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Melding God and Materialism:

A three part review and commentary on “*The Language of God: a Scientist presents evidence for belief*” by Francis Collins

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“Religion involves a series of statements about facts, which must be either true or false. If they are true, one set of conclusions will follow about the sailing of the human fleet: if they are false, quite a different set.” C.S. Lewis¹

Part I - The Origin of Matter and Biological Information

Francis Collins book, *The Language of God: a scientist presents evidence for belief* (2006), is extremely important because Collins is a serious Christian and leading scientist. As a geneticist he is noted for his landmark discoveries of the genetic cause of cystic fibrosis and his leadership of a 2,400 multinational team that mapped the human genome. Although science is his job, he genuinely believes the most important organizing principle in his life is his Christian faith. His book seeks to reconcile his religion with his science.

It is a concise, candid, well-written and lucid treatment of many scientific issues that impact our views “about the sailing of the human fleet.” It proceeds logically from Collins conversion from atheism to Christianity and then to evidence relevant to that conversion. For Collins the evidence points to a God that has intervened to create the cosmos and a moral law, but, oddly, not to create life.

Collins and I are converted non-theists who admire CS Lewis. However, we are divided over Collins’ implicit use of a doctrine that creates the origins controversy and drives his opinions - *scientific materialism*. It holds that natural phenomena must be explained by material or “natural” causes - and not by any intelligent cause. The inadequate treatment of this underlying bias frustrates a satisfactory reconciliation of biological science with theistic religion. It may also lead many readers to believe the work is objective, while it effectively promotes Theistic Evolution, a religion that melds theism with biological materialism.

Collins is a cosmological creationist who is obviously uncomfortable with biological materialism. He believes intelligence is required to create the universe and fine tune its constituents for life. However, he reluctantly allows the created material causes - the properties of matter, energy and forces, together with chance, do the rest of the work. Collins believes God created a moral law for life to follow, but argues there is no need to show that he intervened to write the “*scripts*” that enable the follower to perceive it.

Collins opens the door to a “Divine foot,” but seems to keep it standing in the foyer. How does he reconcile these contradictory views, one of which he admits is “counterintuitive?”²

¹ [C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p.72 (Macmillan, 1943)]

² Francis S. Collins, *The Language of Life, A scientist presents evidence for belief*, p. 147 (Free Press, 2006)

Collins, a Cosmological Creationist

For Collins the scientific evidence of “[t]he Big Bang cries out for a divine explanation. It forces the conclusion that nature had a defined beginning.” He then analyzes the values of the constituents of matter, energy and the forces and the initial conditions that dictate the current structure of the universe and reaches the following conclusion:

“The precise tuning of all of the physical constants and physical laws to make intelligent life possible is not an accident, but reflects the *action* of the one who created the universe in the first place.”³

Although a major purpose of Collins book is to downplay “Intelligent Design,” he unwittingly uses an intelligent design analysis to make his case for a designed universe.

Any case that seeks to show intelligence as the proximate cause of a pattern of events consists of three necessary elements or evidentiary showings. The pattern must (1) have an apparent purpose or end, (2) it must not be the product of a “natural” or material cause, and (3) it must not be due to chance or random occurrences or a combination of (2) and (3). Intelligence is not the proximate cause of the image of a human face on the surface of Mars because the apparent alien sculpture can be explained by a random combination of sunrays and Martian mountains that cast shadows comprising the face. However, stick figure images on the wall of a cave that depict the spearing of an animal imply objectively real design, because the images reflect a purpose that can not be explained by chemistry, physics and/or chance.

Although used by archeologists and forensic scientists, “mainstream science” does not use this kind of analysis for the origin of natural phenomena because scientific materialism permits only a material or accidental cause for an origins event. Intelligent causation is excluded by assumption.

Remarkably, Collins abstains from scientific materialism in analyzing the origin of the cosmos and matter. He finds the “purpose” element of the inquiry satisfied by life itself. Life is the apparent purpose or “motive” of the observed “fine tuning” of the cosmological constants and initial conditions that produced them. The second element of the inquiry is satisfied with evidence that the values of the fine tuned constants are arbitrary and not set by any natural or material cause. The third element is satisfied by showing that the apparently purposeful pattern of the universe cannot be explained by chance. The fine-tuning is statistically implausible for a single universe and there is a lack of evidence for an infinite number of multiple universes that might make chance otherwise plausible. Collins reluctantly admits this makes him a “Creationist.”⁴

Why does Collins find matter designed, but not life?

