

SALVO

Issue 53 Summer 2020

Child Caring

Loving the Imperfect

*The Choice Between Compassion
& Fear-Fueled Eugenics*

John D. Martin, p. 26

Children at Risk

*An Abusive Agenda Targets
& Harms the Young*

Joshua Pauling, p. 6

Terrell Clemmons, pp. 11, 12 & 14

Nicole M. King, p. 20



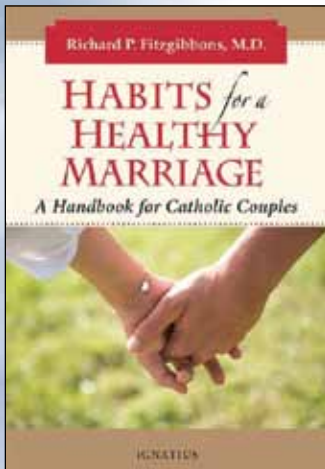
—How 12 Trends in Science Are Supporting Intelligent Design, p. 36

—Why Science Remains Stymied over the Origin of Life, p. 45

Christianity's Gifts, p. 8 || Immaterial Mind, p. 22 || Reason over Passion, p. 43

The Speciation Enigma, p. 32 || Second-Guessing Creation, p. 40

Marriage, Sex and God's Mercy



♦ **HABITS FOR A HEALTHY MARRIAGE: A Handbook for Catholic Couples** — Richard Fitzgibbons, M.D.

Drawing on forty years' experience as a psychiatrist, Fitzgibbons presents twelve habits that foster healing and growth in Catholic marriages. He helps couples to identify and resolve major emotional conflicts that weaken relationships and hurt their marriages.

This unique work draws on the field of positive psychology, focusing on growth in particular virtues that help couples overcome common marital problems. It shows how forgiveness is the path to healing, and also incorporates the luminous writings of St. John Paul II on marriage. A book to help those newly engaged, recently married, or married for many years. **HHMP** . . . Sewn Softcover, \$17.95

"Provides a penetrating guide to the virtues that sustain strong and happy marriages. Highly recommended!"

— **W. Bradford Wilcox, Ph.D.**, Director, National Marriage Project, University of Virginia

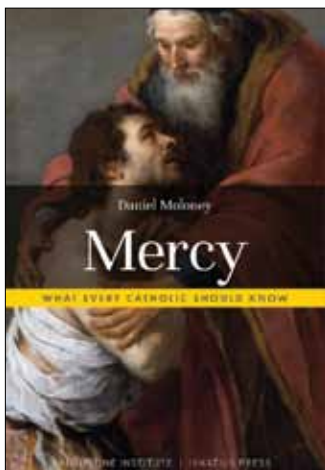
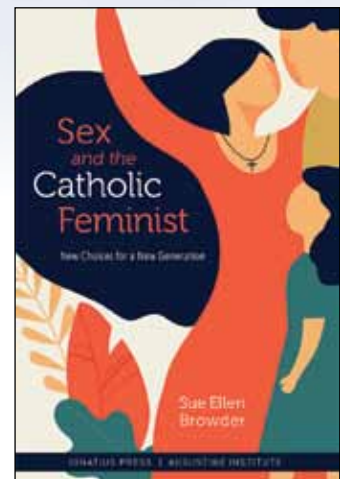
♦ **SEX AND THE CATHOLIC FEMINIST: New Choices for a New Generation**

Sue Ellen Browder

Challenging the notion you can't be a feminist and believe in God, former *Cosmopolitan* writer Browder echoes St. John Paul II's call to embody a "new feminism," a radical new view of women's dignity. She uncovers why the pro-life thread of feminism in America has been ignored by the media and left out of public conversation for fifty years.

Tracing the history of feminism in America, Browder reveals the core of various feminist movements: a desperate search for personhood. She shows that placing one's identity anywhere other than in God will prove unfulfilling, and that feminism rooted in this truth is authentic feminism that we should reclaim and celebrate. **SCFP** . . . Sewn Softcover, \$15.95

"A must-read for anyone interested in the 20th century history of feminism, its manipulation by powerful men, and the exciting beginnings of the long road back to sanity." — **Fiorella Nash**, Author, *The Abolition of Woman: How Radical Feminism Is Betraying Women*



♦ **MERCY: What Every Catholic Should Know**

Fr. Daniel Moloney

Starting from an unexpected perspective, this book approaches mercy from a political point of view, explaining how mercy is intimately interwoven with politics and power, and touches upon topics like legal punishments, the death penalty, and self-defense. It eloquently explains how mercy is not synonymous with leniency, but is a response to a privation of something which ought to be there.

He highlights God's identity as a loving Father, explaining how the most loving route to take for your children and for their ultimate good is sometimes through the course of tough love. God is always good and loving, and his justice and mercy go hand-in-hand. **MWCKP** . . . Sewn Softcover, \$16.95

"Moloney untangles the concept of mercy from its sentimentalized counterfeits, providing us with a theologically rich and rigorous account of God's loving kindness to His wayward creatures." — **R. Reno**, Editor, *First Things*



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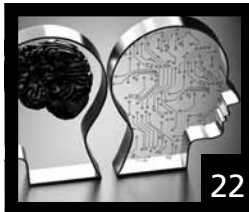
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SALVO



32



22



26

HEADQUARTERS

22 Immaterial Mind

Kenneth Miller's Epic Failure of Evolutionary Guesswork

::: by Richard W. Stevens

FEATURES

26 Serving the Imperfect

The Stark Choice Between Compassion & Fear-Fueled Modern Eugenics

::: by John D. Martin

32 The Speciation Enigma

The Presumed Evolutionary & Fossil Record Trees Are Strikingly Divergent ::: by Hugh Ross



