

The Darwin Wars

“An unpopular opinion is almost never given a fair hearing.”
- George Orwell

By Joan d’Arc

The modern Darwin wars began in October 2004, when the town of Dover, PA, became the first school district to mandate the teaching of Intelligent Design (ID theory). However, to be clear on this, the school board had adopted a policy that simply required 9th graders to hear a prepared statement about ID theory in the Biology classroom. In no way was equal time being given to the new theory. Nonetheless, two dissenting board members resigned on October 18, 2004.

In May 2005, the Kansas School Board voted to teach Intelligent Design in public schools alongside the theory of Darwinian evolution. The fight that ensued was billed by the media as the anti-Darwinists against the scientific establishment, which considers the evidence of the origins of life to be “beyond dispute.” It was clear the fight had gotten real down and dirty when, at a hearing, William Harris (co-founder of Intelligent Design Network Inc.) projected a “strategy letter” from a Kansas Citizens for Science member onto a screen. The letter stated that the way to defeat the “anti-evolution forces” was to portray them as “political opportunists, evangelical activists, unprincipled bullies and ignoramuses.”

Darwinists indeed see the I.D. movement as driven by a bunch of hicks in a junk wagon. If anyone is interested in applying rationality to the issue, they could start by reading the 117-page Kansas Science Education Standards (www.ksde.org, which at this revision in 2008 is no longer posted). The curriculum is nothing short of the sentinel of science. Approved on November 8, 2005, the curriculum states, “All scientific theories should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully, and critically considered.” It asserts: “Compelling student belief is inconsistent with the goal of education. Nothing in science ... should be taught dogmatically.”

The Kansas Standards “defines good science, how science moves forward, what holds science back, and how to critically analyze the conclusions scientists make.” It calls for students to “learn about the best evidence for modern evolutionary theory, but also to learn about areas where scientists are raising scientific criticisms of the theory.” The curriculum’s objectives are to help students understand the “full range of scientific views” on evolutionary theory, to develop understanding of the scientific method by studying “opposing scientific evidence,” and to ensure that science education in Kansas is “secular, neutral and non-ideological.”

In September 2005, the National Academy of Sciences responded to the Kansas Standards deeming anything contrary to Darwin is simply not science: “There really is no “range of scientific views” on this issue—those views that are being touted today are not scientific (despite

statements to the contrary by their proponents), but they are ideological.” By November 2006, Dorothy had returned safely from Oz and the conservative board of education in Kansas had shifted to a more moderate majority, and promised to restore a science curriculum “that does not subject evolution to critical attack.” The moral is, don’t buck the System, Dorothy.

There is no “range of scientific views” because Darwinism is the state religion of America. In her book *Evolution as a Religion*, philosopher Mary Midgley argues that evolution functions dually as a creation myth and a scientific theory, and that its sociobiological “escalator model” (of Herbert Spencer) is not only non-Darwinian, but distorts the theory’s scientific standing toward that of ideology and myth. Midgley asserts, “The theory of evolution is not just an inert piece of theoretical science,” but is also “a powerful folk tale about human origins.” She warns against applying the confidence due to well-established scientific findings to a “vast area which has only an imaginative affinity with them,” and where only the “trappings of a detached and highly venerated science are present.”

My approach to this subject is not religious in any way. As for my papers, I have a B.A. in Anthropology and I was a card-carrying atheist for many years, including my time studying in college. I now consider myself to be an atheist creationist, if there can be such a crypto-animal. My Darwinian dissent began shortly after college, and in 1997 I began writing *Space Travelers and the Genesis of the Human Form*, published in 2000 by The Book Tree. A second book called *Phenomenal World* followed.

In 2003, I founded a secular-based website, BIPED: Beings for Intelligent Purpose in Evolutionary Design (biped.info) to highlight valid scientific alternatives to Darwinian evolution other than “creation,” although I’m not particularly opposed to that term (if it walks like a duck). Among those alternatives are: Gaia Theory, Vitalism, Morphic Resonance (a.k.a. Formative Causation), Intelligent Design, Panspermia and Directed Panspermia. This article provides an overview of these theories for those who do not realize there are valid scientific hypotheses that are contrary to Darwinian theory—they just aren’t part of the naturalist paradigm. As such they have a right to exist and students have a right to learn about them, if not in school then at least on their own on the Internet.

Gaia Theory

Microbiologist Lynn Margulis and chemist James Lovelock formulated the Gaia Hypothesis in the 1970s (now upgraded to a theory). They proposed that life creates the conditions for its own existence, challenging the reigning theory that the forces of geology set the conditions for life, while plants and animals, accidentally along for the ride, evolved by chance under the right conditions.

