

## 'Intelligent Design and Science?'

Call me paranoid but I think what is called 'intelligent design' is being promoted by sources that place little value on science or for how science works. Evolution from its beginning has been viewed as a threat to the literal interpretation of the Biblical story of creation. (I place a very high and personal value on the Bible, and believe that it is always at risk of being misused-especially when its symbolic language is taken literally, or interpreted as historical fact). Many people have heard of the Scopes "monkey trial" that took place in Tennessee in the 1920's, which is portrayed in the movie *Inherit The Wind*. This event disturbed some Bible believers by making humans seem (to them) too much like animals, and bringing into question such religious doctrines as the "fall of humankind," which are often literalized and historicized from the Bible stories. I think such ideas are what many literalist Bible believers have a deep need to keep in tact, even after all that has been learned about the nature of the Bible in the past 100 years.

To believe there is an "intelligent design" behind evolution is a philosophical or religious idea, not a scientific one; and that should be made clear wherever this discussion(which I think is totally appropriate in literature, philosophy or religion classes) comes up in public school teaching. It is a belief, not a scientific model from which to experiment. Evolutionary theory does not claim ultimate truth(it changes with new learning) but it is a model, and a very successful one, from which to productively do scientific experimentation. There is no real scientific experimentation that flows from 'intelligent design' of which I can conceive. It raises no questions as science must continually do to be science. It makes a faith claim and that's it. Where evolution is taught it is common for the question to surface of whether the universe is all by chance or design. A competent science teacher might respond, "We don't know, but scientifically it makes no difference. We still do the work of science using this time-proven model called evolution which has been the basis of much scientific progress for 150 years."

I think that it is wrong for groups to come seeking public support with a hidden agenda. And I suspect that 'intelligent design' is just that. I've heard this discussed on radio programs (I actually called into two of them only to be cut short) and find it disturbing that the real public importance of evolution rarely even surfaces. I view such a powerful and enduring spark of creative thinking, like evolutionary theory, as evidence of God dwelling in humanity. The story of how Charles Darwin, a believer in God, came to visualize this amazing pattern that has been so productive in furthering human understanding of the natural world is a powerful testimony, I believe, to God at work. Yet, many Biblical literalists have taken it as a threat to their faith structure. I find that very sad--a kind of willful ignorance of modern information. The promotion of 'intelligent design' comes across to me not as an interest in science at all but an interest in promoting a religious/philosophical point of view (however important it may be) onto the whole public via the public schools. Very few working scientists seem to be saying much in this debate. They may either think it is laughable (I might also if I did not see it as a

rather serious threat to scientific learning in America's public education) or perhaps they are too busy doing real science.

Both faith and science are extremely important, and, I believe, God-given functions of the human mind and heart. Science, by its nature, thrives and progresses from a deep desire to know more than is now known. Faith, by its nature, derives meaning and security in what it trusts and is not driven to find out more. Scientific thinking is a more recently evolved (if you will) capacity of human beings who were previously at the mercy of the faith function, which was often dominated by what we now view as untrue prejudices and superstitions. This does not call us to cast out the faith function but to see faith and science clearly as two different ways of being and of progressing as humans. We need both. But to fail to keep this distinction is to take a step backward in human development that was very hard won. To think of 'intelligent design' as something to compare or to balance out 'evolutionary theory' is a tragic educational mixing of apples and oranges.

Some religious people view nature as evidence for their belief in a creator God(of their particular religion). That is fine and understandable. However, some people's belief in God does not rest on that, at least not in any primary way. If my faith rested on a literal interpretation of the Genesis story, evolution would scare me also. As it did years ago and I fought diligently, as many still do, to discredit it.

Science, on the other hand, wants to approach nature as a mystery that will give up some of her secrets (via the scientific method) to human understanding. This often helps humans to control nature in ways that assist and benefit human and other life on the planet.

If either view in this debate comes to the public without acknowledging what its assumptions or agendas are, then it is guilty of deceit and should be ashamed. I think this discussion is very healthy for the American public and I hope it will be taken seriously enough that more people can get a truer perspective of the nature of both faith and science. I'm confident that a more complete truth will present a way to see how these two important human functions can intersect each other without misrepresenting or doing harm to the legitimate reality of either.

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