

Letters

coherent theory that can account for this highly detailed fossil record. They are left with a true mystery that can only be confronted with ad hoc explanations. The present understanding of conventional geology and evolutionary biology suggests that there is nothing implausible with the rapid and late diversification of angiosperms, and thus the mystery of the details of their origin is not one of inconceivability, but rather one of wonder.

Notes

¹ Gerald E. Aardsma, "The Age of the Earth, Virtual History, and Hebrews 11:3," *The Biblical Chronologist* 8, no. 5 (2002): 1-3.

² Ole Seehausen, "African Cichlid Fish: A Model System in Adaptive Radiation Research," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 273 (2006): 1987-98.

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Does Philosophy Justify ID?

Responding to Douglas Groothuis ("Intelligent Design and the State University: Accepting the Challenge," [*PSCF* 60, no. 4 (2008): 233-9]), Walter R. Thorson ("A Response to Douglas Groothuis" [*ibid.*, 240-7]), handles the scientific aspects. But there are still major problems with philosophical matters.

Groothuis zips past Gettier's objection to the ancient definition of knowledge as "justified, true belief" (pp. 233; 238, note 2), which unfortunately applies to his argument. Gettier presents a story of two applicants, Smith and Jones, waiting for the announcement that one has been chosen for a job.¹ The president of the company had told Smith that Jones would be hired and Smith has watched Jones nervously counting the coins in his pocket. On this basis, he deduces that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.

However, Smith neither knows that he also has ten coins in his pocket nor that he will actually get the job. Smith's conclusion, though true and believed with apparent justification to be true, was derived from false premises. Consequently, he cannot be said to have known it. Also, the change from specifying the individual by name to the more broadly descriptive "man who will get the job" takes away the specificity necessarily required.

Groothuis overlooks such a requirement in his statement that ID is "made up of scientists, philosophers, and others" (p. 234) who make certain claims. But what a philosopher states does not meet the requirement of strict truth justifying ID. The sole ultimate test for a philosophical system is logical consistency. Fully worked out, both philosophical systems and mathematical calculi are derived deductively from sets of axioms. Geometers may accept Euclidean, Riemannian, or Lobachevskian axioms and get some different incompatible theorems. Consequently, the truth of a theorem is conditional on the specific axioms which are assumed, not proved. Similarly, philosophers may accept axioms yielding materialistic, pantheistic, deistic, theistic, or other philosophical systems. Not all of these, as advanced by individuals, are

consistent, but I know of no demonstration that all but one are inconsistent. However, there is a strong tendency to declare one's own system right. A limitation of this approach is illustrated by the impossibility of disproving solipsism, which we all reject.

Adding an unproved philosophical view to the doing of science neither alters the practice of science nor makes its theories true. At most, ethics may proscribe some experiments, as may a lack of funding. It has been widely noted that the neo-atheistic declaration that science proves atheism is silly. The same unfortunately holds for claiming proof of a deistic, theistic or alternative designer from science. Adding philosophical assumptions or techniques to the current methodology of science does not qualify it as true. It merely makes the whole a mishmash of categories.

Note

¹Edmund L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 23 (1963): 121-3. Also at www.ditext.com/gettier/gettier.html (accessed December 29, 2008). I have modified the story.

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