After articulating a compelling case for a created cosmos, Collins moves to the key question - what caused life?

He candidly admits that science has no materialistic answer to that question. Faced with an empty handed materialist one would expect an admitted Creationist to jump at the chance of presenting solid evidence for the alternative. However, Collins avoids that presentation. He

³ Note 2, p 75
⁴ Note 2, p171

recognizes but then gives little credit to the acknowledged elephants in the room: an eerily perfect genetic code and lengthy initial “*scripts*” needed to assemble the nano-sized biological clocks, motors, trucks, factories and communication and transportation networks that generate, operate and maintain life.

The reason Collins is a biological materialist is that he seems oblivious to the smoking gun for an intelligent cause for life - *its apparent purposeful character*. The events that gave rise to life imported purpose into the natural world. Unlike rocks and rivers, an egg that turns into a human exhibits clear purpose. A purpose, the product of intelligence, describes an end or event to occur in the future. Collins describes DNA as “*scripts*” that order countless future events. Matter energy and the forces, lacking a mind have no capacity to produce purpose or to contemplate the future. The apparent purpose of life appears objectively real because, unlike hieroglyphics on the walls of caves or the temples in Luxor, we can observe the copying, translation and use of the scripts for well-defined ends. The apparent purpose of bio-systems is evidence that makes the first element of a case for intelligence unquestionable. Even Richard Dawkins agrees that bio-systems “give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.”⁵

Watson and Crick predicted the second element of the case for design - evidence that nicely rules out material cause for the initial “*scripts*” of life.⁶ Collins recognizes, but fails to explain, that the *sequences* of the four genetic letters that make up the scripts of life are arbitrary, just like the cosmological constants and initial conditions.⁷ The sequence of genetic letters in DNA is not determined like the sequence of ions in salt. In salt the chemical and physical attributes of chlorine and sodium ions cause themselves to be aligned in a fixed and periodic crystal lattice. But, the chemical and physical attributes of the genetic “letters” that make up the scripts of life do not dictate their sequence - a sequence that prescribes the content or genetic “meaning” or “function” of the scripts. Genetic letters can be arranged in any order. Watson and Crick predicted this result, otherwise DNA would not have the capacity to carry biological information necessary for the seemingly infinite variety of life. This evidence moves any quest for an unintelligent perpetrator to chance, the third and final element of the case for an intelligent cause for life.

Collins candidly agrees that chance is not a plausible explanation for the scripts necessary for first life.⁸ They have been postulated to be about the length of a novel. Statistical analysis shows their probability of organizing by chance next to impossible.⁹

The sum of these items of evidence (purposeful patterns not reasonably explainable by physics, chemistry and chance) satisfies all three elements of a case for design. The data logically suggest

⁵ Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the evidence of evolution reveals a Universe without Design*, p.1 (W.W.Norton, 1996)

⁶ “So in building models we would postulate that the sugar-phosphate backbone was very regular, and the order of bases of necessity very irregular. If the base sequences *were always the same*, all DNA molecules would be identical and there would not exist the variability that must distinguish one gene from another.” [James Watson, *The Double Helix: A Personal Account of the Discovery of THE STRUCTURE OF DNA*, p 52-4 (Touchstone 1968)]

⁷ Note 2, p 101-103

⁸ Collins, Note 2, p 90. “I think even the most bold and optimistic proposals for the [purely chemical] origin of life fall well short of achieving any real probability for that kind of event having occurred.” [Francis Collins, *Faith and the Human Genome*, (*Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, Vol 55, No.3, p 152, Sept 2003)

⁹ Hubert Yockey, a highly regarded information theorist, has calculated the amount of information content necessary in the minimum genome for life to arise and the probability of that occurring by chance as something less probable than $10^{-186,000}$. *Calculating Evolution*, Vol. 3 No. 1, p. 28 (*Cosmic Pursuit*, 2003).

intelligence as a rational explanation for the origin of life. Why does Collins, who is seeking to make a case for belief, fail to argue this evidence?

