

Letters

book. But I would encourage any reader to view the ethical and theological sections as starting points, just as inspiring by their incompleteness as for the content they do provide.

This book serves as a good introduction to scientific advance, the challenges that are already here and coming, and the way those challenges will be escalated and co-opted by various late modern and postmodern worldviews. We need more Christians knowledgeable about these issues, engaging the ethical and theological material as seriously as they do the scientific.

Reviewed by Jacob Shatzer, Associate Professor of Theological Studies and Associate Dean, School of Theology & Missions, Union University, Jackson, TN 38305. +

Letters

Does Complementarity Explain Anything?

Jim Stump presents a notable defense of the view that God guides evolution in his article, “Did God Guide Our Evolution?,” in *PSCF* 72, no. 1 (2020): 15–24. While I am partial to the epistemological view that he espouses, there remain some difficulties. As he points out, the idea is an old one described with different terms over the years, from cognitive dualism to complementarity to levels of explanation, to cite a few. Cognitive dualism received a surge of interest and support with the discovery of scientific complementarity. Best known is the wave-particle duality articulated by Louis de Broglie in the 1920s. Scientific complementarity gave cognitive dualism support as a fundamental principle of the universe. Its logical application to Christianity was widely publicized by, among others, Richard Bube and especially Donald MacKay, in the 1970s. The late Jack Haas took a somewhat skeptical view in his series entitled “Complementarity and Christian Thought: An Assessment” in the September 1983, December 1983, and June 1984 issues of *PSCF*. As he explained to me personally, his major concern was that complementarity didn’t really explain anything.

While Jack has a point, I still find complementarity to be the best available perspective, even though it does not provide us with an understanding of divine action. The analogy of the tea kettle can help one to understand the problem. Stump attributes this analogy to John Polkinghorne while acknowledging in a footnote that Polkinghorne was “probably not” the first to use it. The earliest reference I have found is in the book *Christianity in a Mechanistic Universe*, edited by Donald M. MacKay and published in 1965. In his essay contribution to that book, Frank H. T. Rhodes, ninth president of Cornell University from 1977 to 1995, refers to “Dr Douglas

Spanner’s example of the boiling kettle ...” (p. 42) and describes the identical analogy and application.

In this analogy, the explanation for “why is the tea kettle boiling” can be either “I want some tea” or “the thermal energy of the flame transfers energy to the water beyond its boiling point.” These are complementary and not mutually exclusive explanations. But all of us are intuitively aware that humans have the agency to translate the desire to have some tea into igniting the fire or activating the electrical switch that provides the heat to boil the water. Though we may not understand all the details involving our consciousness and free will in generating and carrying out our desires, we do understand the connection. In contrast, we do not understand divine action through which God translates his ultimate purposes into guidance of evolution. The intelligent design community feels that they do not need to provide such a mechanism but merely need to demonstrate that there was such guidance. Stump rejects Russell’s idea of quantum interference by God as being inadequate. He also rejects, perhaps inappropriately, Barrigar’s probabilistic view of God’s purposes as too deistic. The epistemological view does not provide insight into any means by which divine action actually guides evolution. Complementarity seems to be an accurate description that two different discourses are necessary to fully represent phenomena. But it fails to explain the relationship between those discourses.

We have a biblical basis for claiming that God can work his purposes through random processes (see, for example, 1 Kings 22:34 and Acts 1:26). Yet we have no insight into how this is achieved. The mysterious way in which God guides evolution or anything else remains mysterious. The evidence in science is that evolution with key elements of randomness accurately describes the development of all life forms of which we are aware. The inference that God does, in fact, guide evolution, as well as all of nature, is our interpretation of how God carries out his purposes as revealed in God’s Word.

Randy Isaac
ASA Fellow

The Agape/Probability Proposal Is Not Deist

Jim Stump has recently addressed the question, “Did God Guide Our Evolution?”¹ Along the way, he rejects three strategies for reconciling science and theology, including this writer’s *Agape/Probability* (A/P) proposal.² Stump rejects the A/P proposal “because of its implications for God’s distance from the created order”³—that the A/P proposal leaves God as a “spectator” to creation as the universe unfolds from its initial