



"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)

REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

OCTOBER 2005

What's Happening?

Upcoming Events

A number of events are planned for November. All are free and open to the public. Plan to attend one or all of them!

- Nov. 6, Dr. Fuz Rana on "Solving the Mystery of Adam," 7-9 PM, Lake Sammamish Foursquare Church, 14434 NE 8th Street, Bellevue, 425-463-7000 or www.lakesamm.org.
- Nov. 7, Dr. Fuz Rana on "Solving the Mystery of Adam," 7-9 PM, Christ Memorial Church, 18901 8th Ave. NE, Poulsbo, 360-779-5515 or www.christmemorial.net.
- Nov. 8, Dr. Hugh Ross on "Creation: Fact or Myth," 7-9 PM, University of Washington, Kane Hall 130. For directions to Kane Hall, go to www.washington.edu/home/maps/.
- Nov. 9, Dr. Ross on "Creation: Fact or Myth," 7-9 PM, His Place Community Church, 1480 S. Burlington Blvd., Burlington, 360-757-3111 or www.hisplacechurch.com.

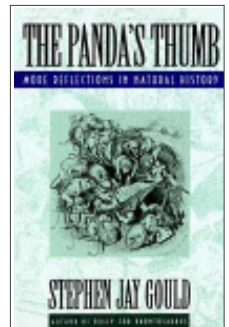
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Why Scientific Naturalism is Logically Fallacious

REV. GARY JENSEN

The primary challenge for theists in the creation/evolution debate seems to be not over the evidence, but rather logic and definition. A curious bystander might imagine both parties in the debate would be eager for lively engagement in an endeavor to see the truth win out. But, in fact, sustained discussion rarely ensues. While "creationists" are eager to present their case, evolutionists oppose debate on the allegation that, as the late Stephen J. Gould has argued, science and religion are "non-overlapping magisteria."² Science, Gould states, works within the sphere of nature and empirical fact, while religion is limited to the realm of subjective values.³



Gould claims that it is pointless to grant creationists a place at the table because creationism is not science. But, is that intellectually valid? No, it is not. For one thing, he uses a false definition of religion—and Christianity in particular—to making this claim. There are many other reasons as well. It is not my purpose here to rehash the creation/evolution debate on scientific grounds, but rather to address this issue philosophically. I wish to clarify why the exclusion of theism as a potential explanation of origins is flawed on logical grounds.

The philosophy Gould has championed in this matter has been called "scientism," or "scientific naturalism." These terms, under several variations, name the conviction that nature embraces the whole of reality, so that scientific inquiry becomes the sole manner for ascertaining fact. Gould, of course, is not alone in this conviction. A broad chorus of scientific elites argue for the exclusion of "theistic tainting" from the question of origins. Perhaps the best way to summarize this opposition to creationism is by reference to the stated official position of the American Atheists:⁴

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Because an intelligible use of the term “creation” must imply the existence of a “creator,” and because the creator of all of nature must be, quite literally, super-natural, we see that the fundamental force operating in “creation science” is a super-natural force—which is a polite term for magic. Science, however, involves the study of natural forces only, and ceases to be science when it attempts to explain phenomena by means of super-natural forces.⁵

Now, there is one aspect of the origins issue where I agree with scientific naturalists—namely, that some creationists use questionable science. I part company with so-called “creation scientists” who attempt to do science from their Bibles, claiming scientific study begins with one’s Bible and the facts of science must yield to their private interpretation of the Scripture. Real scientific analysis moves in the opposite direction *from* empirical observations, *toward* conclusions.

However, that being said, it is wrong for scientific naturalists to argue from the errors of “creation scientists” that valid scientific hypotheses must yield only naturalistic causes. The exclusion of theism as a viable hypothesis because some creationists use questionable science commits the logical error known as *genetic fallacy*. A defect in the source or origin of a claim is not evidence a hypothesis is invalid. Rather, a hypothesis should be judged on its merits.

A second problem is the structure of their argument. Stated as a categorical syllogism, their major premise is *science considers only naturalistic causes*, their minor premise is *theistic causes are super-natural*, and their conclusion is *therefore God cannot be the creator of the nature*. This argument is a classic example of a *non-sequitur*. Were it true that scientific study considers only natural forces, then science is by its own self-limitations not competent to address the question of origins because it has decreed from the outset that only one explanation from a field of potentially valid causes can and will be considered.