Presumably, it is because he is unwilling to reject scientific materialism, the key tenet of evolutionary biology. This is reflected in his misguided rationale for rejecting an intelligent design for life. He rejects intelligent design as a flawed argument from complexity.¹⁰ But ID does not argue that life is designed because it is complex. It claims life is designed because the “*scripts*” of life serve a purpose. Purpose generates the inference, while a showing of complexity is necessary only if one wishes to confirm it. The hallmark of design is not complexity, it is purpose.

It is within character for Collins to miss the core issue of purpose, because biological materialists deny that purpose inheres in the natural world. Like Evolutionary Biologist Douglas Futuyma,¹¹ they naively claim the flower of a violet has function, but no purpose, a distinction that lacks a difference since both describe an end.

Collins stops using the Razor

In downplaying an intelligent cause for life, Collins illogically abandons use of Occam’s Razor, an analytic argument he employs to make a case for a created universe. If two solutions are possible, the razor retains the simplest by shaving off the more complex. Life that is dependent on statistically improbable fine tuning logically implies a universe made for that purpose. The alternative is an imaginary speculation about a complex plethora of an infinite number of other universes “that strains credulity.” Collins uses the razor to shave off the more complex materialistic alternative.

“On the basis of probability, option 2 [chance] is the least plausible. That then leaves us with option 1 [multiple parallel universes] and option 3 [design]. The first is logically defensible, but this near-infinite number of unobservable universes strains credulity. It certainly fails Occam’s Razor.”¹²

Since Collins admits intelligence as the cause of atoms, his Razor should shave off an unknown complex material cause for the cause of life, given the substantial evidence for the admitted alternative. However, he stops shaving. Collins puts down the Razor when he addresses the origin of life. Why? Perhaps because, if he uses the razor to implicate an intelligent cause for the first script, then he will be obliged to use it for the second, the third, and all other script modifications. The Razor would then neatly shave off Darwin’s beard, the “counterintuitive” mechanism used by evolutionary biology.

God or Materialism of the Gaps?

Rather than showing the evidence for an intelligent cause for life and then using Occam’s Razor, Collins incorrectly argues that an inference to an intelligent cause is a “God of the Gaps” argument harmful to theistic religion.

For Collins the history of life is like a puzzle that has many missing pieces. He claims ID substitutes a supposition for the missing pieces - the supposition that God did it. He argues that instead we should look for puzzle pieces that provide a non-god or “natural” explanation. If we keep at it we will eventually find them all.

¹⁰ Note 2, p. 87 and 184.

¹¹ Douglas J. Futuyma, *Evolutionary Biology, Third Edition*, p. 10 (Sinauer Associates, Inc. 1998)

¹² Note 2, p. 76

Collins is wrong. The ID theorist does not fill the “gap” in material explanation with a supposition, he fills it with available puzzle pieces of evidence that simply suggest a different picture - a different outcome than that imagined by Collins. The evidence includes purposeful aperiodic lengthy scripts that specify, assemble, operate and maintain life and that can not be adequately explained by chance or necessity. Intelligence, which is ubiquitous to the natural world, is an appropriate picture to hypothesize given Collins conclusion that the world itself is its product.

Actually, it is Collins, not an ID proponent, who fills the so-called explanatory gap with supposition rather than newfound pieces of evidence. Instead of letting found pieces of evidence determine the shape of the picture, Collins decides in advance what the picture looks like. Rather than allowing the puzzle pieces suggesting design to affect the content of the picture, he would ignore them and not put them on the table for consideration. He is working on a puzzle that is not a puzzle at all. He has in his mind the final “natural explanation,” and so he need not consider pieces that don’t fit that picture. The gaps that would otherwise be occupied by pieces reflecting intelligent causation can easily be filled with imagination - imagined natural explanations. Of course with this supposition, there can be no puzzle pieces presented that the “*scripts*” of life have an objectively real author. Also, there is no need to even present evidence for a material cause for life, since that cause is *supposed*. We can stop working on the puzzle because we know in advance it is not really a puzzle at all. We in fact know what the ultimate image will show.

Collins is obviously conflicted about how to explain the origin of life. He implicitly recognizes that materialism can’t explain it. Yet he pleads with us to eschew design because the gap might eventually be filled with its imagined unlikely alternative. However, in discussing the premises of his religion - *Theistic Evolution* - he implies a supernatural cause is “*required*” for the start of life.¹³ It is tough being both a creationist and a materialist.