The Darwinian concept of adaptation to the environment has been seriously questioned by Margulis, Lovelock and others working from a systems point of view. Evolution cannot be explained by the adaptation of organisms to local environments, they argue, because a network of living systems is also shaping the environment. The evolution of life, according to the Gaia Theory, depends on a cyclical, self-regulating feedback relationship. Margulis has stated that one day neo-Darwinism will be judged as “a minor 20th century religious sect within the sprawling religious persuasion of Anglo-Saxon biology.” She has also asserted that Darwinism is based on

outdated reductionist concepts, asserting that, “It’s wrong like infectious medicine was wrong before Pasteur. It’s wrong like phrenology is wrong. Every major tenet of it is wrong.”

Lovelock popularized his Gaia theory in 1972 in a paper titled, “Gaia as seen through the atmosphere,” and in his 1979 book, *Gaia: A New Look At Life on Earth*. His initial hypothesis proposed that the whole Earth behaves like one self-regulating organism wherein all of the geologic, hydrologic, and biologic cycles of the planet mutually self-regulate the conditions on the surface of the Earth so as to perpetuate life. When the mainstream scientific body got hold of the theory it changed significantly and we can guess why. It didn’t conform to the Darwinian paradigm, which holds that evolution has no overarching purpose or goal. Lovelock’s theory was *teleological*: some force *outside of nature* was possibly controlling the evolution of forms. According to Darwin himself, if any outside force (super- or supra-natural) was found to be at work, we were instructed to throw out his baby with the bath water.

Lynn Margulis still insists that consciousness evolved, but where did the consciousness come from? Answer: It had to come from inside the system (Earth-based) in the “naturalist” framework. According to evolutionists, consciousness has to evolve; it can’t have been there in the first place. This conjecture is based on the anthropic principle: the minimum time required for the evolution of “intelligent observers.” In this scheme, a billion years is required for the evolution of intelligence. The anthropic timescale argument posits that the types of processes allowed in the Universe must be of such an age that “slow evolutionary processes will have had time to produce intelligent beings from non-living matter.” (Barrow)

Pondering how consciousness “arose in the Universe,” this peculiar Western viewpoint refuses the primacy of consciousness, and instead assumes a chain of linear metamorphoses, accidental and directionless, from nonsentience to sentience. As I have written in *Space Travelers and the Genesis of the Human Form*, the evolution story dramatizes the “natural” transfiguration of mankind through a linear procession of metamorphoses that eventually separate him from the animals of his ancestry—evolution is Western man’s totem.

Vitalism vs. Natural Selection

Many people I talk to are under the assumption that Darwinism is playfully malleable and open to their mishmash of supernatural ideas. I try to inform them that Darwinian evolution is an all-or-nothing theory; it will not allow inclusion of any vitalist or supra-natural process—or, goddess forbid, any anthropomorphism. It is very exacting on that rule. If you are espousing any form of supernaturalism, you are clearly not a Darwinian. Perhaps you are a vitalist.

Vitalism is the doctrine which espouses that life processes arise from a nonmaterial essential principle that cannot be explained by physics and chemistry alone. One of its adherents was Swedish chemist Jöns Jakob Berzelius (1799-1848), who hypothesized that only living tissue, by possessing a “life-force,” can produce organic compounds. French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) proposed the idea of an *élan vital*, or creative force, at the heart of evolution. Bergson advocated a return to neo-vitalism, which maintains that the phenomena of life are unpredictable, chaotic, and beyond the range of science. The well-known scientist Wilhelm Reich was a vitalist and Darwin’s peer Jean Baptiste de Lamarck utilized vitalism in his theory of acquired characteristics.

Yet, the notion of a life-force (perhaps involving the “ether” which Einstein wrongly abandoned) is flatly contrary to Darwinian theory, which emphasizes no purpose, goal or outside force at work in the development of new species.¹ To be sure, the principle of natural selection is the only suspicious force allowed in through the back door of Darwinism.² What force in nature does the *selecting* of the *fit* characteristics and how does it produce new and (at the same time) useful structures by random chance? Indeed, Darwin later regretted his use of the term because it suggested a mysterious guiding force was at work.

Natural selection is a supposedly blind “natural” process which somehow ensures (let’s not say “chooses”) that the most *fit individuals survive to produce the most offspring*. Darwin’s concept of natural selection simply defines the *fittest* as the individuals that survive—the fittest organisms are, plain and simple, the ones that produce the most offspring. Hence, natural selection is a meaningless tautology which essentially states, “those organisms which leave the most offspring, leave the most offspring.”

There is no evidence that would confirm the hypothesis, argues zoologist Pierre Grasse, that the concept of natural selection is “an evolutionary process capable of producing innovative designs” (i.e. new species). He explains that supposed proofs of evolution in action are simply “observations of demographic facts, local fluctuations of genotypes and geographical distributions”—not new and distinct forms.