12

Undercover by Terrell Clemmons

12 Cruel & Unusual

How Gay-Affirming Culture Fosters Same-Sex Abuse

14 • Sexual Programming: LGBTQ's Grip on U.S. Education

Biohazards by Bryan Just

16 Dealing with Drugs

Questionable New Responses to Opioid Addiction

Family Briefing by Nicole M. King

20 Coming Out Wrong

Adult Sexuality for Kids & Adolescence for Adults

Deprogram by Denyse O'Leary

36 Twelve Steps Forward

The Trends in Science Continuing to Aid Intelligent Design

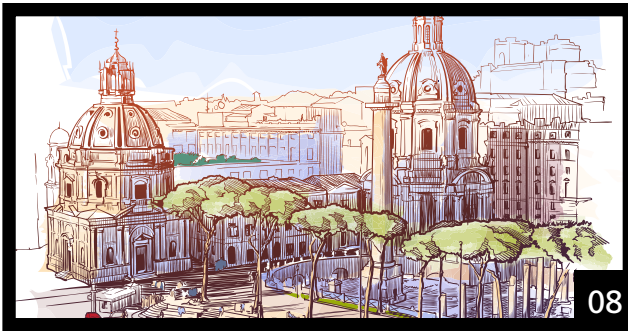
Operation ID by Jonathan Witt

40 Watching Our Maker

Both Theology & Science Undermine New Conjectures About God & Evolution



40



Opening Salvo by James M. Kushiner

05 Of Viruses & Men

The Truth About Our
Malfunctioning World

Maneuvers by Joshua Pauling

06 Discoloring History

You May Want to Find Out What's in
Your Child's Classroom Library

Camouflage by Terrell Clemmons

08 Light of the World

Christianity Inspired Liberal Society
& Even Informs Its Antagonists

Surveillance by Terrell Clemmons

11 Perverse Readings

Your Kids Should Not Check Out Drag
Queen Story Hour

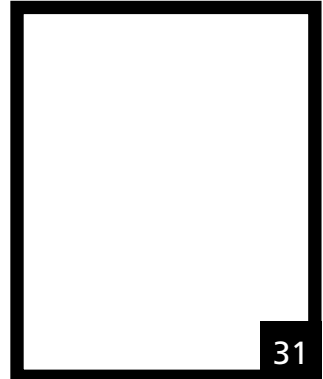
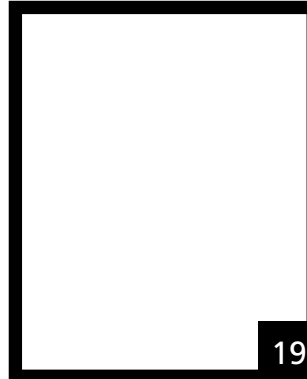
The Trenches by Joshua Steely

43 Outrage or Insight?

A Timely Lesson on Not Placing
Passion over Reason



THE SALVO FAKE ADS



Blips by Terrell Clemmons

45 It Only Gets Deeper

A Review of *The Mystery of Life's
Origin: The Continuing Controversy*

46 Book Blips

Raising a Strong Daughter in a Toxic Culture by
Meg Meeker • *What Is a Girl Worth?* by Rachael
Denhollander • *Our Bodies Tell God's Story* by
Christopher West • *Church of Cowards: A Wake-Up
Call to Complacent Christians* by Matt Walsh • *The
New Normal: The Transgender Agenda* by Dr. Lisa
Nolland, Dr. Carys Moseley, et al.

47 Film Blips

*Created Equal: Clarence Thomas in His Own
Words* • *American Factory* • *16 Bars* • *A Hidden
Life* • *I Am Patrick: The Patron Saint of Ireland*

Parting Shot by Emily Morales

48 Home Stuck

The Coronavirus Reveals an
Intolerance of Solitude

SALVO

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salvo n. (säl'vō)

1. A mental reservation
2. An expedient for protecting one's reputation
3. A forceful verbal or written assault
4. A group of shots fired simultaneously for effect

A publication of The Fellowship of St. James (www.fsj.org), *Salvo* is dedicated to debunking the cultural myths that have undercut human dignity, all but destroyed the notions of virtue and morality, and slowly eroded our appetite for transcendence. It also seeks to promote the Christian worldview. The opinions expressed by individual contributors are not necessarily those of the editors or publisher.

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Summer 2020

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Of Viruses & Men

The Truth About Our Malfunctioning World

by James M. Kushiner

Man is a demonstrably fallen creature of habit and desire. Dependably, he sooner or later forgets the lessons he has learned from hardship, especially if they require a measure of vigilance, sobriety, and discipline in their application. Modern man assumes that life must progressively become more comfortable, convenient, and entertaining. He also measures the health of society by its levels of spending and consumption—the more, the better. Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon has often noted that the goal of unlimited growth is “the philosophy of the cancer cell,” whose growth makes it deadly to its host.

There must be limits. For the children of men are not the products of blind chance and randomness. We have been formed in our mothers’ wombs, and our form has a shape, a pattern, from which it may not deviate without consequences. Some of the consequences, such as disease, may be survivable, even curable. But if a virus overwhelms our body’s antibody production, it will kill us.

At the core of the viral epidemics that have long plagued mankind is what we moderns call misinformation, bad instructions. A virus is “a sub-microscopic piece of DNA or RNA, a piece of genetic material,” explains biochemist Michael Behe, with a shell made of protein. Genetic material is information, coding. A virus is one-tenth-thousandth to one-millionth the size of the human genome. In itself, it is *not* alive. Behe says:

[A virus] needs to get into a cell in order to reproduce. The information it carries in its DNA or RNA hijacks the machinery of the cell, and the cell reproduces the virus for it and sends copies of the

virus out to infect other cells. That process often-times wrecks the host cell, and that’s what causes the damage.¹

Behe notes that we have no idea how viruses arose in the first place. Problems occur especially when a virus that is common to one species jumps (sometimes aided by mutation) to another species. Since the new host is not familiar with the foreign virus, it lacks effective immunities and antibodies. Many experts believe the new coronavirus can be traced to bats sold in a “wet market” in China. (Chinese food markets are filled with every imaginable wild creature.)

Amazingly, our bodies work at the genetic level to develop immunities as quickly as possible, almost as if a software security program had been installed for just that purpose.

Scientists have long theorized that genetic sequences in our bodies that look like viruses are discarded DNA segments (“junk DNA”) from our ancient past. But now they’re discovering that the “junk” plays positive roles in the human body. Therefore, says Behe, “we can’t say that definitely viruses are all bad.”

We might think of viruses as smaller units of information or coding that, if misplaced or mutated, mess up an organism’s operation in much the same way that computer coding that is incorrectly situated or out of sequence messes up the operation of the program. All such bits of information may either serve to assist proper functioning or find their way into places where they do not belong and thereby wreak havoc.

We’ve all heard of malware.

The very first malware targeted at humans was, “You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4–5). It was false information. It was also dead, for it had no basis in reality—until it found a host, who accepted

and acted upon it. Then it went “viral.” So it has reproduced and mutated, spreading one falsehood after another. A deadly legion of lies about good and evil has spread in the 21st century. *Salvo’s* mission as a cultural antibody is to combat those lies for your mental and spiritual health. ☺

Note

1. Interview with Michael Behe: discovery.org/multimedia/audio/2020/03/michael-behe-on-covid-19-and-why-are-there-viruses-anyway.





Discoloring History

You May Want to Find Out What's in
Your Child's Classroom Library

by Joshua Pauling

As schools across the country attempt to improve student literacy, boatloads of taxpayer dollars are being poured into creating classroom libraries, so that each classroom will have a large number of interesting and varied books for students to read. The district I work in has been issued nearly \$500 of state money per classroom for this purpose. Assuming that all schools in the state are being allocated similar amounts, it is clear that a great deal of money is being devoted to this cause. While it is laudable to surround students with the world of words, it is troubling that the choices of books seem to be limited—and ideologically so.

For instance, when I went to the website of the designated state supplier for these books to look for works that might be useful in my high-school history classes, I noticed that one particular set of books was being promoted as an excellent classroom library collection. I clicked to see the titles contained in this set, and one that immediately grabbed my attention was *Queer, There, and Everywhere*:

23 People Who Changed the World by Sarah Prager. I was a bit taken aback, but clicked to see a synopsis of the book, which read:

World history has been made by countless lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals—and you've never heard of many of them. Queer author and activist Sarah

Prager delves deep into the lives of numerous people who fought, created, and loved on their own terms. From high-profile figures like Abraham Lincoln and Eleanor Roosevelt to the trailblazing gender-ambiguous Queen of Sweden and a bisexual blues singer who didn't make it into your history books, these astonishing true stories uncover a rich queer heritage that encompasses every culture, in every era.