Imagine a forensic scientist approaching a well-dressed corpse lying in a pool of blood at the end of an alley with the assignment to determine the cause of death. What confidence should the public have if the investigator decided in advance to rule out murder (an intelligent cause) and consider only death by natural causes? The wholesale rejection of a supernatural intelligence as a potential cause of the universe is just as absurd. In fact, there is no *prima facie* reason why God (an intelligent being) cannot be creator of the cosmos. The answer to that question should conclude an investigation rather than define its terms.

A third problem is scientism is not objective. The exclusion of God as a potential cause of nature invalidates the claim that science will explore the question of origins fairly. The “polite” term for protecting a desired conclusion with a self-serving definition as the major premise, amounts to the logical fallacy *begging the question*. Neither theism nor atheism, of

See SCIENTISM, *page 6*

In the NEWS...

[YEC Grand Canyon Claims](#)

This article on the R²'s Science Watch site takes a critical look at the young-earth claim that the Grand Canyon provides compelling evidence for a recent creation. Go to: <http://sciencewatch.blogspot.com/2005/09/yec-grand-canyon-claims-fail-test-of.html>.

[America to Science Educators](#)

This article by Chuck Colson discusses a recent poll that indicates two-thirds of Americans want creationism taught alongside evolution. Go to: www.pfm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=BreakPoint_Commentaries1&CONTENTID=16853&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm.

[Origin of Intelligent Design](#)

This Discovery Institute article examines the claim that intelligent design is simply a repackaged version of creationism. Go to: www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/index.php?command=view&id=2885&program=CSC&callingPage=diiscoMainPage.

[Praying When Depressed](#)

Many people experience profound emptiness and depression that makes it difficult to pray. This article from a Catholic writer provides ten tips for praying and contemplating God’s love when depressed. Go to: www.beliefnet.com/story/145/story_14508.html.

[Scientific Status of I.D.](#)

This article by Stephen Meyer discusses the methodological equivalence of naturalistic and non-naturalistic origins theories. Go to: www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/index.php?command=view&id=2834&program=CSC&callingPage=diiscoMainPage.

[Here We Go Again](#)

This article by Chuck Colson discusses the “Darwinist Inquisition” at many academic institutions rejecting intelligent design. Go to: www.pfm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=BreakPoint_Commentaries1&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=16923.

Book Reviews

Moral Darwinism

Benjamin Wiker
InterVarsity Press, 2002

Reviewer: Mike Brown

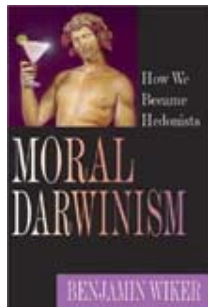
Michael Behe writes: “Benjamin Wiker masterfully traces the ancient roots of the conflict between belief in the intelligent design of the universe and atheistic materialism. This wonderfully written book is a must-read for understanding our modern culture wars.”

Mr. Wiker powerfully builds the case that our culture wars and moral wars are actually cosmological wars. He goes through history revealing the consequences of living by these two incompatible worldviews. He also effectively builds the case that there can be no middle ground. Here are two great quotes I use in my apologetics class:

“Inevitably, a society that contains a significant number of materialists and Christians will be locked in bitter and irreconcilable moral controversy in regard to sexuality and marriage. Both sides begin from fundamentally irreconcilable views of nature and human nature, and so what it means to be reasonable is completely different. The debate concerns two rival cosmologies, two mutually exclusive accounts of the universe, which yield utterly irreconcilable arguments about sexuality.” (p. 89)

“To be blunt, because these fundamental disagreements between the [materialist] and the Christian historically define the rival sides in our moral debates, our society can only become more and more deeply divided. And as a house divided against itself cannot stand, so also our society, defined by two ancient and antagonistic accounts of nature and human nature, cannot withstand this fundamental disagreement for long.” (p. 25)

Wiker points out that when it comes to the materialist worldview, there are ultimately no moral restraints. “What one or two hundred years ago would have made even most materialists blush, would not even raise an eyebrow today; what today makes many materialists cringe will soon enough be quite acceptable.” (pp. 299-300) We have seen this borne out in such areas as sexuality, abortion, euthanasia and eugenics. According to Wiker we have created “...a dreary Brave New World where scientific manipulation of our humanity is destroying our humanity.” (p 319)



A Matter of Days

Hugh Ross
NavPress, 2004

Reviewer: Jeannie Glenn

“Biblical truth has nothing to fear from honest science,” writes Jerry E. White, president of The Navigators, in the forward to this book. This statement dovetails with Dr. Ross’ stated purpose for writing this book—to try to calm the storm that currently rages among Christians regarding the word “day” found in Genesis 1.

