

RFE and ID Universes Are Both Supernatural

I was intrigued by Howard J. Van Till’s reply in Dialogue III, “Is the ID Movement Capable of Defeating Naturalism?” (PSCF 56, no. 4 [Dec. 2004]: 292–5). He equates the unique characteristics of a robust formational economy (RFE) universe with the unique characteristics of a naturalistic universe.

A naturalistic universe proceeding from a naturalistic singularity is uncertain, contingent, and random. In a naturalistic universe, chance or the future is indeterminate to humans and to God. The universe, its capabilities and its potentialities, are natural to humans and to God.

A RFE universe proceeding from a God-designed singularity is ordained, non-contingent and ordered, for God, from all eternity, did freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.¹ In a RFE universe, chance or the future is indeterminate to man but not to God. God has no contingency plans. The universe is natural to man but not to God. A scientist does his experiments, but God ordains the outcome. Man casts the lot into the lap, “but its every decision is from the Lord.”² A scientist, as a creature of the universe, cannot determine if the universe is loaded, because the load is supernatural and because there is no comparative universe against which to run experiments.

The characteristics of chance in each universe are distinct and are not interchangeable. Generally, Intelligent Design (ID) speaks against chance in a naturalistic universe.

A RFE universe possesses all the resources, capabilities and potentialities needed for the “formation of every kind of structure, system and organism that has appeared in the universe’s formational history.”³ However, the capabilities and potentialities are not natural but supernatural. Every particle and wave retains a supernatural load until

heaven and Earth pass away. The universe is God’s “Rube Goldberg” device.

An ID universe is ordained, non-contingent and ordered. God’s hand-like activity is permitted, for “God, in his ordinary providence makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure.”⁴ Was not God’s hand-like activity present when he wove each of us in our mother’s womb⁵ and when he made the deaf, the dumb and the blind?⁶

Does a particular atom decay at a specific location and at a specific moment in time (1) because the RFE potential activates the decay; or (2) because God speaks to it; or (3) because Christ chooses to sustain it no longer?⁷ A scientist cannot determine which cause is operable because all three are supernatural.

The RFE universe and the ID universe are one and the same. They constitute the two sides of a single coin. (See chart below.) Can RFE defeat naturalism? Absolutely not. Can ID defeat naturalism? Absolutely not. RFE and ID are supernatural technologies. Neither is scientific. Naturalism is defeated by the logic and data found in quality science.

No scientific data uniquely and unequivocally support naturalistic evolution, for what could a naturalistic universe do that a RFE universe or an ID universe could not do?

Naturalistic macroevolution is based on “natural causes, both known and unknown.”⁸ A reliance on unknown causes underscores the fact that naturalistic macroevolution is hypothetical. No *scientific* theory of evolution exists.

The probability of naturalistically assembling the genetic code for an integrated, functional, complex enzyme com-

The Physical Characteristics of Various Universes as Known by God and as Perceived by Humans

	NATURALISTIC UNIVERSE		ROBUST FORMATIONAL ECONOMY UNIVERSE		INTELLIGENT DESIGN UNIVERSE	
	God	Humans	God	Humans	God	Humans
Singularity	Natural	Natural	Supernatural	Natural	Supernatural	Natural
Scientific	Yes	Yes	Ordained	Yes	Ordained	Yes
Experimentation	Natural	Natural	Ordained	Natural	Ordained	Natural
Chance [The Future]	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Ordained	Indeterminate	Ordained	Indeterminate
Uncertainty	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Contingency	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Randomness	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Capabilities	Natural	Natural	Supernatural	Natural	Supernatural	Natural
Potentialities	Natural	Natural	Supernatural	Natural	Supernatural	Natural
Miracles	Deception	Deception	Supernatural	Supernatural	Supernatural	Supernatural

posed of 100 amino acid residues is about one chance in 10^{65} per try.⁹ The maximum number of individual organisms from all species ever existent on Earth is far less than 10^{50} individual organisms.¹⁰ Every step of naturalistic macroevolution must be accounted for with fewer than 10^{50} tries, but 10^{50} tries fails to be enough for the probable naturalistic assembly of even one gene coding for a small, integrated, functional, complex enzyme. Naturalistic macroevolution is an extremely irrational scientific hypothesis.

Since naturalistic macroevolution is a scientific hypothesis, which lacks unique and unequivocal scientific data and which is extremely irrational, it should be excluded from all scientific curricula.

Notes

¹The Westminster Confession of Faith, "Of God's Eternal Decree," chap. III, no. 1.

²Prov. 16:33.

³H. J. Van Till, "Is the ID Movement Capable of Defeating Naturalism? A Response to Madden and Discher," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 56, no. 4 (Dec. 2004): 292.