The Fields of Morphe

A modern example of vitalist theory is Rupert Sheldrake’s theory of Morphic Resonance (“formative causation”), described in detail in his book, *A New Science of Life*. Sheldrake believes morphogenetic fields are non-physical carriers of information (intelligence) which guide the development of an organism in the form of its species. He believes DNA is not the source of structure, but is a “receiver” that translates information into physical form. In this sense, genes are grossly overrated, he states.

Morphic fields (from the Greek *morphe*, which means *form*), he explains, are the organizing fields of nature. Morphic fields organize in living organisms as well as in the forms of crystals and molecules. Each kind of molecule has its own type of morphic field, and even our own mental lives depend on this field. In his book, *The Presence of the Past*, Sheldrake explains that morphogenetic fields contain an inherent memory, and he believes the structure of the fields “depends on what has happened before.” Inheritance depends on cumulative memory built up through “a pool of species experience” in a process he calls morphic resonance. Sheldrake believes vitalism has come back to life as a scientific theory and is being embraced in many corners.

Intelligent Design

Intelligent Design is the science that detects “signs of intelligence.” In his book, *The Design Inference*, its leading proponent, mathematician William Dembski, employs statistical testing of the natural world to see if it shows evidence of intelligent design. He explains:

“To say intelligent causes are empirically detectable is to say there exist well-defined methods that, based on observable features of the world, can reliably distinguish intelligent causes from undirected natural causes. Many special sciences have already

developed such methods for drawing this distinction—notably forensic science, cryptography, archeology, and the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI). Essential to all these methods is the ability to eliminate chance and necessity.”

For instance, scientists such as Dr. Mark Carlotto and Professor Stanley McDaniel explore the artificiality of formations on Mars. They argue that natural features do not exhibit a high degree of parallelism, symmetry or geometrical straight-edged patterns. Statistically, a feature on another planetary body such as the moon or Mars which was found to exhibit a high degree of parallelism or geometry, such as large-scale patterns that look like walls or streets, could perhaps be artificial constructions. Likewise, according to Richard Hoagland, such geometries might be construed as a mathematical “signal” from an intelligent race.

Although the late SETI pioneer Carl Sagan believed that such investigations are scientifically legitimate, many scientists disagree that Intelligent Design is comparable to SETI. In his essay entitled “Design Yes, Intelligent No,” Massimo Pigliucci asserts:

“Dembski is absolutely correct that plenty of human activities, such as SETI, investigations into plagiarism, or encryption, depend on the ability to detect intelligent agency. Where he is wrong is in assuming only one kind of design: for him design equals intelligence and, even though he admitted that such an intelligence may be an advanced extraterrestrial civilization, his preference is for a god, possibly of the Christian variety. The problem is that natural selection, a natural process, also fulfills the complexity-specification criterion, thereby demonstrating that it is possible to have unintelligent design in nature.”

According to this argument, the comparison of ID theory with SETI is flawed because the highest design in the court of naturalistic science, in fact the *only* design allowed, is unintelligent design. Stripped of any meaning or explanatory power outside of Darwinian scientism, this phrase only reiterates Phillip Johnson’s assertion that natural selection is simply an algorithmic theory of non-random death.

Try as it will, Dembski argues, Darwinian evolution cannot explain human consciousness. The concept of natural selection, he explains, “places a premium on survival and reproduction and has no stake in truth or conscious thought. Indeed, meat-puppet robots are just fine as the output of a Darwinian evolutionary process.”

When the Darwinian establishment charges that ID theory is not science, they are really saying it is not based on scientific naturalism. The heart of the reigning paradigm of naturalism is that intelligence is an accidental byproduct of evolution. In contrast, Intelligent Design tells us that we live in an intelligent universe. In ID theory, intelligence trickles down from the cosmos, if you will, and in naturalism it builds up incrementally from prebiotic chemical soup. As William Dembski has charged, “For the naturalist, the world is intelligible only if it starts off without intelligence and then evolves intelligence.”

Ballistic Panspermia

Panspermia is the ultimate trickle down theory that life on earth was seeded by microbial life from space. This theory was advocated by many, among them the Greek philosopher,

Anaxagoras (500-428 BCE), Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894), and William Thomson Kelvin (1824-1897). Swedish physicist Svante Arrhenius later promulgated the theory of Radio Panspermia, wherein microbes from space are transported by light pressure.

The proponents of modern day Panspermia are British astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle and Sri Lankan mathematician-astronomer Chandra Wickramasinghe, who theorize that DNA arrived on earth via meteorites (Ballistic Panspermia) or by comets (Modern Panspermia). In fact, Hoyle mathematically dismissed the chance of evolution having actually occurred the way Darwinists propose, arguing, “even if the whole universe consisted of organic soup ... the chance of producing merely the basic enzymes of life by random processes without intelligent direction would be . . . a probability too small to imagine.”