Some Christians believe “day” represents a 24-hour period; others understand it to mean an indefinite, but finite, period of time. Many who adhere to a 24-hour view, attribute the controversy to the advent of Darwinism in the mid-1800’s. Dr. Ross explains, however, that the controversy over the length of creation days actually began with the first English translation of the Bible—the KJV—about 200 years prior to Darwin.

In the mid-1600’s, John Lightfoot and James Ussher published their elaborate calculations for the exact date for the creation of the universe. However, their calculations ignored Hebrew scholarship and assumed the Genesis genealogies were complete. Their dates were accepted uncritically virtually everywhere—the exception, perhaps, being China, where Chinese historical records indicated that civilization began and spread before Ussher’s date for the origin of the universe.

Using up-to-date scientific discoveries, and drawing generously from Scripture and a myriad of scientific journals and resources (meticulously recorded in the endnotes), Dr. Ross pulls together a coherent history and progression of the controversy, while continuously pointing out not only that it need not be a controversy, but also how wonderfully solid the scientific evidences are for the God of the Bible, and for supporting belief in Jesus Christ as Creator of the universe.

The flow of content from one chapter to the next is seamless, and the tone throughout is one of gentleness and respect. Dr. Ross’ concern for “those who cannot reconcile the young-earth concept with their scientific observations,” as well as for the divisiveness among us Christians on this topic is heartfelt. As more people read this book, the discussion over the Genesis days should become more informed, open and charitable, and attention should be able to focus outward again, toward those who need to hear of God’s love in the first place.



Evangelical Relativism

MARK RAMBO

What is relativism? Simply put, relativism is the idea that what is true for you may not be true for me. Do some evangelical Christians hold relativistic views? Or better stated, are there non-Biblical traditions within the evangelical community which promote or encourage relativism?

Recently, I listened to talk by Greg Koukl, president of the Stand to Reason Ministry.¹ Koukl pointed out that some evangelical Christians promote the belief that God gives Bible verses to people to cover their personal situations. For example, he spoke of a married woman who became interested in another man and claimed God gave her the verse, “put on the new man,” as permission to pursue the relationship.

While this example is bizarre and few Christians would believe God provided special revelation to the woman to encourage the relationship, it does illustrate the problem with this tradition—it supercedes the God-inspired text and relegates the Bible to subjective, rather than objective, truth. Don’t things like this hurt Christianity and reinforce the same relativism our culture promotes?

Few skeptics will claim Christianity is not true. Rather, most will say Christianity may be true for you, but not for them. So what makes Christianity different from other religions and worldviews? If you have a relativistic view of religion, or are depending upon a “burning in the bosom” or some other form of religious experience, the answer is “not much.” After all, most religions will offer subjective testimonies to validate their faith.

Christianity is different because it is objectively true. The Bible is unique and claims to be the very words of God. The people and places recorded in Bible are not myths, but verifiable by external means. Despite repeated attacks from skeptics throughout the ages, the Bible has passed rigorous tests and has been demonstrated to be historically, archeologically, and textually true. And, if the things in the Bible we can test are true, we can be confident the things we can’t test are true as well.

Throughout Christian history, the Bible has always been the standard against which doctrine, theology, and teachings were tested. This was profoundly true during the reformation when the reformers developed methods for testing and evaluating doctrine. The reformers viewed the Bible as God’s special revelation and the creation as God’s general revelation. The reformers took the methods developed for Biblical evaluation and applied them to the created order leading to the scientific method and the birthing of modern science.

The reformers saw Christianity as an objective truth. They also believed that men were prone to error and their ideas required testing and retesting. Unfortunately, some Christians seem to be moving away from this. Such is the case in the age of the earth debate. In the past, young-earth creationist organizations attempted to provide scientific evidence for their view that the earth is only a few thousand years old. Now, however, they appear to have

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Apologetic TOOLS

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changed their tactics. For example, according to the Institute for Creation Research (ICR):

Those who accept an old earth position are relying on fallible mankind's ideas about the past. It's easy to construct stories to support a position that is based on mankind's ideas. However, we never say that we are trying to "prove" a young earth anyway.²

Other young-earth organizations have made similar statements. Doesn't this appeal to "blind faith" suggest the Christian faith is subjective and thus promote a form of relativism? Doesn't it ignore the Reformers desire for consistency between special and general revelation and the need for a constant testing of our opinions regarding the non-essentials of our faith? I believe it does.

