typical skeptics' view of evolution and creationism:

Evolutionary theory is no more a guess than atomic theory. We have so much evidence supporting not only the idea of the evolution of life forms but of the process of natural selection, that only a person with a closed mind can possibly ignore the obvious conclusions about the validity of the theory. ... Creationism and its offshoot, intelligent design, are not science, they are nonscience, the work of science nullified, and as such they are of no real consequence to science, since they offer nothing that can be useful in the exploration of the real world."¹

1. Dan Agin, *Junk Science: How Politicians, Corporations, and Other Hucksters Betray Us* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 199.

What Agin is saying is that there is myth (creation) and there is science (evolution) – a view presented in newspapers, public school textbooks, and many television science programs.

Yet evolutionists are often honest in describing their beliefs as the property of those who seek a world view away from God's dominion. Julian Huxley's *Evolutionary Humanism* is one of my favorite books – not because I agree with him but because he is someone who is that honest. Huxley says Darwin has rightly been called the "Newton of biology" – a claim that immediately presents Darwin as no more a discoverer of evolution than Newton was a discoverer of the laws of motion. This is contrary to the view of Robert Clark and James Bales who argue that Darwin wanted to escape God's existence with faulty reasoning if necessary.² Darwin, Huxley says, rendered evolution "inescapable as a fact, comprehensible as a process, all-embracing as a concept."³

2. Robert Clark and James Bales, *Why Scientists Accept Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Baker House, 1966), 50. A quotation therein from Robert E.D. Clark should suffice to sum up Darwin's reasoning: "Perhaps there was never a better instance of a man throwing away the baby with the bath water. Darwin was determined to escape from design and a personal God at all costs. He did so by deciding that either every trivial detail in nature must be designed or else that there was no design at all. Since the former possibility did not ring true, he refused to discuss the subject seriously any more. As Raven has so well remarked, 'His letters exhibit a resolution not to follow his thoughts to their logical conclusion.'"

3. Julian Huxley, *Evolutionary Humanism* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1992), 9.

What does Huxley mean that evolution is a fact, a process, and a concept? This strange verbiage doesn't make sense anywhere else. We do not call bacterial resistance to antibiotics a fact (which it surely is), a concept, and process. Huxley notes that "evolution in the most general terms is a natural process of irreversible change, which generates novelty, variety, and increase of organization: and all reality can be regarded in one aspect as evolution."⁴ It is tempting, though, if one is biased, to apply to all of nature and the universe what one sees in a small portion of it – much like applying the concepts of erosion to explaining the origin of the Grand Canyon. Thus the evolutionist applies his idea of the concept of evolution to everything and wants to believe that his ideas are the fact of evolution. Huxley furthermore says:

Thus the evolutionary vision, first opened up for us by Charles Darwin a century back, illuminates our existence in a simple but almost overwhelming way. It exemplifies the truth that truth is great and will prevail, and the greater truth that truth will set us free. Evolutionary truth frees us from subservient fear of the unknown and supernatural, and exhorts us to face this new freedom with courage tempered with wisdom, and hope tempered with knowledge. It shows us our destiny and our duty. It shows us mind enthroned above matter, quantity subordinate to quality. It gives our anxious minds support by revealing the incredible possibilities that have already been realized in evolution's past; and, by pointing to the hidden treasure of fresh possibilities that still remain to be realized, it gives us a potent incentive for fulfilling our evolutionary role in the long future of our planet.⁵

4. Huxley, 29.

5. Huxley, 88-89.

This is not science. This is metaphysics. What Huxley is proposing is faith built around the foundations of continuing evolutionist progress without the supernatural.

Other humanists want to install evolution as a world view using science for justification of it. In 1933 thirty-four humanists signed just such a statement: *Humanist Manifesto I*. Its first few affirmations state that their bedrock beliefs clearly rest in evolutionist naturalism: the universe exists and has not been created, man has originated as a result of an evolutionary process, the belief that man is body and spirit must be rejected, and science reveals that our values do not come from any supernatural creator.⁶ No other "scientific fact" is mentioned – the freezing point of water, for instance – and the only conclusion one must reach, then, is that only "the fact of evolution" is the basis for a secular religion of liberal freedom (as in the freedom to obtain an abortion or divorce).

6. Paul Kurtz, ed., *Humanist Manifestos I and II* (New York: Prometheus, 1973), 8.

Similarly, Corliss Lamont says that humanism:

... believes that Nature itself constitutes the sum total of reality, that matter-energy and not mind is the foundation stuff of the universe, and that supernatural entities simply do not exist.

This nonreality of the supernatural means, on the human level, that men do not possess supernatural and immortal souls; and, on the level of the universe as a whole, that our cosmos does not possess a supernatural and eternal God.⁷

⁷ Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1965), 116.

Humanist faith in a future secular country is unceasing and assumes that if religion is not totally eliminated, then at least greater religious tolerance ensues. For instance, Lionel Elvin suggests that fifty years ago (which would for him have been roughly 1911) it would have been natural for one person to say to another that the two of them worshiped different gods. But now, one would say that we merely worship the same god differently. Today, he says, “the time is coming when we shall see that this world view based on the postulate of supernatural powers, immediate or distant, intervening or merely originating, does not fit our present time.”⁸ Despite the prevalence of religion, humanists simply ignore the evidence that man is basically religious, and they continue the struggle working toward a secular earthly heaven someday.