⁴The Westminster Confession of Faith, "Of Providence," chap. V, no. 1. ⁵Ps. 139:13.

⁶Exod. 4:11.

⁷Col. 1:17; and Heb. 1:3.

⁸Van Till, "Is the ID Movement Capable of Defeating Naturalism?" 292.

⁹H. P. Yockey, "A Calculation of the Probability of Spontaneous Biogenesis by Information Theory," *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 67 (1997): 387; and J. F. Reidhaar-Olson and R. T. Sauer, "Functionally Acceptable Substitutions in Two α -Helical Regions of λ Repressor," *Proteins: Structure, Function, and Genetics* 7, no. 4 (1990): 315.

¹⁰A total of fewer than 10^{50} individual organisms from all species have existed on Earth over the past 3.5 billion years. *E. coli* are about 2 microns in length and 0.2 microns in diameter. With the multiple filamentous structures, a single organism has a volume greater than 0.25 cubic microns. A cubic meter contains 10^{18} cubic microns. Less than 4×10^{18} *E. coli* could be stacked into one cubic meter. A collection of 10^{50} *E. coli* would fill a volume greater than 2.5×10^{31} cubic meters. Earth contains less than 1.5×10^{18} cubic meters of water. A volume of 2.5×10^{31} cubic meters is 1.666×10^{13} times the volume of Earth's water. A collection of 10^{50} *E. coli* could fill 100% of all bodies of water on Earth every day for more than 45 billion years, which is some nine times the age of Earth and three times the age of the universe. As a corollary of interest, a total of fewer than 10^{50} individual organisms from all species have existed on Earth over the past 3.5 billion years.

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Stem Cell Research: Critiques and Views

I would like to comment to David Siemens' recent letter (*PSCF* 56, no. 4 [December 2004]: 309) critiquing Kristyn Mannoia's "An Evaluation of Three Religious Perspectives on Stem Cell Research" (*PSCF* 56, no. 3 [September 2004]: 216–25). Our ASA area discussion group, which meets periodically to discuss *PSCF* articles, thought Ms. Mannoia's article was excellent. We did not find her arguments foolish, though Timothy Chen said her portrayal of the various positions could have been more nuanced.

Siemens begins by pointing out contra Stanley Hauerwas that "following our intuitions is not an adequate basis for moral standards." Fair enough, but

Mannoia does not say they are. Her reference to intuitions occurs within the larger context of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral and, as she says, "illuminates one facet of truth." Intuition "may suggest that embryos are indeed persons." She makes no other claim for them.

Siemens then attacks Gilbert Meilaender's argument that a person is someone who has a history. This argument, Mannoia says, can be applied to the zygote since it too has a history. Siemens counters that lots of impersonal things have histories. That is true, but the question is one of values, and it is also true that we frequently value impersonal things because of the history attached to them. If we do not value the zygote, it is because we do not value its history, but not valuing its history is the first step in devaluing its personhood. I suspect Mannoia means no more than this.

In this regard, Siemens points out that a large percentage of fertilized ova do not implant. Well, so what? Lots of other people meet tragic deaths. But perhaps a fertilized ova is no person until it implants, or until it reaches a certain stage of development. We simply do not know, so, since we do not know, Siemens' argument is only suggestive, not conclusive.

The same cannot be said of Siemens' reference to Caiaphas' prophecy in relation to personal choice. Caiaphas did not give himself for a sacrifice, he simply—and ignorantly—proclaimed the purposes of God. Therefore Siemens' appeal to the passage has no bearing on the argument addressed.

While it may be true that an ovum stimulated in the right way can produce a viable human being (the reality of Turner females suggests this, something neither Mannoia or Siemens mentions), it is also true that a fertilized egg is the first step to a fully formed human being. Trying to avoid that fact by an appeal to stimulated ova is irrelevant.

Nor does Siemens' attempt to qualify the testimony of the church fathers pass muster. They may not have known precisely when pregnancy occurred, but they spoke in one voice in defense of the unborn when they knew it had occurred.

Siemens then pounces on Mannoia's point that "hES research involves something conceived in the womb." That is ridiculous, he says, since hES uses ova acquired through *in vitro* fertilization. Apparently everyone but Siemens snoozed past that one! Or did they? Since *in vitro* fertilization was unknown until the late twentieth century, the early church would not have addressed it. Plainly Mannoia is trying to apply the principle that a fertilized ovum is the first step toward a fully developed human being to the current situation, and, until very recently, such an ovum would only have been conceived in the womb.

Mannoia purposed to apply Ian Barbour's work to the question of stem cell research. I think she did a credible job. Indeed for an undergraduate she did a remarkable job. I also think it is a shame that David Siemens missed it.

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