Part II - Collins Argument for Biological Materialism

“Evolution by natural selection, for instance, which Charles Darwin originally conceived as a great theory, has lately come to function more as an antitheory, called upon to cover up embarrassing experimental shortcomings and legitimize finds that are at best questionable and at worst not even wrong.”¹⁴ Robert B. Laughlin, PhD, Nobel Prize in Physics in 1998

“Evolution as a mechanism ... *must be true.*”

At the beginning of his case for a materialistic explanation for the diversity of life, Collins defines evolution as a “mechanism” driven by two mindless processes: “random mutation and natural selection.”¹⁵

Random mutation generates change or variation, while Natural selection processes it. The processor consists of randomly changing environmental conditions that sort individuals in replicating populations. Like a constantly changing sieve, the “processor” discards random changes that do not enable the organism to fit or function within the existing environment and

¹³ Note 2 at 200: Tenet 4 of his view of Theistic Evolution states: “4. Once evolution got underway, no special supernatural intervention was required.” This implies a need for supernatural intervention to get life started.”

¹⁴ Robert B. Laughlin, *A Different Universe: Reinventing Physics from the bottom down*, pp 168-170 (Basic Books, New York 2005)]

¹⁵ Note 2, p 97, 129, 131, 189

retains those that do. These random means by which the effect of human life is said to have occurred, describe an entirely materialistic set of causes that exclude intelligent input.

For Collins “no serious biologist today doubts the theory of evolution to explain the marvelous complexity and diversity of life.”¹⁶ However, in making this overstatement of the reigning consensus, he fails to fully explain that the lack of doubt is due in large part to an unstated use of a required supposition that philosophically rules out the competition. Collins discloses the supposition, but not in a way an uninformed reader would likely notice.

After admitting that the “mechanism” of evolution is “counterintuitive,”¹⁷ he then makes the following extraordinary statement:

“Evolution as a mechanism can be and *must* be true.”¹⁸

“*Must*” means “to be obliged or bound to by an imperative requirement.” Of course, the imperative that binds us to hold as “true” that life results from random mutation and natural selection is *scientific materialism*. The word “must” renders the claims of evolution non-refutable. It inserts a non-refutable supposition for all of the “gaps” in the historical record. For Collins “intermediate [random] steps *must* have existed,” even if they don’t appear in the fossil record.¹⁹

If Collins “must” rule out design as a matter of doctrine, then what is his point in even discussing it? Doesn’t the imperative make the discussion irrelevant? Why lead one to think that design fails for evidentiary reasons when that issue has already been decided as a matter of doctrine? If evolution “*must be true*,” then why all the fuss about the evidence? It really doesn’t matter how much evidence rests for or against it, because the issue has been pre-determined by supposition, not the evidence.

The case for a process that “must be true,” rests largely on imagination, rhetoric and hyperbole.

Collins promotes his case for evolution by castigating those who suppose the earth is 6000 years old, while the serious scientific debate is not about that issue. The core issue is about the adequacy of random mutation to generate nano-sized information processing systems so sophisticated that they are yet to be comprehended by human intelligence. The controversy is reflected in a statement signed by PhD’s that questions “the adequacy of random mutation and natural selection to explain all the complexity of life.” The list has grown at an accelerating rate to over 600 as of June 2006.²⁰ Many are molecular biologists, biochemists, and biologists. The list refutes Collins hyperbole that “*No serious biologist* today doubts the theory of evolution.”

Clearly most biologists believe in evolutionary change. However, they are not in agreement over the mechanism of change.

Collins arguments against irreducible complexity lack substance

Putting aside for the moment origin of life evidence for design and Occam’s Razor, Collins properly recognizes the most significant scientific challenge to random mutation and natural selection is the apparent irreducible complexity of many purposeful bio-systems.

¹⁶ Note 2 at 99.