Reading the LGBTQ Agenda into the Past

The inclusion of Abraham Lincoln and Eleanor Roosevelt in this book shows that its approach to history is not only ideologically driven but also irresponsible. To be sure, reputable historians hold different opinions regarding the sexuality of these two figures, but to paint them as soldiers in the LGBTQ cause is a distortion of history. Perhaps to justify the claim of LGBTQ ubiquity reflected in the book's title and synopsis, the author appears to have read the LGBTQ agenda into the past.

Any first-year history major can tell you that context is critical to determining the meaning of historical sources, and that the language contained therein must be considered in the cultural context of the time. In previous generations, the language used in letter-writing was vivid, deep, expressive, and often intimate, even in correspondence between persons of the same sex. In today's overly sexualized culture, we assume that the friendships or relationships between persons who wrote to each other this way must have had a sexual component because we can't imagine such language being used in any other context. But this is to read the present into the past, and that is problematic at the very least.

In the chapters of her book that actually deal with these high-profile individuals, Prager does use qualifying phrases like “we may never know for sure,” but her choice to include such recognizable figures in the book at all, and to call attention to their inclusion in the synopsis, is suspect. It indicates that careful historical scholarship on this issue is lacking. By contrast, Ken Burns’s documentary *The Roosevelts* treaded very carefully in dealing with Eleanor’s deep friendships with other women, and never made claims of a sexual nature.

While Prager is correct to note that there have been different expressions of sexuality in “every culture, in every era,” and that it is proper to acknowledge this fact, she fails to consider the moral dimensions of aberrant sexuality and how individuals who indulge it should be viewed. Instead of portraying such persons as broken and fallen, at least with respect to their sexuality, she presents them as pioneering role models to be imitated.

Before deciding whether to add the book to my cart or not, I perused the reviews on Amazon. Unsurprisingly, they revealed a polarized response, with some critiquing the book’s questionable historical methodology and others praising it as a welcome development.

Co-opted by the Progressive Agenda

I decided not to add the book to my cart, but now I wanted to know how many other books of this nature were available from this state-sponsored supplier. I entered “LGBT” into the search box and found many selections dealing with these themes for all grade levels. Had the classroom library project been co-opted by the progressive agenda? Now my ideology detector was up.

I wondered if a search for

books on Martin Luther or John Calvin, two important historical figures in the making of the modern world, would turn up similar results. Surely, there would be at least a few books available about these major figures of the Reformation.

But no; not a single title on either man was returned. Was that because these individuals had four strikes against them—being white, male, European, and Christian?

What the search for “Martin Luther” did return were 60-plus titles about Martin Luther King, Jr., who certainly is a historical figure worthy of significant coverage. But no books about the man he was named after?

This seemed to be evidence that another of progressivism’s go-to categories lay behind the selection of books being made available for classrooms: race. I scanned more titles and found numerous books about racial issues. Again, race is indeed a major aspect of history and should not be ignored. I spend significant time in my classroom dealing with this difficult topic, not sugarcoating America’s record on race. But it is not the only issue worth considering, and a consequence of focusing on it so heavily is that students are encouraged to develop the destructive mindset of identity politics, which views the world through a racial lens, as if that one characteristic is what defines us as humans.

My next thought was that, if there weren’t any books about Luther or Calvin, surely there must

be some about the Reformation generally. But again my search returned nothing, only titles having to do with “reform” as in social reform movements, another progressive hobbyhorse. I wondered if there were books about non-

Christian religious figures, say the Dalai Lama; here my search was more successful, returning three books.

Salvaging a Few Classics

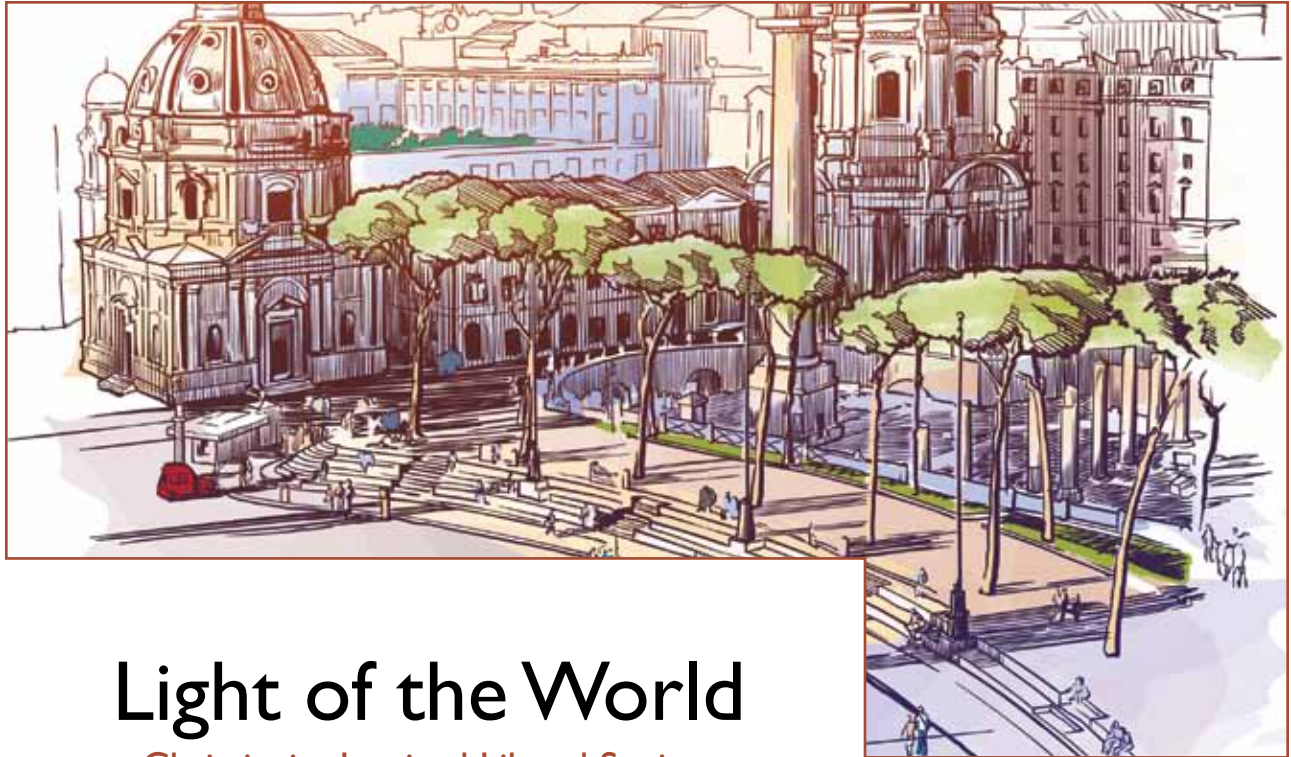
Nevertheless, by this point I was quite frustrated, finding the book selections to be strictly limited by an ide-

ological agenda, even though the state supplier claimed to be offering “diverse authors” and “diverse perspectives.” It was clear that this actually meant rubber-stamping books promoting the singular progressive views on sexuality, gender, race, and social justice.

In the end, I tried searching for historical classics, some of which did turn up (especially books by what are termed “diverse” authors). These I quickly selected to fill up my cart, hopefully avoiding the ideological game being played in the process.