We must continue to promote Christianity as an objective truth. When we don't, we undermine the truth claims of Christianity by allowing skeptics to place Christianity into the non-testable realm of subjective truth. This merely plays into the hands of a culture that wants to see religion through relativistic eyes.

Some Christians are afraid of science. While it is true that many scientists embrace naturalism (i.e., all things have a natural cause), the Biblical truth that the creation reveals God (Rom. 1:9-20) remains objectively true. And, this is being confirmed as scientists learn more about the cosmos. The findings from astronomy, biology, archeology and other fields raise serious questions about the naturalistic model. Rather than the product of blind chance, they point to a cosmos that was carefully and intentionally crafted for the sake of humanity.

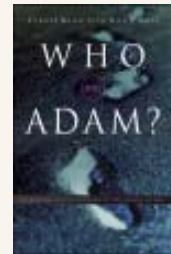
Mark Rambo lives is an Electrical Engineer developing embedded systems and lives in Poulsbo. He is a trained RTB apologist and a member of the Seattle Chapter leadership team.

REFERENCES

1. Greg Koukl, ABC Ambassador Series, Stand to Reason, <http://www.str.org/cgi-bin/shop.pl/task=feature/feature_file=abc.dat>
2. From an email sent to RTB apologist Harold Whidden from the Answers Department at ICR, Tuesday, July 26, 2005.

RTB Resources

Was Adam an accident of nature? Are humans descending from primates? In this new breakthrough book, "Who Was Adam," Hugh Ross and Fuz Rana examine the evidence that challenges these notions and points to a special, supernatural origin of mankind. *Intermediate/Advanced, Hardback, US\$ 12.95.*



In *Origins of Life: Biblical and Evolutionary Models Face Off*, Hugh Ross and Fuz Rana reveal how life's beginnings can be tested. They examine origin-of-life research and compare it to the biblical model, exploding the myth of a naturalistic origin of life. *Intermediate/Advanced, Hardback, US\$ 12.95.*



The length of time represented by the word "day" in the Genesis creation account is a source of controversy in the Christian church. In this new book, *A Matter of Days*, Hugh Ross explores how this controversy developed and addresses many of the key issues of the debate. *All Readers, Paperback, US\$*



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themselves, prejudices open investigation. Rather, it is the demand at the outset that only one outcome will be explored.

It should be noted that the recent radical exclusion of religious influence on scientific inquiry is both *a-historical* and arbitrary. Western science as a disciplined method of exploring nature began in a culture founded on a Christian worldview and with an array of scientists who personally believed in the God of the Bible.⁶ As the renowned philosopher of science, the late Sir Karl Popper has confirmed, “It is a fact that purely metaphysical ideas—and therefore philosophical ideas—have been of the greatest importance for cosmology.”⁷

A fourth problem is scientism is self-refuting. Even when espoused by advanced degree scientists, scientism is philosophy and not science. Once scientists turn their attention from the empirical study of the world and seek to understand the nature of what they are doing, they have left the realm of science and entered the arena of philosophy. Since scientism holds that only empirically observed events have the status of fact, then logically the philosophical position that science is the sole ascertainment of truth cannot be a fact. As Popper has observed, scientism has no foundation beyond illegitimate subjective opinions on which to downplay religious insight or to legitimate itself.⁸

The fifth problem is scientism applies a double standard. The proponents of scientism are not consistent in their rejection of theistic inference. In *The Panda’s Thumb*,⁹ Stephen J. Gould argues the Panda’s paw is so ineptly constructed that it argues against the notion of an intelligent designer. Other proponents offer other examples of apparent incoherence in nature to echo the challenge that evolution, not a supernatural agency, lies behind the many bizarre features in the so-called evolutionary train of life. The problem is they want to have it both ways.

Let it be stated, first of all, that most allegations of poor design have been more than adequately addressed by creationists.¹⁰ However, if apparent design in nature is not allowed to argue for the existence of a supernatural designer because theistic implications don’t belong in science, then by the same principle it follows logically that apparent poor design in nature should not be allowed to argue *against* God’s existence. If naturalists are going to make this argument, then they ought to be logically consistent and open themselves to the other side of the equation.

Finally, scientism commits the logical *fallacy of exclusion* by the out-of-hand rejection of critical evidence. For example, while most people find design to be an obvious trait of the universe, a small number of committed naturalists mockingly claim that design is illusory. At some point, philosophical objection must come to terms with the massive evidence to the contrary. The

finger-in-the-ears approach of the scientific naturalists actually betrays a fear of what legitimate challenge will do to their cherished beliefs. As C. John Collins has admitted:

If we insist that “science” can only deal with natural explanations, then we’re trying to win by controlling definitions ... If we insist that ... only natural-process-based experiments will count as science, the only way that can be rational is if we already know before hand that natural forces are the only things involved. But what if we don’t know that? Then we have no rational right to insist on natural explanations only in science—unless of course, we’re willing to make science independent of the rules of reason.”