¹⁷ Note 2, at 147

¹⁸ Note 2 at 107

¹⁹ Note 2 at 190

²⁰ The list is posted at <http://www.dissentfromdarwin.org/>

An irreducibly complex machine is one that will not function until all parts necessary to its function are fabricated to match and then brought together. The most famous example is a mousetrap. The question is whether random mutation and natural selection are adequate to explain the occurrence of a 3 billion year old motor in a bacterium that is hooked up to an autopilot and propeller that spins at 100,000 rpm and that functions to move the bacterium to a food source. The function does not arise until all these well-matched parts are fabricated and put together. The reason this is a serious problem for evolution is that one of its two mindless processes, natural selection, acts as a saboteur rather than a helper until the function of the entire system happens to “occur.” This leaves all of the fabrication, delivery and assembly of parts to the mindless uncoordinated molecules that are just wandering aimlessly around in the dark in a cavernous three-dimensional time sensitive space. Are the mindless workers impeded by the saboteur up to the task, given the fact that the likelihood of success decreases EXPONENTIALLY as the complexity of the task increases? Michael Behe and many others argue that science has yet to show how random mutations can do the job.²¹

Collins argues the challenge has been met by “recent research”²² showing how the motor “*presumably*” occurred from a duplicate precursor bio-syringe called a type III secretory system used by bacteria to inject toxin into host organisms. However, this untested imagined scenario is not even plausible because it is believed the motor came first, not the syringe.

Resorting to imagination rather than empiricism, Collins suggests how random mutations in randomly occurring duplicate genes *could* produce a new multi-protein complex. However, he shows no detailed explanation that provides the argument with any legs. The imagination he uses adds data that is not intersubjectively accessible.²³

His argument against irreducible complexity also neglects to mention a peer reviewed scientific paper that casts doubt on the plausibility of his imagined, but not experimentally tested scenario. The paper by biochemist Michael Behe and mathematician David Snoke, is a statistical analysis

²¹ Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (The Free Press 1996) and *Reply to My Critics: A Response to Reviews of Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, 16 *Biology and Philosophy* 685-709 (2001). A number of others who share Dr. Behe's concern are included on the list of over 600 PhD's who question the adequacy of random mutation and natural selection to produce complex bio-systems. The list is posted at <http://www.dissentfromdarwin.org/>

²² Note 2 at 192, referencing K.R. Miller, *The Flagellum Unspun*, in Dembski and Ruse, *Debating Design*, 81-97 (Cambridge Press, 2004)

²³ Collins candidly admits at page 190 the use of imagination and supposition rather than empiricism: “Admittedly we can not precisely outline the order of the steps that ultimately led to the human clotting cascade. We may never be able to do so, because the host organisms of many predecessor cascades have been *lost to history* [and therefore not empirically verifiable]. Yet, Darwinism *predicts* that *plausible* [use of imagination] intermediate steps *must have existed* [use of supposition].” In providing a Darwinian explanation for the origin of the eye he states: “It is not prohibitively difficult, given hundreds of millions of years, to *contemplate* how this system *could have* evolved into the modern mammalian eye, complete with light-sensing retina and light-focusing lens.” At its core, Dr. Behe's challenge is one that seeks a more specific explanation of how random mutation can actually do what it is claimed to have done. Without that specificity the theory cannot be tested. Given our incomplete knowledge of how cellular systems work (which Collins acknowledges), it is unlikely the challenge will be met, if at all, before that knowledge is reasonably complete. Robert Laughlin complains that evolution has become an anti-theory that is “not even wrong” – an expression popularized by Wolfgang Pauli meaning that it is so vague and general that one can't show it to be wrong. The nature of the Darwinian historical claims that cannot be verified by direct observation and experimentation coupled with the use of the materialistic supposition are the mechanisms that make it virtually impossible to falsify – Its “not even wrong.”

of the likelihood of new function arising via random changes in duplicate genes.²⁴ The paper points out that the simplest new function produced by a gene, such as a new binding site on a protein, often requires up to 8 or more mutations. So, what are the chances of a new binding site arising that requires just six mutations? It would not be expected until a population the size of one billion trillion in number (10^{21}) had replicated over 100 million generations. This conclusion casts doubt on the claim that random mutation can produce a new multi protein complex that has no function until hundreds of new binding sites have been generated, integrated and coordinated.