This exercise in trying to select books for my classroom library revealed to me the deep connections between the public school system and progressive ideology. Something as simple as creating a classroom library appears to have been co-opted by the progressives, as the books made available have been pre-selected works geared towards inculcating in students a worldview at odds with reality. ☉

Reputable historians hold different opinions regarding the sexuality of these figures, but to paint them as soldiers in the LGBTQ cause is a distortion of history. . . . the author appears to have read the LGBTQ agenda into the past.



Light of the World

Christianity Inspired Liberal Society & Even Informs Its Antagonists

by Terrell Clemmons

How do you measure the influence of Christianity on the world? By the transformation of Rome from state persecutor to state endorser? By Christianity's growth rate in terms of numbers or geographic reach? Certainly, these rank as indicators, but according to historian Tom Holland, the influence of Christianity runs far deeper than metrics such as these. In his most recent work, *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World* (Basic Books, 2019), he says the emergence of Christianity in the ancient world has been the single most transformative development in Western history, with effects so deeply embedded today, it's virtually impossible for us to extricate ourselves from them. And precisely *because* they are so deeply embedded, they are also largely hidden from our view.

Although he grew up in a churchgoing home, Holland says it wasn't church teachings or Christian scholarship that led him to that conclusion, but rather a deep dive into history. As a boy,

he was more interested in "big things"—dinosaurs, empires, ancient kings and their gods—than in the children of Israel or Jesus and his disciples. And so, as he grew into adulthood, his childhood

belief in God gradually faded from view, as if blotted out by the sun of fascination with the Romans and Greeks.

But in the process of writing studies of the classical world, which involved living intimately in the company of some of its largest figures, he found himself increasingly disenchanted with these "heroes." Yes, they soared large across the pages of history, but they were also terrifying and struck him as something increasingly *alien*. Profligate murderers and enslavers of millions, they lacked any modicum of human empathy. How could they so callously disregard basic human rights? Why was there no mercy or compassion? Where were their moral sensibilities?

Unsettled, Holland set out to trace the lineage of the liberal humanist values he had all his life taken for granted—only to find that they traced back, ultimately, to Christianity. *Dominion* is the result of that fifteen-year project. An extensive narrative, it opens in pre-Christian Athens, sweeps

through early Christianity and the Middle Ages, then looks at the Reformation, the rise of science, the abolition of slavery, civil rights, the fall of Soviet Communism, and sexual politics right up to and including #MeToo, exploring, not the history of Christianity *per se*, but the currents of Christian influence that have provoked seismic cultural changes in the world.

Common Grace Endowments

Consider the ancestry of the following ideals, which the Western world and a growing portion of the East affirm as universal:

• **Human Rights, Equality, and the Rule of Law:**

As Holland tells it, soon after the death of the overreaching eleventh-century pope Gregory VII, who claimed that he answered to no one, a law school was established in the Italian city of Bologna. The city became the prototype of something brand-new, the university town, and right away, a decades-long endeavor ensued to codify a comprehensive code of law. Attributed to a single monk named Gratian and completed around 1150, the *Decretum* incorporated ancient Roman law, the Scriptures, the writings of the Church Fathers, and centuries of canon law. Echoing the Stoics, much as Paul had done, Gratian framed his synthesis as *natural law* and set it forth as the key to fashioning a properly Christian legal system.

It opened with a quotation from St. Paul: "The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14). If all souls were equal in the eyes of God, Gratian

reasoned, then in order for justice truly to be done, any legal code must begin with this assumption. This affirmation overturned age-old "commonsense" presump-

tion through Moses, the *Decretum* was the first legislation claiming universal authority over *all* people—secular, royal, or ecclesiastical. Moreover, it was the first "revolu-

Holland makes the case that the ideals of Christianity have taken such deep root in the world that they inform the thinking of us all, whether or not we are aware of it. As you learn to identify this phenomenon, you will start noticing how non-Christians, from secularists to social engineers to sexual activists, bear witness to it.

tions—that unequal classes of people naturally existed and that they rightly lived by different standards, including different standards of justice.

And so, with the *Decretum*, a thoroughly reordered social framework came into being. Resting on the foundational tenet that every

individual was a child of God, who was himself *just* and who possessed the power to write his law on the human heart, its purpose was to provide for equal justice to all, regardless of rank, wealth, pedigree, or anything else.

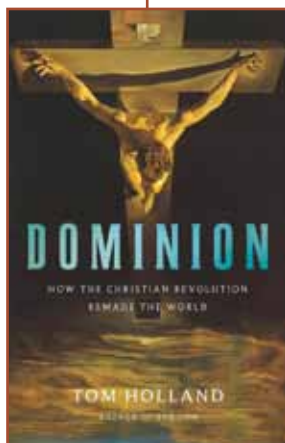
Not only did this inaugurate the revolutionary idea of human equality, it also

introduced a revolution in the relationship between rulers and the people under their rule. Ancient kings either claimed divine right or imposed their rule by conquest. Either way, the parochial power to rule was secured by strength. With the possible exception of the Torah, the law code introduced

tion" pointedly accomplished *by law*—enacted not by the overwhelming power of knights with lances, but by the humble, nonviolent virtue of reason flowing from the pens of learned men. In this way, the *Decretum*, anchored as it was in Old and New Testament principles, laid the groundwork for all the modern liberal democracies that would follow.

• **Education and the Rise of**

Science: Peter Abelard, a contemporary of Gratian, was, like him, a scholar devoted to knowledge. A lecturer in Paris, a city that outshone even Bologna as a center of scholarship, Abelard believed that God's order was rational and governed by rules and that mortals could rightly aspire to comprehend it. His method of inquiry held that, "by doubting we come to inquiry, and by inquiry we perceive the truth." He was convicted as a heretic by an overly authoritarian, anti-intellectual church, but when he died he was buried under the epitaph "the Aristotle of our age," and less than a century after his death, his method of inquiry was accepted and institutionalized by papal statute. Universities,



explicitly independent from church authority, began cropping up across Christendom.

Contra the church that opposed him, Abelard saw no conflict between his career as a scholar and his commitment to the crucified Christ. To identify the laws that governed the universe was to honor the Lord God who had formulated them. These convictions came to lie at the heart of the new universities, and, centuries later, they gave rise to modern science.

The Colonization of Language

The term “science,” as we currently understand it, though, did not come into use until the era of Darwin. This provides a good point on which to turn and consider another invisible effect of Christianity: its influence on our language, including the very categories by which we organize our thoughts, if not whole societies. Following are a few words that have entered our language through or by reference in some way to Christianity.

• **Science and Religion:** Until the mid-1800s, Holland writes, branches of knowledge ranging from grammar to music were considered “sciences,” and theology had long reigned as their “queen.” That changed when Thomas Henry Huxley, the pugnacious “Darwin’s Bulldog,” imperiously declared the natural and physical sciences to be “the only method by which truth could be ascertained.” This diktat effectively redrew the boundaries of what counted as knowable knowledge, subsuming all other truth claims under the principle of “agnosticism,” a term he coined, which sowed this new *scientism* into the way we think about truth and knowledge.

In so doing, Holland writes, Huxley pointedly defined *science* by reference to what he saw as its opposite (or enemy)—*religion*,

which by his day represented knowledge claims based on divine *revelation*. But this was not always so, either. In ancient Rome, *religion*es merely referred to the rites and rituals that governed the city’s calendar. That changed around the year 600, when Pope Gregory I, also called St. Gregory the Great, converted his palace into a monastery and lived as a monk in repentance, poverty, and chastity out of devotion to God. This way of living became known as a life of *religio*, and the term “religion” evolved from there.

