

conditions. That is, the A/P account “confine[s] God’s action to very rare occasions,”<sup>4</sup> and therefore looks akin to deism.

This reading of the A/P account is only possible, however, by setting aside its most fundamental parts. So, I need to reiterate that the whole A/P account is about how the trinitarian God of *agape* love has created a universe in which God can actively engage in *agape* relationships. *Agape* relationships, including incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and the ongoing action of the Holy Spirit in the lives of ordinary people throughout history, means that God’s action is frequent, not rare. As I state, “Divine *agapic* action can take diverse forms, including giving gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit; providing inspiration, wisdom, guidance; providing healing (emotional, relational, and physical); and acting in physical surroundings (nature) to bring about *agapic* consequences for people and/or animals.”<sup>5</sup> This is precisely the opposite of deism.

Enlightenment deists, like theists, believed in a Creator God, but what distinguished them as deists were two doubts they had about the God of theism: one doubt dealt with divine purpose (they doubted that God created the universe with human-related purpose); and the other, with divine action (they doubted that God engages in relationships with humanity). These two doubts led to an inference that after creation God has had no further engagement with the universe; this then led to a secondary derivative inference, that God simply “watches” the processes of the universe unfold. In other words, what constitutes deism is not the belief that God watches everything unfold, spectator-like; what constitutes deism is its doubts, denying both divine purpose in creation and divine involvement with humanity—which makes deism the exact opposite of the A/P account.

Moreover, Stump’s critique implies that there is some inadequacy in the sort of God that would enjoy watching the system he created unfold. But why should God not enjoy watching the spectacular creation he has created? With exploding stars, crashing galaxies, expanding nebulae bubbles, black holes shredding nearby celestial objects, not to mention all the stunning biological processes going on—an infinity of incredible beauty and awesomeness!—it seems a peculiar restriction on the Creator of beauty to imply that there is something unacceptable about God enjoying “watching” this incredible creation unfold while “waiting” for *agape*-capable beings to emerge. In no way does this make God “distant from creation” after God’s act of initial creation. Moreover, I put “waiting” and “watching” in quotes because God’s relation to time is not ours—so our sense of waiting such a long time, billions of years,

for *agape*-capable beings to emerge need hardly be God’s sense of time.

That God takes pleasure in watching his magnificent creation unfold while it brings about *agape*-capable beings no more makes the A/P account deist than belief in a Creator God makes orthodoxy deist. The A/P account’s front-loaded account is perfectly consistent with an orthodox trinitarian understanding of God’s nature, character, and purpose, and is in no way akin to deism—it is precisely the opposite. Moreover, there is available today no account that more fully integrates today’s mainstream scientific knowledge with God’s purpose and action in creation than that provided by the A/P account, thereby offering a powerful alternative to both ID and materialism. I fear that Stump’s misdescription of parts of the A/P account will lead readers to miss the value of what the A/P account has to offer.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Stump, “Did God Guide Our Evolution?,” *PSCF* 72, no. 1 (2020): 15–24.

<sup>2</sup>Barrigar, “God’s *Agape*/Probability Design for the Universe,” *PSCF* 70, no. 3 (2018): 161–74.

<sup>3</sup>Stump, “Did God Guide Our Evolution?,” 18.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>5</sup>Barrigar, “God’s *Agape*/Probability Design for the Universe,” 171.

Chris Barrigar

## Response to Randy Isaac and Chris Barrigar

My thanks to Randy Isaac for taking the time to read and respond to my article. It was Randy who instigated the article (though he should have none of the blame for anything incorrect or foolish I’ve written!) by inviting me to present a paper at the 2018 ASA meeting, with himself and Denis Lamoureux responding to the book *Theistic Evolution*, edited by J. P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger, and Wayne Grudem (Crossway, 2017). The paper became more than a book review, as it gave me the opportunity to try to work out some issues related to what I have called “cognitive dualism.”

Randy’s central concern seems to stem from sympathy he has with the comment he relayed from Jack Haas, “complementarity doesn’t really explain anything.” My response to that is, “Right, that’s the point.” My claim is that the sort of explanation being pushed for is what philosophers often describe not as wrong, but wrong-headed, or as a category mistake. I am not explaining how God guides evolution, but rather I am trying to explain why we can’t get an explanation to that.