Much of Collins argument for unguided evolution is to show evidence supporting the claim that all of the diversity of life can be traced back to a single common ancestor through an unbroken chain of descent with modification. But common ancestry does not falsify a claim of design. Rather than random mutation, some key modifications could be directed by an intelligent cause like the one Collins postulates for the origin of atoms and that seems necessary for the origin of life itself. Since similarity in gene sequences is consistent with both causes, it proves neither.

Collins argues that certain common errors in junk DNA show a common ancestry not rigged by intelligence, for why would a programmer twice insert precisely the same error into the software? Perhaps they are not errors given the fact that much of what previously was labeled as junk is now deemed to be functional. But in any event, common errors do not falsify common design, since an inference of design is not dependent on intelligent input for all changes. It merely postulates that intelligence may be necessary to explain the origin of life and large functional increases in bio-diversity.

Part III - Melding God and Materialism

“It is unlikely that life was destined to have included us. This is because the evolution of life is subject to fates wantonly dictated by three ubiquitous and mischievous forces: chance, coincidence, and chaos.”²⁵ Jeffrey McKee,
Anthropologist

Mind and Materialism don't meld.

As a Christian Collins is called to worship a God who intervenes in the natural world to create and guide life for a purpose. However, as a leader in a materialistic establishment he “*must*” reject intelligent intervention, even in the face of contradictory evidence.

To reconcile the conflict he permits God to intervene to create matter, energy and the forces - the material causes, but not to create biological information and life itself. He suggests a traditional theist like myself should be content with an absent God, because even though He does not directly intervene in the natural world, He has set in motion a creative “mechanism” that renders the intervention unnecessary. He explains it this way:

“Seeking to populate this otherwise sterile universe with living creatures, God chose the elegant mechanism of evolution *to create* microbes, plants, and animals of all sorts. Most remarkably, God *intentionally* chose the same mechanism to give rise to special creatures who would have intelligence, a knowledge of right

²⁴ Michael J. Behe and David W. Snoke, *Simulating Evolution by Gene Duplication of Protein Features that require multiple amino acid residues*, (Protein Science, Vol 13, p 1-14, 2004)

²⁵ (Jeffrey K. McKee, *The Riddled Chain: Chance, Coincidence, and Chaos in Human Evolution*” (Rutgers University Press, 2000), pg. 2)

and wrong, free will, and a desire to seek fellowship with Him.”²⁶ (emphasis added)

Collins defines the mechanism of evolution chosen by God as driven by two components: “random mutation and natural selection,” the latter of which does not operate until the first microbes arise. Natural selection itself also depends on randomly changing boundary conditions. Hence, Collins’ “creative” “mechanism,” is essentially a random mechanism.

The problem fatal to his theology is that a “choice” to use a random mechanism will produce random, rather than intended effects. His theology and science assigns creativity to an “elegant mechanism,” that lacks it. Collins mechanism for the production of life from random mutation and natural selection²⁷ does not incorporate any mind or means capable of “intentionally choosing” to order future events for a purpose. Therefore, even if set in motion by an intentional choice, the mechanism cannot move in any intended direction for a purpose. His mechanism is like a rudderless ship being launched in the middle of a sea.

This “elegant mechanism” for generating the scripts defining life can be illustrated using a simple example: I close my eyes and let my fingers randomly fly on this keyboard to produce this pattern:

[qu]v] eq[5q]]]g

It is one devoid of actual meaning because the selection and sequence of the symbols comprising the pattern was not the product of intention. Even if one might tease some apparent purpose from the pattern, the inference to intention would be erroneous. Hence, if God has chosen to use a random mechanism rather than intention to “write” the “*scripts*” of life, then, by definition, the product of that mechanism - life - will be unintended and not purposeful. As explained by Kenneth Miller, Stephen Jay Gould and anthropologist Jeffrey McKee,²⁸ if we could turn back the clock 4 billion years, life would be entirely different than it is now because “chance, coincidence, and chaos” would yield different purposeless “*scripts*,” that are not true “*scripts*” at all.

The issue of intervention or the lack thereof is key. A random process interrupted by an intelligent intervention can “create” very sophisticated intended results. The intervention can recognize and then “select” a desired effect that will move the entire process towards a goal.

