

There is no conflict between institutionally objective science and religion.

Remarks of John H. Calvert, Esq..

Presented on April 29, 2006, at the Northern District of California Judicial Conference *Litigating Morality*

I wish to thank the organizers for the invitation. But also I would like to applaud them for including this item on the agenda. In my view the decision tree about religion, ethics, morals and even government, starts with a very simple question: "Are we designs or occurrences?" The question we are addressing today is how should science and government respond to it? Should they deal with it objectively or should they prejudge the question and permit only one of the two competing possibilities?

Along these lines this panel has been asked to address the current conflict between science and religion, particularly in the area of origins.

I don't believe there is a conflict between institutionally objective origins science and religion. That kind of science objectively seeks an inference to the best current explanation using the scientific method. It is a quest for more reliable explanations, not pre-ordained ones. This kind of science should not conflict with any religion because it is the weight of the evidence, not bias, that drives explanation.

The conflict arises when science abandons this approach, particularly in an area of science that unavoidably impacts religion - science that seeks to investigate and explain the origin of life and its diversity. Where do we come from? As explained recently by Cardinal Christopher Schönborn, this question is key to the formation of our world views. This is because what we believe about where we come from is INSEPARABLE from what we believe about where we should be going.

Currently many institutions of science do not seek an inference to the best current explanation about the origin of life and its diversity. Instead they actually abandon the scientific method and prejudge the question by allowing only one of two competing explanations. The permitted explanation is that life is the product of only material causes. A material cause is a cause attributable to the physical and chemical properties of matter, energy and the forces. Although material causes adequately explain most physical systems like rocks, rivers, wind and rain, a growing number of scientists believe material causes are not adequate to explain the observed fine-tuning of the universe, the origin of life and much of its diversity.

The competing explanation arises from observed messages in DNA, the lack of any known physical or chemical property that orders the sequence of genetic letters that make up the messages and their extraordinary improbability. Bio-systems use an "eerily perfect" language called the genetic code to carry astonishingly complex and integrated messages that define life. How does a material cause explain boolean logic that is used in the expression regions of genes? A book just published by the National Academies Press describes life as a "Poem," not an occurrence.¹

Although scientists commonly use design as a working hypothesis in trying to understand the way the genome works, that hypothesis is "forbidden" when the discussion turns to the evolution of the genome. The name for the exclusionary rule is called "methodological naturalism or scientific materialism."

Scientific materialism is a prejudgment that many religions are quite happy with. The favored religions include Secular Humanism, Atheism, Scientism, Buddhism and various other non-theistic belief systems. The Humanist and Atheist depend on tenets that life "results from unguided evolutionary change," that the universe is self existing and that there is no reason to believe in a supernatural cause because life can be very nicely explained by only material causes. For these religions, the source of wisdom derives not from traditional religion, but from human reason and modern science.

Although these kinds of religion claim to be based on rationality, they are substantially based on a

materialistic dogma rather than a logical analysis of the relevant data.

Of course, the prejudgment is offensive to traditional theistic religions. Those religions claim that the open minded logical analysis outlawed by the materialist provide a strong rational basis for their theistic beliefs. They claim that analysis also shows that life has an inherent purpose, an attribute foreign to a material cause. Theistic religions function to explain life's inherent purpose that is denied by materialistic religions. Parents are offended when public schools contradict their religious beliefs by selectively showing only the information that supports the materialistic world view. Many become worried when their children come home saying "I don't believe in anything."

So there is a conflict between a dogmatic materialistic science and theistic religion. But there is no conflict between institutionally objective science and any religion.

Institutionally objective science, like that described by the Supreme Court in *Daubert v. Merrill Dow Pharmaceuticals*, 509 U.S. 579, 590 (1993), eliminates preconceptions in a search for the most reliable explanation, not one that is pre-ordained.² If this standard were applied in the area of origins science no religion would have grounds for complaint. Now, certain kinds of religion are the objects of discrimination while other kinds of religion are warmly embraced.

Whether life is the result of only a material cause or an intelligent cause is also important to world views about ethics, bio-ethics, morality, government and even politics. Our system of government was founded on the notion that we have unalienable rights because they derive from a creator.

It is one thing for an institution of science to embrace materialism, however it is extraordinarily problematic for the state to take that step.

Theists began to flee Europe 400 years ago due to conflicting state religions. The worry today is that the state is once again embracing a particular kind of religion, a materialistic kind, that is extraordinarily offensive to their theistic belief systems. They feel they are at the end of the road and their backs are up against the wall.

This is not an issue about the bible. No one wants Genesis taught in a science class. The conflict is between materialistic and teleological explanations of the natural world and whether only one should be allowed.

The solution to the problem is evident. To remove religious conflict, science must be institutionally objective and unbiased, at least in the area of origins science. This enhances all of science, because it is objectivity, not bias, that has led to its outstanding accomplishments. Eliminating institutional bias also removes a science stopper, because much data is showing that a materialistic view of nature may be quite wrong.

John Calvert is a lawyer with training and professional experience in geology and managing director of Intelligent Design network Inc., a non-profit organization that seeks *institutional* objectivity in origins science.

-
1. Debra Niehoff, *The Language of Life: How Cells Communicate in Health and Disease*, (National Academies Press, 2005).
 2. According to *Daubert* for an inference or assertion to qualify as scientific knowledge, it must be derived by the scientific method. The Court points out that the focus should be "on principles and methodology, not on the conclusions that they generate." Contrary to this focus, Methodological Naturalism, which permits only natural explanations using only material causes, dictates the conclusion before the process starts. What is the origin of life? Material causes! No other answer is permitted.