• **Secular:** In Rome, a *saeculum* referred to the general span of a human life or generation. Games were periodically held to mark the passing of a *saeculum*. When St. Augustine, while writing *City of God*, needed a word to characterize the passing and ever-fluctuating things of mortals in contrast to the eternal, unchanging things of God, he chose the term *secularia*—the “secular things.” And so, ever since Augustine, the twin dimensions of life on earth have been referred to as the *sacred* and the *secular*.

• **Heterosexuality and Homosexuality.** Gay and lesbian apologists point out that homosexuality has existed since ancient times. This is only partly true, and it provides a good illustration of the way the coining of terms shapes the way we think. Yes, same-sex eroticism is old, but the terms *heterosexuality* and *homosexuality* are historically recent, having been introduced in late nineteenth-century Germany by homoerotic men campaigning for the repeal of sodomy laws.

They put forth the concept of *homosexualität*, not so much as a term for any *behavior*, but as an *ontological category of human being*. Those who fell into this category were owed compassion by the rest of society—and such compassion should be demonstrated,

it was said, by the decriminalization of their sexual behaviors. Do you see how contemporary LGBT apologists are interpreting ancient historical accounts according to modern categories? Yes, same-sex eroticism existed long ago, but the *classification* of human beings as heterosexual or homosexual did not.

The Homage Vice Pays to Virtue

Do you also see how biblical values were (and still are) being deployed, politically, to serve an agenda that lies outside the purview of their source? Holland makes the case that the ideals of Christianity have taken such deep root in the world that they inform the thinking of us all, whether or not we are aware of it. As you learn to identify this phenomenon, you will start noticing how non-Christians, from secularists to social engineers to sexual activists, bear witness to it.

Consider this 2007 comment from Richard Dawkins: “It is the case that since we are all twenty-first-century people, we all subscribe to a pretty widespread consensus of what’s right and what’s wrong.” He listed slavery, child labor, and domestic violence as “things that people used to believe in and no longer do.” Ironically, with this observation, he confirms the sum thesis of *Dominion*.

Seventeenth-century French moralist Francois De La Rochefoucauld astutely observed that “hypocrisy is the homage vice pays to virtue.” The statement highlights the subtle way in which the hypocrite, in the very act of presenting himself as virtuous, bears witness to his own inner knowledge about virtue and vice. Consider what great dominion God hath wrought, then, when Richard Dawkins, one of today’s most vehement atheists, unwittingly bears witness to the eternal verities of the faith he abhors. ☉

Perverse Readings

Your Kids Should Not Check Out Drag Queen Story Hour

by Terrell Clemmons

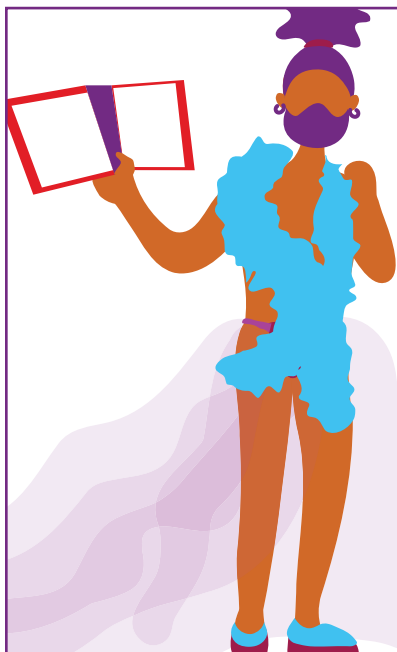
Background:

In the fall of 2015, the first Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH) was held at the San Francisco Public Library. A joint project of queer-core writer Michelle Tea and San Francisco queer arts group RADAR Productions, DQSH is, according to its website (dragqueenstoryhour.org), “just what it sounds like—drag queens reading stories to children.” In 2018, RADAR passed the program on to the San Francisco Public Library and local chapters to manage.¹ Libraries, by and large, have been cooperative, and in five years, DQSH has grown to more than fifty independently funded and managed chapters worldwide.

Events are designed for children ages 3–8, and usually last about 45 minutes. Typically, one or more men, dressed in drag, will read a few books to the children, sing a few songs, and do an activity, such as a craft, face-painting, or dress-up. Most events take place in libraries, but schools and bookstores may host them as well. Some DQSH events have seen attendance numbers in the hundreds.² The DQSH organization also publishes its own material for children such as *The Dragtivity Book* to “help adults and kids explore drag, gender, and identity together.”

Reason for Surveillance:

According to the cast of “RuPaul’s Drag Race,” a popular VH1 drag show, drag first appeared in America in vaudeville and then found a home in Prohibition-era underground gay and transvestite bars.³ As the sexual revolution has



advanced, the “art form” has gone public, and now the men want to bring their show to children.

DQSH is said to be about acceptance, respect for all, and celebrating diversity and freedom of expression. If the men in drag are asking that we treat them as human beings worthy of dignity and respect, then yes, let us fully and clearly affirm our respect for them as men created in the image of God. But if they’re asking us to celebrate what they *do*, well, that’s another matter. Drag has always been, and still is, a risqué form of adult entertainment. With DQSH, we are being asked to accept and celebrate that which is risqué and burlesque *for small children*. This is something no child-loving adult should ever do. To sexualize children is to exploit them, and to endorse DQSH is to participate in the confusion and exploitation.

Most Brazen Affront:

Why, we might ask, are men who dress up like women taking an interest in other people’s children? According to the DQSH website, one reason is that they want to be role models.

DQSH captures the imagination and play of the gender fluidity of childhood and gives kids glamorous, positive, and unabashedly queer role models. In spaces like this, kids are able to see people who defy rigid gender restrictions and imagine a world where people can present as they wish, where dress up is real.

On top of the fact that a man dressed like a woman is in itself a bizarre spectacle, which has always been part of the allure of a drag show, drag is a genre of performance that trades in the sexually suggestive, provocative, and freakish. DQSH events have included pornographic themes, twerking, and BDSM-wear.⁴ Some DQSH “queens” have been exposed as convicted sex offenders and pedophiles.⁵ These are not the character traits of role models.

Children are young, defenseless, and malleable. All DQSH does is confuse them and subject them to the lusts of lecherous adults. These dress-up shows are unabashed grooming on steroids. ☹

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CRUEL & UNUSUAL

How Gay-Affirming Culture Fosters Same-Sex Abuse

In February 1988, some two hundred activists met for a first-of-its-kind “war conference” to establish a national GLBT agenda. The top recommendation, according to the final statement, was “a nationwide media campaign to promote a positive image of gays and lesbians.”¹ The following year, two Harvard-educated gays who had attended the conference, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen, published *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the '90s*. Admittedly “a program of unabashed propaganda, firmly grounded in long-established principles of psychology and advertising,” the bestseller became colloquially known as the Gay Manifesto.