²⁶ Note 2, 200-201

²⁷ Collins should be applauded for his candor. In describing the evolutionary mechanism he repeatedly refers to random mutation or variation as one of the two drivers. For example on page 127-28 he states :”...it provides powerful support for Darwin’s theory of evolution, that is, descent from a common ancestor with natural selection operating on *randomly occurring variations*.” He describes it as “elegant,” but that adjective is appropriate only if the mechanism is the sole cause of the change. Of course, that is the key question. Is it aided by any intervening intelligence? If so, it is the intelligence, rather than random variation that deserves the credit.

²⁸ See note 19 and Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin’s God: A Scientist’s Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution*, 211-12 (Harper Collins, 1999): “The observation that Gould finds so remarkable follows naturally from the cause-and-effect links that extend upward from quantum physics through chemistry and biochemistry into the undirected input of variation into living, genetic systems. Gould may not have recognized the physical roots of his observations, but they are nonetheless there for all to see. The natural history of evolution is unrepeatable because the [random] nature of matter made it unpredictable in the first place. Wind that tape back, and it will surely come out differently next time around, not just for the Burgess shale, but for every important event in the evolutionary history of life.”

However, the mindless mechanism Collins proposes is one let loose to never again be monitored. His rudderless mechanism is entirely *unguided* because it has no goal.

C.S. Lewis explains why theistic or “creative” evolution is an oxymoron:

“People who hold this view [Creative Evolution] say that the small variations by which life on this planet ‘evolved’ from the lowest forms to Man were not due to chance but were due to the ‘striving’ or ‘purposiveness’ of a Life Force. When people say this we must ask them whether by life force they mean something with a mind or not. If they do, then a ‘*mind bringing life into existence and leading it to perfection*’ is really a God, and their view is thus identical with the Religious. If they do not, then what is the sense of saying that something without a mind ‘strives’ or has ‘purposes.’ This seems to me fatal to their view.” (Mere Christianity, p 35, emphasis added)

Collins random mechanism marginalizes traditional theistic religion while promoting materialistic religions.

Collins random mechanism, if true, undermines traditional theistic religion for a number of reasons. A pattern that can be explained by a random process does not warrant an inference to an intelligent cause. If the evidence at the scene of a death implicates a random or natural cause, then there is no warrant for an inference to an intelligent cause - a homicide. So if Collins claim is true that life is the product of a random process then an inference to an intelligent cause like God ceases to be rational, and at best becomes faith based.

A random process also provides Collins no intersubjectively accessible evidence for an inference to a moral law. Intersubjectively accessible evidence is information accessible and comprehensible to a number of persons without dispute. If it is true that humanity is a random occurrence rather than a design made for a purpose, then there can be no intersubjectively accessible evidence that it was designed to adhere to a moral plan or law. This leaves Collins intuition about the existence of a moral law entirely subjective and without any objective legs to stand on.²⁹

Furthermore, if humans are the product of a random rather than an intelligent cause, then humans have no meaningful relationship to an intelligent cause. A randomly produced life owes its existence to chance, not a creator. That being the case it has no duty to a creator. A child who is the unintended product of a fling in the hay by a father who has removed himself from the scene at conception has no meaningful relationship or duty to the father. If 14 billion years ago God threw dice having 10^{80} sides and we just happened to turn up, then how can I even know the die were thrown? And why should I, an unintended product of an imaginary throw, believe the thrower cares or has any plan for life or my life or deserves any thanks?

Perhaps, most important, if humans are random occurrences rather than creations, then they have no inherent purpose because purpose only derives from an intentional act, not a random occurrence. The function of theistic religion is to explain the purpose of life and the duty of the

²⁹ His inference to a moral law is subjective: “The only way in which we could expect [the controlling power that exists outside the universe] to show itself would be *inside* ourselves as an influence or a command trying to get us to behave in a certain way. And that is just what we do find inside ourselves.” [Note 2 at 29]

created to the creator.³⁰ However, if life has no inherent purpose then a religion that seeks to explain it becomes pointless, futile and irrational.

Collins “elegant [random] mechanism” also unwittingly undermines the primary rational basis for his belief - a created cosmos. His inference to an intelligent cause for the creation of the cosmos is predicated on the proposition that life is the purpose of the fine-tuning. However, if life is just the product of a purposeless random mechanism it is not an end and can not serve as a purpose of the fine-tuning. Hence, Collins inference to a created cosmos fails for the lack of apparent purpose. This renders his theistic belief system without any rational legs to stand on.

