

BOOK REVIEW: Williams and Darwinism. Review by Alex Reichel

Robyn Williams: "Unintelligent Design: Why God is not as smart as she thinks she is" Random House.\$17.95.

Have you noticed that the Darwinian atheists are in panic mode! It seems that the Intelligent Design theorists are making too much headway, threatening the most cherished vision of nineteenth century atheistic ideologues that materialistic science would eventually triumph over God and religious superstition. This would leave the world free for hedonism, eroticism and mud in the eye for the restraining institutions of Christendom.

However this cherished dream is now under serious challenge, not only from Intelligent Design, but also from an upsurge in spiritual renewal world-wide. In Christian terms it means that the creative Holy Spirit continues to hover over the waters of chaos, producing many observable phenomena which blatantly escape the mechanistic nets which adolescent skeptics lay for them. Perhaps there is also a panic reaction to the recent book by Alister McGrath, Professor of Historical Theology at Oxford, called "The Twilight of Atheism: The rise and fall of Unbelief in the Modern World". McGrath chronicles the rise and fall of all the nineteenth and twentieth centuries schools of atheism. Only neo-modified Darwinism hangs on tenuously. To call it a science is more than many scientists can stomach and philosophically it is in a mess. If so-called scientific rationalism, mechanicism, is stressed to the exclusion of many other strands of human need like ethics, creativity, intuition, visionary consciousness, faith in the transcendent, tradition, personal experience and just plain common sense, the human spirit will rebel and is doing so.

Viable science began in the West as a thoroughly Christian enterprise; to prepare the earthly future of mankind, to eliminate risks and contribute to human freedom. The severance of this link has been a humanitarian disaster.

In January, the high priest of the Darwinian cult, Richard Dawkins, authored a series on BBC television, called "The Root of All Evil?". It was called a polemic against religion. Dawkins had already featured on Robyn Williams Science Show on the ABC, celebrating 30 years since the publication of "The Selfish Gene". No doubt, "The Root of All Evil?" will also appear there. There is a wave of new books by militant atheists who are obviously threatened by the return of spioritual realities. One of these books is by Daniel Dennett, called "Breaking the

Spell:Religion as a Natural Phenomenon". He is most patronising and pompous towards believers. He refers to atheists as "brights". Dennett is a mechanistic philosopher of mind, firmly of the opinion that no spiritual realities exist apart from the brain and this is due to the purposeless process of Darwinism. It is the dogma which has to be believed; forget about the facts . Darwinians are notorious for circular thinking. Dennett tells us that his research for this book was speedy because of "the urgency of the message". I prefer the word "panic".

The latest polemicist of the genre is our own Robyn Williams. This book was drafted at white-hot speed and it shows. Let me say at the outset that Christian thinkers have nothing to fear from Robyn Williams' childish tirade. He is appallingly ignorant of even simple Christian cosmology and relies on name-calling and invective to try and carry the day. He seems never to have outgrown the schoolboy's curly questions with which he made his school headmaster squirm. I half expected to hear the old canard:"Did Adam have a Navel?", but even so, the questions he boasted about were at about this level. He has made one central mistake. He has completely misread what the Intelligent Design theorists have claimed. There are three theses:

1. Specified or irreducible complexity is well-defined and empirically detectable.
- 2.Undirected natural causes are incapable of explaining specified or irreducible complexity.
3. Intelligent causation best explains specified or irreducible complexity.

These theses have been argued on rational grounds, whether or not one agrees with the reasons given is irrelevant to their standing as scientific theses.

Personally I think that William Demski's argument employing Information Theory has merit, even if Michael Behe's conception of the bacterial flagellum is conceived rather too much as a mechanical model rather than a vital or holistic one. Nevertheless, its irreducibility is fairly obvious- a matter of common sense.