# Letters

This metaphor isn't perfect, but you might think of it like a response to attempted proofs for how to trisect any given angle with a compass and a straightedge. I consider three such attempts and show where I think they go wrong, and then offer a proof for why there is no solution to that problem. If someone says, "OK, I accept your proof, but I'm still concerned that you've not shown us how to trisect an angle," then I have not successfully communicated what I am trying to do.

I think one of the problems here is that the position I have attempted to describe is not exactly the same as complementarity or different levels of explanation—at least as I have seen these articulated. There are big areas of similarity, to be sure, but cognitive dualism is set in the context of a particular tradition of philosophy that gets scant attention in the academic discipline of science and religion. (By the way, in his recent book, *Against Methodology* [Routledge, 2019], Josh Reeves shows that there has been an overreliance on analytic philosophy of religion, which has led to an impasse on key issues.) The main point of difference is the degree to which language is accepted as "constitutive," rather than merely "descriptive" as Charles Taylor calls the traditions in his *Language Animal* (Harvard University Press, 2016). There is fear that accepting a constitutive role for language leads one into the morass of postmodern relativism. And it certainly does cast significant doubt on any kind of direct realism, which takes scientific theories as literal descriptions of reality. But there is a position between realism and relativism called "scientific perspectivism," which lends itself well to cognitive dualism. It acknowledges that there is an independent reality, but our access to it comes through the concepts available to us through our language; then, because different languages "carve up" reality in different ways (they are "re-presentations," not literal descriptions of reality), there is a real possibility that different discourses constrain our thinking in different ways. Of course, we might call these discourses "complementary," but in my understanding of cognitive dualism, the real work is being done by a particular view of language which does not seem to be shared or even discussed by most in the science and religion discussion—undoubtedly, this is a liability for wide acceptance of my position.

Chris Barrigar's concerns are more pointed and personal. I am pleased to report that he and I have begun some productive personal correspondence in the attempt to understand each other better. It is never fun when someone disagrees with you in print, particularly when you feel that disagreement stems from misunderstanding or even misrepresentation. I think his claim that I "reject" three strategies (including his) is a tad strong. I said that I would "consider a range of defensible ways of responding to this question, arguing more

specifically for the one I find most persuasive" (p. 16) and that the four I present "point toward the most plausible responses we can make to the perceived dilemma" (p. 16). So I have explicitly included Barrigar's general view among those I take to be defensible and most plausible. Further, in writing about his view in particular, I said, "Barrigar's account is sophisticated and subtle, and definitely worth further consideration" (p. 18). That doesn't sound to me like a "rejection."

I continue to maintain that each of the strategies I critiqued has merit and should be studied further for the insights it brings—this itself may be another argument in favor of my perspectivism. In our finite understanding, we are right to reach for models and explanatory structures where we can find them. But, of course, the front-loading view (or what I called the "nomological strategy") is not the one I find most persuasive.

Barrigar is most concerned that I have labelled him as a deist. I didn't quite do that, but admit that I came close. "Deism" is probably a term thrown around too casually against one's interlocutors (perhaps not unlike "concordism"). And hardly anyone uses it today as it was originally understood by the likes of Benjamin Whichcote, John Toland, and Matthew Tindal in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Back then, to be a deist was not a declaration about God's approach to the world, but rather about our approach to believing in and understanding God. Namely, deists based their religion on reason rather than revelation. Now, it is usually used to mean that God started things off and then had no more involvement. Barrigar definitely does not have an uninvolved God, and so does not deserve the deist label. But the kind of involvement he admits is only with respect to things such as sustaining, inspiring, and providing wisdom. And we have no scientific explanation for those kinds of activities—nor do I see how we ever could without becoming complete reductionists. So, my main point of concern with his view is that it leaves the same dualism I described intact: there are still two different kinds of description we have to use—a scientific and a personal. So, it seems advantageous to me to limit science and say that there may be more of God's activity going on in, say, the evolution of *Homo sapiens* than is describable by science.

Others, no doubt, evaluate the pros and cons of these positions differently. We all benefit by continued conversation across perspectives. I am grateful to PSCF and the ASA for fostering this. +

J. B. Stump