All of these conclusions provide the foundation for materialistic religions that reject traditional theism. Atheism and humanism reject traditional theism because Collins conclusions, if true, do not warrant an inference to a God, or at least one that is relevant. For those religions life is the product of unguided evolutionary change and therefor has no inherent purpose. Purpose, guidance and direction is provided to life by human reason and science, not by traditional theistic religion.³¹

These materialistic religions and religious belief systems provide a completely different set of postulates for ethics, morals and even government. Our government is founded on the notion that our rights are inalienable because they were derived from a creator and cannot therefore be taken by government. Materialistic governments presume that humans are occurrences and not creations and therefore have no inherent rights - they have only what the government allows.

According to Lewis, “*Religion involves a series of statements about facts, which must be either true or false. If they are true, one set of conclusions will follow about the sailing of the human fleet: if they are false, quite a different set.*”³² The statement of fact key to the competition between materialistic and theistic religions is whether God has intervened to produce life or whether it is simply the product of Collins’ random mechanism. If the latter is true then materialism and its ethics and morals will prevail. However, if it is false, then the values of traditional theism should guide the human fleet. Collins theology favors the former, not the latter.

The purpose of the moral law is affected by our theistic or materialistic perspective.

According to CS Lewis, the purpose of the moral law is to order three relationships. “Firstly with fair play and harmony between individuals. Secondly, with what might be called tidying up or harmonizing the things inside each individual.³³ Thirdly, with the general *purpose* of human

³⁰ This is recently explained in a new book that has exceeded 15 million in sales: Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I here for?*, (Zondervan, 2002).

³¹ Humanist Manifesto III. “Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, ***without supernaturalism***, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity. The life stance of Humanism—***guided by reason...Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Humanists recognize nature as self-existing.*** We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. ...Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience.”

³² See Note 1

³³ “When a man says about something he wants to do, ‘It can’t be wrong because it doesn’t do anyone else any harm.’ He is thinking only of the first thing. He is thinking it does not matter what his ship is like inside provided that he does not run into the next ship.if our thinking about morality stops [with the first thing], we might just as well not have thought at all. Unless we go on to the second thing – the tidying up inside each human being – we are only deceiving ourselves. What is the good of telling the ships how to

life as a whole: what man was made for: what course the whole fleet ought to be on: what tune the conductor of the band wants it to play.”

A traditional theist holds that we are a part of a larger band and that we should humbly submit our minds to the guidance of the conductor who chooses the tune we are all to play. However, the materialist holds that we were not created by another mind for a purpose, and are therefore just conductors of one-man bands and captains of our own ships.

The one-man band philosophy of materialism is reflected in Collins conception of ethics. Collins lists 4 ethical principles inherent in the moral law. They all fit within the first category listed by C.S. Lewis: “fair play and harmony between individuals.” However, they ignore the second and third criteria - tidying up things inside each individual and the purpose of life as a whole - the tune the entire band is to play. Instead, Collins lists as his cardinal ethical principle, human autonomy. This describes the selfish concept of the one-man band, not the concept of humanity selflessly being guided by a creator for an overall purpose. As Lewis observed, “You may have noticed that modern people are nearly always thinking about the first thing and forgetting the other two.”³⁴

Another difficulty with Theistic Evolution is that it imports religion into science and science into religion. The proper role of science is that of an objective investigator, not that of a priest. Institutional science should stick with what it does best - the gathering and evaluation of evidence without bias or preconception. Under this formula it is the evidence, not preconception that will drive our conclusions about where we come from and why we are here.

What is the belief Collins seeks to promote?

The evidence Collins presents for the origin of life does promote *belief*, but not in a creator that has created life for a purpose. Since life has no inherent purpose and since, random processes and material causes can nicely explain life as Collins so emphatically declares, we should turn away from traditional religion and turn to religions that use only human reason and science as a conductor. Who then is waving the baton? Who then is standing on the podium directing the course of life? The scientific materialist who has us believe he is leading us to play a tune scripted by the evidence, when it is a tune scripted by the conductor to fit the materialistic supposition.

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³⁴

steer so as to avoid collisions if, in fact, they are such crazy old tubs that they cannot be steered at all. Note 1 at 71-72
See Note 1, p 71