In the final chapter, the authors got remarkably candid about the empty life awaiting most gay men after the inaugural rush of sex. “So many gays seem silly, superficial, little wiser at fifty than at twenty.” By age thirty, the hot and sexy years will give way to “widespread disillusionment and unhappiness,” eventually culminating in “misery . . . by the age of thirty-five or forty at the latest.”²

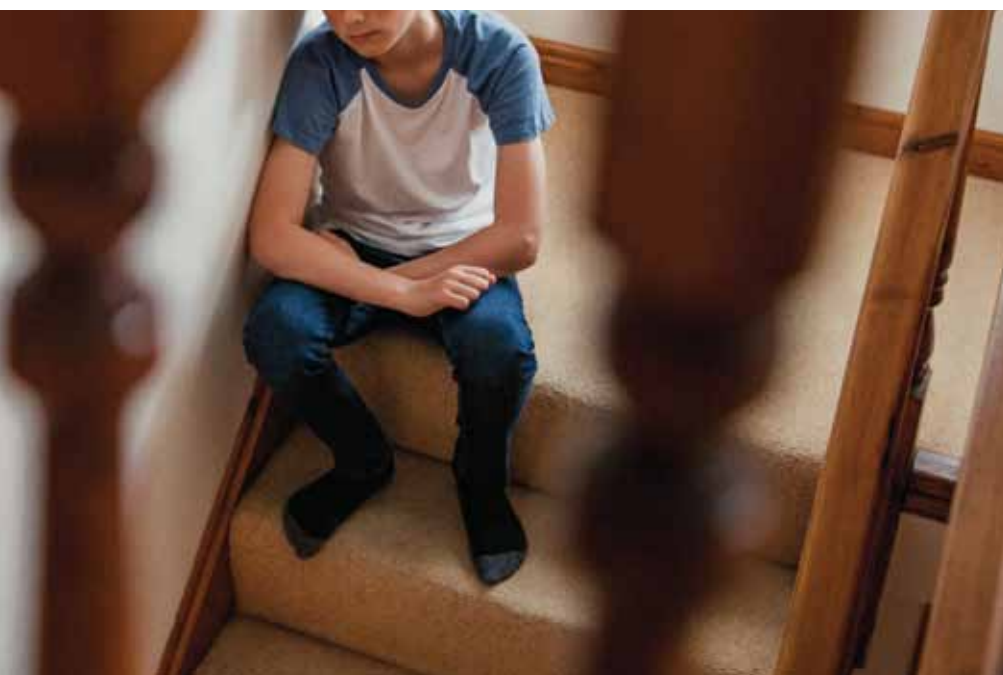
To mitigate this unfortunate but predictable result of a lifestyle centered on individualistic sex, they proposed that gay men adopt “a viable alternative to the heterosexual family.” Here’s how it would work: Older gay men should “court” youth for the purpose of initiating relationships that would be equal parts “father-son, teacher-student, and big brother-little brother . . . with the superadded bond of explicitly sexual love.” The relationships would last for a time and then end, at which point the younger partner, now an adult, would seek out a child of his own to “love.” The Greeks did it, they said, and so this “new ideal for gay men—a family structure of their own” was only a return to Greek love.

The propaganda strategy laid out in *After the Ball* centered on talking about gayness loudly and often, and in ways that portrayed gays as victims and opponents as hateful oppressors. Clearly, it has been wildly successful. Most Americans now either celebrate or shrug at gayness. But what about this “modest proposal” (yes, they really called it that) prescribing age-disparate sexual liaisons as the new gay “family”? Most of us do still draw a line at grown men pursuing adolescent boys for sex. Most of us still call that sex abuse. Or do we?

A CULTURE OF ABUSE

Robert Oscar (Bobby) Lopez has been talking about same-sex abuse for years, since long before #MeToo came to the aid of women exploited by men. In an *American Thinker* article provocatively titled, “To Affirm LGBT Ideology Is to Support Abuse,”³ he wrote that gay culture is *itself* a culture of abuse and that *all* of gay-affirming society is complicit in it.

To illustrate, he told his own “nightmare” story. When he was thirteen, two older teenage boys got him drunk, held him down, “and did things they had apparently learned from older gay men.” They convinced him he was gay and that he had wanted it.



Massively confused, he internalized the lies and went on to engage in a string of trysts with older men throughout high school, even though he found the sex painful and revolting.

When he tried to make a fresh start in college by dating girls, he was mercilessly beaten into submission by a relentless onslaught of gay-enforcing cant: "People are born this way." "Look at how you talk—how can you deny yourself?" "You can't change." "If you don't accept this, you will kill yourself." Terribly in need of somewhere to belong, he capitulated. Had it not been for a cancer diagnosis at age 27, he might never have escaped the gay web of delusions.

"For female victims, a whole society has rallied to support them," Lopez wrote. "For male victims, a whole society has rallied to affirm their abusers."

MASS DECEIT

"Everything about gay ideology is a series of hideous lies," he says. Here are three big ones:

- "You are born gay."
- "You know from a very young age that you are gay."
- "There is nothing wrong with the sex act, that there's nothing objectively more difficult about engaging in homosexual activity than heterosexual activity."⁴

There is no evidence to support the assertion that people are born gay and plenty of evidence to refute it. Lopez calls this "pure and simple . . . a pickup line." And the companion line that says kids know they're gay from a young age is a gross and insidious generalization, completely unsupportable by any standard of evidence.

As for the idea that gay sex is merely a benign counterpart to heterosexual sex, this is demonstrably false. Lopez tactfully explained on the Eric Metaxas Show how anal sex is inherently unhealthy and can inflict long-term damage on the male body, especially when practiced repeatedly over time. It's simply a biological fact that the part of the body that expels waste contains high levels of bacteria and pathogens. Combine this with the way male sexuality tends to be more aggressive and more promiscuous, and it should come as no surprise that gays have higher



rates of injuries, infections, and cancers in the private areas.

It *should* come as no surprise, but it *might*. The medical profession is all but silent on these things, especially after Dr. Paul Church, a prominent urologist and Harvard Medical School professor, was banned from four Boston hospitals after refusing to affirm gay sex.⁵

PERPETUATING A SYSTEM OF ABUSE

Lopez followed up "To Affirm LGBT Ideology Is to Support Abuse" with an *Inside Higher Ed* opinion piece. In "Same-Sex Abuse Should Not Be Invisible,"⁶ he discusses three ways gay-affirming culture is abusive.

First, there is the *physical*. Gay sex for him was painful, coercive, and injurious. He later learned that this is common to gay male sexuality, and in

2017, MassResistance put scientific backing to the claim with the publication of *The Health Hazards of Homosexuality: What the Medical and Psychological Research Reveals*, a 500-page volume containing peer-reviewed medical analysis that catalogs the disproportionate rates of diseases and disorders among homosexuals.

Second is the *psychological*. Propaganda is a form of psychological warfare. Another gay lie, now being enforced in some states in the form of therapy bans, says, "If you try to change, you will kill yourself." Taken together, the gay lies construct an alternative reality that closes in on confused youth like a vise, sealing off avenues of escape from "being gay." "None of [gay ideology] had anything to do with helping me as a person or advancing any humanitarian cause," Lopez wrote. "It had nothing to do with human rights. Sleazy men wanted to sleep with me, and these arguments would ostensibly keep me in their dating pool."