Hoyle concluded that “Darwinian evolution is most unlikely to get even one polypeptide sequence right, let alone the thousands on which living cells depend for survival.” Given that there are trillions of different kinds of cells in delicate balance, he argues, each of these varied cellular structures would also have to develop by chance. This mathematical impossibility is well known to scientists, he said; yet most of them “cling to Darwinism because of its grip on the educational system.” They do not want to be branded as “heretics.”

Directed Panspermia

As molecular biologist Michael Denton articulates in *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, “Nothing illustrates as clearly just how intractable a problem the origin of life has become than the fact that world authorities can seriously toy with the idea of Panspermia.” Such describes the dilemma of British molecular biologist Francis Crick, who received the 1962 Nobel Prize for the discovery of the double helix structure of DNA.

After discovering the astonishingly huge and complex information storage capacity of the DNA molecule (humans have three billion coding letters in each nucleus), Crick could not imagine any conditions under which this information vehicle could have evolved from non-living chemicals. He argued that since the earth has too short a history for life to have developed here, it must have developed on another planet in a solar system several billion years older than ours.

Crick’s aversion to religion led him and Leslie Orgel, in 1973, to put forth the theory of Directed Panspermia. To get around the idea of God, Crick proposed that the primordial seeds of life were shipped to earth in spaceships billions of years ago by intelligent beings. After proposing this idea, Crick was left in the predicament of explaining the origin of the ET beings, and finally had to acknowledge the paucity of the idea, saying, “Every time I write a paper on the origin of life, I swear I will never write another one, because there is too much speculation running after too few facts.” (*Life Itself*, 1981)

Although an atheist, Crick was quoted as saying, “An honest man, armed with the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense the origin of life appears to be almost a miracle.”

Writing in his essay, “Astrogenesis,” William Hamilton explains, “The real paradigm shift is to consider that the Universe is a life-producing nursery and that the genesis and evolution of life is not earth-centered but rather is distributed among the stars of the galaxies.” Let’s not forget, however, that the theory of Panspermia still leaves us with the question of the origin of those

stars and those galaxies, which of course was never addressed by Charles Darwin; nor was the actual origin of any species.

A Scientific Revolution

In his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn defines a scientific revolution as a “non-cumulative developmental episode” whereby an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an “incompatible new one.” Such scientific revolutions begin with a growing sense that “an existing paradigm has ceased to function adequately in the exploration of an aspect of nature.” The emergence of new theories is usually preceded by a period of “pronounced professional insecurity,” since it involves large-scale paradigm destruction.

The essential problem is, scientists cannot do research in the absence of a controlling paradigm. They cannot pull the floor out from under themselves, and when it goes this structure will fall hard. Kuhn explains, a scientific theory “is declared invalid only if an alternative candidate is available to take its place.” The normal response to crisis, he explains, will be to loosen the rules of normal problem solving in ways that will permit the new paradigm to emerge. This essentially describes the action taken by the Kansas School Board in its Science Education Standards. The new paradigm will emerge when the youth of tomorrow are not so emotionally and financially committed to the old one. Reading alternative science on the internet is a place to start.

Intelligent Design is a mathematically based theory, not a religious theory. Paranoid tirades about Christians taking over the world have nothing to do with the facts of the matter. Those who react this way are reacting emotionally to the messenger rather than opening the message with the minimum decorum expected of adult human beings. By dogmatically rejecting Intelligent Design without fully comprehending it, we allow the reigning naturalist, materialist scientific paradigm to become a fascist element in society. We do a great disservice to democratic scientific debate and to the way our children learn. And as for the separation of church and state, shouldn't we also be concerned about the separation of science and state?

The question we should ask is, Do we want our children and grandchildren to be *taught* or do we want them to be *indoctrinated*? Indeed, America's educational system is in dire trouble when a Chinese paleontologist notices that, “In China it's OK to criticize Darwin but not the government, in the U.S. it's OK to criticize the government but not Darwin.”

Footnotes

1. Darwin never quite defined the term species. He wrote in *Origin of Species*, “it will be seen that I look at the term species as one arbitrarily given for the sake of convenience to a set of individuals closely resembling each other, and that it does not essentially differ from the term variety, which is given to less distinct and more fluctuating forms.” He wrote that “varieties” are simply “incipient species.” Forever teetering on the edge of potentiality, species are always in a hapless phase of *becoming*.

2. Some evolutionists argue that Darwin never claimed natural selection to be the exclusive mechanism of evolution. Selection merely preserves or destroys something that already exists. Mutation must provide the innovative changes in design which natural selection then tests out in the field. Problematically, mutations that are large enough to cause visible and immediate changes are deadly.

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