8. Huxley, *The Humanist Frame* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 272, 279.

Among evolutionists there is always the suspicion that belief in any god may be ratified by new discoveries – hence the need to minimize or refute any evidence that might do that. Conway Morris, described as “one of the foremost paleontologists of his time” by Thomas Hayden in *U.S. News and World Report*, argues that evolutionary history does not make sense if we assume that evolution happens by accidents. Rather, Morris argues evolution has “trajectories” in which life evolves along certain convergent lines because life contains a limited number of possible outcomes.⁹ Hayden suggests that these ideas lead toward an armistice between religion and science, but does note that many scientists lean toward atheism. Morris’ colleagues worry that his book *Life’s Solution* “offers free ammunition to fundamentalist Christians who insist on a literal reading of biblical Creation.” An unnamed paleontologist whom Hayden quotes suggests that creationists have always misquoted isolated statements by scientists, and now Morris has given them a whole book from which to quote.¹⁰ Once again, it is obvious that science, although seemingly unbiased, is a chosen advocate of evolution guarding its rear flank against religion.

9. Thomas Hayden, “Divining Nature’s Plan,” *U.S. News and World Report* 135:10 (September 29, 2003), <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/culture/articles/030929/29evo.htm> (accessed April 14, 2013).

10. Hayden, http://www.usnews.com/usnews/culture/articles/030929/29evo_2.htm (accessed April 14, 2013).

When David Berlinski criticized Darwinism for *Commentary* magazine,¹¹ Paul Gross replied to reduce “the encouragement Mr. Berlinski has given creationists and other consumers of anti-

science who might be among *Commentary's* readers."¹² Berlinski did not extol any type of creationism (young-earth, old-earth, or even progressive), and in his reply to critics he reaffirmed that he did not subscribe to any creationism. Gross, however, was more worried about the satisfaction the religious might get from Berlinski's article than its truth.

11. David Berlinski, "The Deniable Darwin," *Commentary* (June 1996), 19.

12. This is from Gross' critique of Berlinski's "The Deniable Darwin," which critique was published in *Commentary* (September, 1996), 9.

Richard Dawkins makes it clear that evolution is a delight to his philosophy when he suggests that Darwin made it possible to be an "intellectually fulfilled atheist."¹³ One of the most recent developments in evolutionary biology is the concept of punctuated equilibrium in which gaps in the fossil record are explained by rapid speciation and not by divine creation. Dawkins admits to this when talking about the fossils in the Cambrian strata appearing already formed – a fact, he says, that has "delighted creationists." He says that adherents of both schools of thought – punctuationists and gradualists¹⁴ – agree that the only other explanation is divine creation, and both reject it.¹⁵ If there's one thing that these evolutionists can agree on, whether they have to massage the evidence to show a gradual evolution of species with transitional links or rapid evolution without them (in essence, two choices which are mutually exclusive), it is that creationism cannot receive a hearing.

13. Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: Norton, 1987), 9.

14. By "gradualist" he means those who believe that evolution proceeds slowly rather than in rapid bursts, which is what "punctuationists" believe.

15. Dawkins, 229-230.

Robert Jastrow, in a frequently quoted statement, says:
[S]cientists cannot bear the thought of a natural phenomenon which cannot be explained, even with unlimited time and money. There is a kind of religion in science; it is the religion of a person who believes there is order and harmony in the Universe. Every event can be explained in a rational way as the product of some previous event; every effect must have its cause.¹⁶

Jastrow also has this religious faith and, in an interview for the video *The Privileged Planet*, admits that

Just as I can't believe there was a creator, I can't believe this all happened by chance which implies there was a creator. You see, I'm at a completely hopeless bind and I stay there. Again, I find it hard to believe that this is all a matter of atoms and molecules and so I try to fit into my concept of the world the conclusion that there is a larger force of some kind which we can call "god" or you can call it whatever. But I can't accept that. I'm what's called a materialist in philosophy. It means that I believe the world consists entirely of material substances.... That's what my science tells me.¹⁷

16. Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Norton, 1992), 105.

17. Illustra Media, *The Privileged Planet*, directed by Ladd and Wayne Allen, DVD (La Mirada, California: 2004).

Lastly, when debating J. P. Moreland, Kai Nielsen argues that it is dangerous to base arguments for the existence of God on speculative science that involves risky theories about the origin of the universe, including theories about the Big Bang. Nielsen states that “scientific fads come and go” and that some of these are at the fringes of science. William Lane Craig, replying to Nielsen, states that he cannot help but smile because atheists will seize any scientific evidence that contradicts the Bible or theism, but not jump on the scientific bandwagon when it supports the Bible.¹⁸ Nielsen is worried about and fearful of discoveries that might validate Moreland’s case and has revealed that he has prematurely made up his mind before a full debate.

18. J.P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen, *Does God Exist: The Debate Between Theists and Atheists* (New York: Prometheus, 1991), 70, 153.

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