And finally, there is the *silencing of victims*. Gay-affirming culture frames "coming out" as a *liberation*—boys aren't being groomed and abused; they're being liberated, mentored, and "loved" by father-teacher-brothers. Truth-tellers aren't whistleblowers but are "homophobic" and "antigay." Abuse is put forward as love, and truth-telling as abuse. This is tantamount to telling boys that what is being done to them isn't abusive. The result is that youth who are being actively targeted by predators have few resources affirming sexual truth and few safe harbors from would-be abusers. "For female victims, a whole society has rallied to support them," Lopez wrote. "For male victims, a whole society has rallied to affirm their abusers."

Kirk and Madsen acknowledged a real deficiency in gay life. They would have better served America by stopping right there. Instead, they recommended *sucking children into the void*—as if boys existed to meet the "needs" of gay men. That right there should have tipped us off that there was something very wrong with this movement. We used to call things like this perversion. Now they fly under the banner of Pride. Only hell itself would put a positive spin on that. ☉

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SEXUAL PROGRAMMING

LGBTQ's Grip on U.S. Education
by Terrell Clemmons

Christopher Culp, a Washington, D.C.-area sexual health educator, criticizes sex-ed as it's usually taught because it isn't inclusive enough. The problem, as he explained in a TED Talk titled "Queer sex ed for all," is that it's based on the notion that sex is about reproduction, but the reproductive model of male + female = baby "doesn't fit everybody." If "penis and vagina" sex is assumed to be the norm, he said, then "we don't get to talk about a whole lot of other sexual acts, the whole spectrum." He didn't elaborate on what other sex acts he wanted to talk to kids about, but he did note that he himself is gay, and that he doesn't want to reproduce. "I have lots of kids because I teach." >>>



Now, I am not here saying that Culp or anyone else is, by virtue of the above, an active child molester, at least not physically. But he and a ubiquitous array of sexual activists are exhibiting an extreme interest in other people's children, and in that sense, I think there's some very real moral, emotional, and psychological molestation going on.

To illustrate the ubiquity of the sexual activists' programs, Linda Harvey of Mission America compiled a Corruption/Propaganda Calendar for the 2019–2020 school year.¹ Here is a list of events that were scheduled from September 2019 to May 2020:

Banned Books Week—a week for highlighting books that have been challenged. Materials questioned because of their obscenity or depravity may be featured in weeklong library displays.

Ally Week—Children are encouraged to adopt a particular position on sexual morality. Ponder the pressure when the opposite of "ally" is "bigot" or "hater."

LGBTQ History Month—a month for celebrating known LGBTs and for reimagining the sexuality of other historical figures, such as George Washington Carver, Florence Nightingale, or Tchaikovsky, none of whom identified as LGBT.

Coming Out Day—Any child can enjoy a moment of fame by officially declaring himself or herself anything but normal ("cisgender" heterosexual).

International Pronouns Day—a day to promote speech patrol and control.

Spirit Day—If you wear purple on this day, you're signaling that you're not a bully. All bets are off if you don't.

Transgender Awareness Week—a week for sowing gender confusion.

Transgender Day of Remembrance—a day for framing the gender-confused as victims of bigotry and hate.

No Name-Calling Week—a whole week of signaling your virtue by conforming to politically correct speech codes.

Jazz & Friends National Day of School & Community Readings—a day for cute stories that reframe gender confusion as authentic self-expression.

Transgender Day of Visibility—another day for celebrating the gender-confused as heroes.

Day of Silence—Begun in the 1990s, this was the original day of portraying LGBTs as victims. Students signal their solidarity by remaining silent.

International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia—commemorates the day the World Health Organization declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder.

Harvey Milk Day—memorializes a known pederast as a civil rights icon.

LGBTQ Pride Month—Lest the kiddies forget to celebrate during official Pride month (June), the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has produced a Pride Month educator's guide to year-round LGBTQ-promotion.

Returning to Mr. Culp of Queer sex-ed for all, his education programming includes "using youth empowerment models and an adult-youth partnership framework . . . in order to examine adolescent health."² Given the proposed alternative family structure for gays, I think it's fair to ask: *What kind of adult-youth partnerships does he have in mind? And: Who, exactly, defines adolescent health?*

The natural family structure already provides an adult-youth framework. It's called parenting. And good parents are usually highly suspicious of grown men who want to talk to their children about sex. It's time to resuscitate that suspicion and kick these whole-spectrum sexual meddlers out of the classroom. ☺

Notes

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DEALING WITH DRUGS

Questionable New Responses to Opioid Addiction

It is no secret that the United States has a problem with opioids. These are drugs that come in many forms (OxyContin, Vicodin, morphine, fentanyl, and heroin are all classed as opioids) and are primarily used as painkillers. Historically, doctors found these drugs useful for helping cancer patients cope with the pain resulting from their illness. However, because

of the association with opium dens and heroin, they were loath to prescribe opioids for most other conditions.

This started to change in the early 1990s as doctors began to see a potential for using opioids to treat chronic pain. Some doctors began to advocate for expanding their use, and this support was echoed by pharmaceutical companies that stood to earn billions of dollars from producing these drugs. Together, they argued that opioids had the potential to dramatically alleviate suffering from chronic pain, and they downplayed the potential risks, such as abuse or addiction.¹

Their campaign was successful, and ever since the early 1990s the prescription and use of opioids has rapidly increased. In 1990, doctors wrote 2–3 million opioid prescriptions; in 2017, more than 191 million prescriptions for opioids were filled.² And these are only the numbers of prescriptions; they do not account for the use of illicit opioids, such as heroin.

In tandem with this increase in prescribing has been a precipitous rise in opioid addiction and opioid-related death. The CDC reports that nearly 450,000 people died from overdoses involving opioids between 1999 and 2018,³ with over 46,800 deaths in 2018 alone, accounting for almost 70 percent of all drug overdose deaths.⁴ Worse yet, there are now questions as to whether opioids are even effective for treating chronic pain, with some arguing that they are ineffective at best and may even exacerbate the pain experience.⁵

The sheer scope of this problem led President Trump to declare the opioid crisis a public health emergency in October 2017.⁶ Nor is this unique to the U.S.; the World Health Organization reports that opioid overdoses are a major problem worldwide.⁷

ONE DUBIOUS SOLUTION

So great is the concern over the growing mortality rate from opioid overdoses that some doctors have shown willingness to try almost anything to alleviate the problem—even some questionable methods. One such intervention comes from Vancouver, Canada. The brainchild of Dr. Mark Tyndall, who dubbed it the MySafe Project, the initiative involves using an ATM-like machine to dispense pharmaceutical-quality opioids to those with an addiction.⁸



There are currently several stringent criteria for making use of the machine. The initial trial has only 14 participants, all of whom have been prescribed Dilaudid (an opioid with about twice the potency of heroin). The machine uses biometric scanning for security, and it can be used by an individual up to four times per day. The basic goals are to increase personal autonomy and reduce overdose deaths by providing those addicted to an opioid with a standardized dosage and a clean, regular supply.⁹ In a February 2020 Tweet, Tyndall said that “the over-riding objective is allowing people the chance for stability and reflection by disrupting the endless cycle of trauma, violence and despair.”

Tyndall’s initiative ties into Vancouver’s overall scheme of harm-reduction for those with illicit drug addictions, exemplified by the city’s supervised injection site program, where drug addicts can have medical supervision while taking drugs to ensure there is a trained professional on hand should they overdose.