Yet, not all evolutionists are so closed-minded. The most celebrated atheist in recent history, Antony Flew, left his atheism behind last year to embrace theism. The chief evidence that persuaded this noted philosopher and champion of atheism was big bang cosmology and the incredible complexity of the living cell. The arbitrary philosophical argument that theistic implications have no place in scientific investigation could no longer hold him back from coming to believe in God.¹² His concession that evidence outweighs trumped-up philosophical opposition has the potential to further open the debate just as it deserves.

Of course, the mere citation of logical objections to the naturalistic argument does not confirm the evidence for an intelligent Creator. My purpose here is not to make that case (others admirably are). Rather, my goal is to assist in opening up honest discussion so that the truth may finally win out. As stated previously, the objection to this debate comes from side of the scientific naturalists. The typical pathetic theistic response to their challenge has been timid and piecemeal, amounting to a plea for acceptance and the making of an exception. We ought instead to be bold.

My thesis here is that naturalistic “emperor” has no clothes. Naturalists should not be allowed to escape their obligation to produce bona fide evidence and actually address the flaws in their position. I hope that exposure of these philosophical weaknesses to the naturalistic position will rekindle confidence in the theistic camp to argue the power and design of the intelligent Creator of the universe without apology.

Gary Jensen is a Lutheran Pastor and lives in Kent. He is a trained RTB apologist and a member of the Seattle Chapter leadership team.

ENDNOTES

1. For the sake of simplicity I use the term “creationist” in the most general sense to include all groups who believe in a God who directly created the universe. Although distinctions between old universe and young universe views matter enormously in other contexts, they are irrelevant to the specific thesis of this article.
2. Stephen J. Gould. Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life. (Ballantine, 1999). p.22.
3. First of all, Gould’s definition of religion is simplistic, factually incorrect and self-serving. Whether or not Christianity is successful in its self-claims (I argue it is), it does make claims for God’s cosmic creative activity and His intervention in history.
4. I am not suggesting that only atheists oppose the consideration of God in regard to scientific questions. There are many scientists who are Christians, yet oppose any connection between God and the role of cause and effect in nature. However, their hesitancy as Norman Geisler describes it, fails to distinguish between “*operation sciences, which are empirically studied, and the equally legitimate forensic sciences, for which a strictly scientific methodology is impossible.*” Norman Geisler. “Scientism.” Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics. (Baker 1999), p.702.
5. <<http://www.atheists.org/evolution/creation-science.html>>
6. Rodney Stark. For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch Hunts, and the End of Slavery. (Princeton University Press, 2003), ch.2, “*God’s Handiwork: The Religious Origins of Science.*”
7. Sir Karl Popper. The Logic of Scientific Discovery. (Routledge, 2002), p.XXIII.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
9. Stephen J. Gould. The Panda’s Thumb. (Norton, 1980).
10. William Dembski. “Intelligent Design is Not Optimal Design.” <<http://www.leaderu.com/offices/dembski/docs/bd-optimal.html>>.
11. C. John Collins. Science or Faith: Friends or Foes. (Crossway Books, 2004) p. 297.
12. <<http://www.biola.edu/antonyflew/flew-interview.pdf>>.er Attebery at RTB: 800-482-7836 or eattebery@reasons.org.



Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

Who Are We?

The Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons To Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound area and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, what God says through His word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and seek to provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

What Do We Do?

Our mission is to remove the doubts of skeptics and strengthen the faith of believers. We provide scientific, historical and philosophical evidence that supports the Christian worldview and helps remove barriers to a belief in God, the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission by:

- Helping people access RTB and other scientifically and biblically sound resources.
- Bringing nationally-known speakers into the area to promote the scientific reliability of the Bible.
- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science, the Bible and related topics.
- Working with teachers and homeschoolers to achieve a balanced approach to the teaching of origins.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of the RTB ministry.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, encouraging them to evaluate their worldviews.

We welcome your involvement and support. For more information, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Seattle RTB, PO Box 99683, Seattle, WA 98139-0683.

Questions? Get Answers.

Whether you are looking for scientific support for your faith or answers to questions about God, the Bible, and science, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. You can also call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.