But our atheists are quick to smell danger. To speak of intelligent causation, they say, implies that they are talking about God and Genesis 1. This is a basic error springing from prejudice. The only concession the ID people make to this line of thinking is that the issue cannot be resolved by mechanistic science. Like all issues in speculative science, especially mathematics, resolution can only occur by entering fields of enquiry outside the domain in which they occur. It never occurs to the Darwinians that Nature itself might be alive and imbued with spiritual

intelligence. In the mechanistic model Nature is mechanical- dead in other words. Its hard bits can always be manipulated. But brave souls in the scientific establishment are risking their jobs (and I can name many who have lost them) by daring to posit a universe imbued with non-mechanistic realities. Ultimately, theological insights are by far the most satisfying. Take for example, the following quotation from the Book of Wisdom, speaking of Mother Nature:

"For within her is a spirit intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, active, incisive, unsullied, lucid, invulnerable, benevolent, sharp, irresistible, beneficent, loving to man, steadfast, dependable, unperturbed, almighty, all-surveying, penetrating all intelligent, pure and most subtle spirits; for Wisdom is quicker to move than any motion; she is so pure, she pervades and permeates all things". (Ws.7:22-24)

Robyn Williams, however, remains spooked by the Garden of Eden and *deus ex machina*. The human condition is less than perfect: "Halitosis, farting, vaginal discharge, reflux, snoring, rheumatism, warts, smelly armpits, varicose veins, menopause, brewer's droop...., these are not the marks of a designer at the top of his game". If Williams keeps on this line of thinking he may discover eventually that humanity, and indeed the whole of creation is in need of a Saviour.

It is not clear from Williams' treatise how he manages to skuttle the concept of irreducible complexity. But he does give a couple of examples of Darwinism at work. First assume the theory is true. Then elaborate a complicated Just So story of how we had fish for ancestors or how DNA might have arrived on the scene through the action of viruses "two billion or more years ago" to build a template out of a free-living Lego set based on RNA. The mind tends to boggle a bit until you realise that all of the steps are without evidence and are highly speculative- but the theory has been saved to Darwinian satisfaction.

Whereby hangs a tale. Professor Antony Flew has carried the flag for philosophical atheism for many years. He is a highly respected British philosopher. He is by no means a Christian and yet he has been convinced by the logic of the Intelligent Design protagonists. He insists that biologists' investigation of DNA has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce life that intelligence must have been involved.

Francis Crick, who claimed joint discovery of DNA insists that things that look as if they have been designed are really not- they have really been evolved. Dogma first! Strangely, Crick agrees with Fred Hoyle that there has not been enough

time for chance mutations and natural selection to produce living cells on earth; they must have been seeded from outer space -panspermia. Fred Hoyle expressed this colourfully: The odds against life occurring on earth were about the same as those of a tornado blowing through a junk yard and producing a Boeing 747. Professor Antony Flew is famous for noting a peculiarity of nineteenth century Marxism. He saw that anything that could possibly occur in sociology or political theory could be explained by Marxism, whether or not the propositions were contradictory.. Some aspect of the theory could be produced to accommodate any contingency. The same applies to Darwinist biological observations. Darwinists can cheerfully claim that so far no experiment or observation has shown the Darwinian mechanism of evolution is incorrect (although a flood of anomalies are causing quite a few headaches). The simple reason is that no observation or experiment can prove it either. Karl Popper's criterion of falsification cannot possibly apply to it..

The history of Darwinism is remarkable for two reasons-- fakery and humanitarian disaster.

There have been several attempts to foster its cause by direct fakery, eg. The Piltdown Hoax, Ernst Haeckel's misleading drawings of embryos, illustrations of trees of life in countless textbooks without any vestige of evidence, the fabrication of Huxley's supposed rebuke of the Bishop of Oxford in that famous debate in which the good bishop is reputed to have questioned Huxley's ancestry. This old hoary was trotted out again by Williams notwithstanding that its falsity has been known since 1976.

Ernst Haeckel's German Monist League was based on the premise that "evolution has now pressed on to its final victory" and "the eternal iron laws that rule the evolution of the whole cosmos control our own life". With a little help from Nietzsche he saw that Germans were a superior race, and had to ensure that their genetic superiority was not polluted by alien species, such as the Jews, who had migrated from Russia. Nor was there to be any pollution from the weak, the malformed or the handicapped or those with an hereditary bias towards mysticism. Dan Dennett is a modern reincarnation. Haeckel's efforts found their consummation in fascism and Hitler. Haeckel plus Hitler equals Holocaust. A perusal of Mein Kampf and Hitler's Table Talk is enough to establish this. Darwinism has played a significant role in the eugenic programmes which were

taken up by many countries. It is certainly lurking behind the current push for embryonic stem cell research and cloning for so-called therapeutic purposes-- once again without any demonstration of fact but a misdirected hope in the efficacy of science. Science as Salvation!

Given Robyn Williams' fixation with suppurating anatomical orifices, I know precisely what he can do with his Darwinism.

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