These types of interventions pose several ethical problems, however.

First, while MySafe argues that there is little risk of participants selling or giving away their drugs, the evidence is not yet in. And even if no one in the initial trial abuses his easy access to opioids, a trial involving only 14 participants is far too small to form a basis for making predictions about what would happen if the initiative were to be implemented city-wide, as its proponents hope. In addition, there is the possibility of people feigning need in order to receive a supply they can sell; feigning a medical need to receive opioids is already a major problem in hospitals and would likely be exacerbated by the more impersonal MySafe system.

Second, even if these concerns could be surmounted, others remain. While the MySafe Project may be safer for participants in the short run than chasing after illegal street drugs, its focus is purely on helping people live with their addictions, not overcome them. Additionally, MySafe has not addressed the long-term effects of taking opioids, nor the potential for building up a tolerance, which could

So great is the concern over the growing mortality rate from opioid overdoses that some doctors have shown willingness to try almost anything to alleviate the problem—even some doubtful methods.

result in drugs from MySafe being mixed with illicit ones, negating the system’s entire purpose.

Finally, though Tyndall claims that the goal of the initiative is to provide people with space for “stability and reflection,” nothing in the promotional information gives any indication as to how that support will be offered. MySafe, at least at this stage, is concerned about stabilizing only. This has led some doctors to come out strongly against it, saying it is “in effect ushering users towards death, rather than treating curable conditions.”¹⁰ Though the goal of harm reduction is a noble one, this type of initiative has a great risk of trying to treat a deadly problem with a Band-Aid solution.



A DIFFERENT APPROACH

A second intervention, from the Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute in West Virginia, takes a very different approach to curbing opioid addiction. Described in some reports as a “cyborg technology,” researchers are experimenting with a chip implanted into a participant’s brain that uses deep-brain stimulation to target the reward centers responsible for addiction. By using electrical impulses from the device, they hope to stabilize the level of dopamine, a hormone linked to drug cravings.¹¹

Though referring to it as a “cyborg technology” may make it sound scary, the technology is quite similar to that of pacemakers, which have been used for years to assist patients with abnormal heartbeats. In this context, all that “cyborg” means is that the technology is internal to, rather than external to, the patient. The researchers themselves dispute that it is “cyborg” at all, since their goal is not to enhance or augment the physiological functioning of their patients, but simply return them to a “normal” level of functioning.

It should also be noted that while adaption of the technology for those with opioid use disorders is new, the technology itself is not. Similar deep-brain stimulation devices have already seen some success in treating Parkinson’s disease, epilepsy, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.¹²

Though the research on this approach is still in the very early stages, it, too, calls forth a number of ethical considerations. While this particular intervention might be innocuous, it raises the question of how, as a society, we want to approach the melding of humans and technology. There is also the question of when one has crossed the line between treating a person and “enhancing” him; while stabilizing dopamine levels may fall short of enhancement, the same brain-stimulation technology, if used to target other parts of the brain, could cross that boundary. And again, there is the risk of misuse. While, for now, participation is voluntary, it is not hard to imagine scenarios in which governments or insurance companies would force such an intervention on those who frequently abuse drugs or who have had medical events caused by a previous drug overdose.

On the individual level, there are questions regarding how much of a person’s own personality and judgment such a technology could override, and whether it is morally permissible to let it do so, even if it is thought to be for the patient’s own good. There are also practical issues—the procedure is estimated to cost around \$75,000, much more than the majority of those who struggle with drug addiction

could ever afford. And even if the cost were significantly reduced, it would still be prohibitively high for people in developing nations who struggle with the same addictions. Given the relatively small number of opioid users who could even avail themselves of such a drastic intervention, it is doubtful that, on its own, it would be enough to turn the tide of the epidemic.

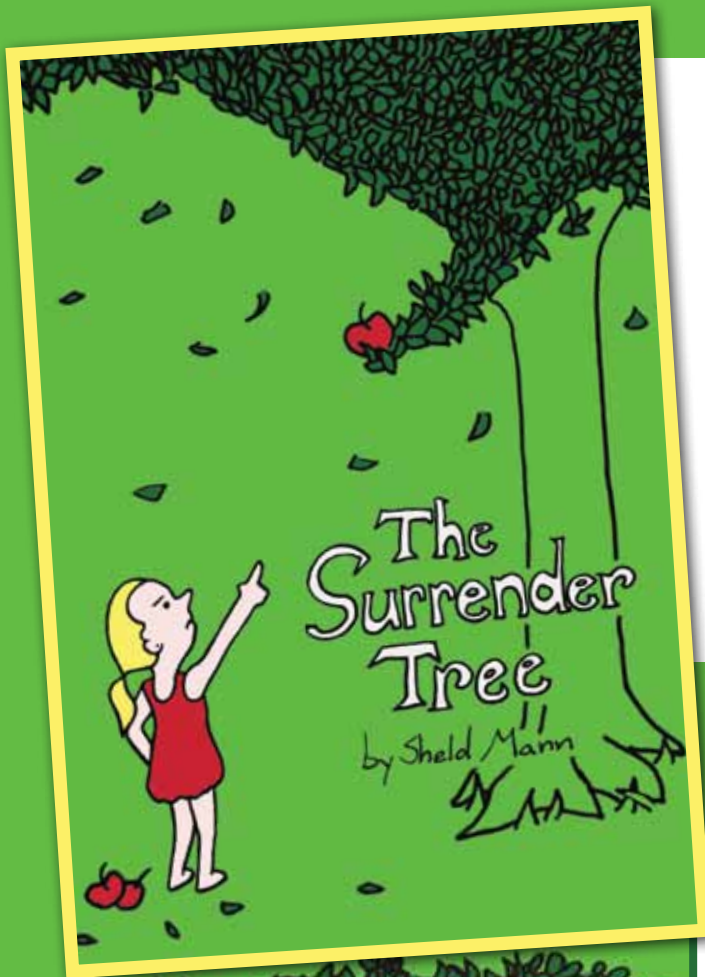
ROOM FOR REFLECTION

It is, of course, never enough to assess an intervention only by its positive or its negative potentials; one must consider both to fully tease out the implications of the intervention for society as a whole. While MySafe raises a number of concerns regarding how a society should approach the issues of drug use and addiction, it does have the potential to prevent overdoses and save lives in the short run. And while there are numerous scientific, ethical, and financial hurdles to be overcome regarding the use of brain implant technology, it has the potential to offer hope and recovery to those who have been unable to break free from the chains of addiction using other currently available methods.

Both of these initiatives highlight the need for better responses to drug addiction generally and the opioid epidemic specifically. Whether they are ultimately scrapped or widely implemented, they demonstrate an attempt to try something new and to move forward in the struggle against addiction, and that, at least, can be supported. ☺

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New from RANDOM PLACE:

The Surrender Tree by Sheld Mann

The *Surrender Tree* is the story of a tree and a child who develop a special bond. The tree is capable and strong, yet many of his attributes could frighten or possibly even harm the child. The tree is very sensitive to the child's emotional state, and as she grows up she becomes more and more empowered by his abject surrender.

Embark on an adventure of unquestionable feelings . . .

“Oh child, I see that I’m worrying you. How can I make you feel more safe?”

“I might be allergic to your pollen or get hit by your falling apples. . . .”



“I’ll surrender my leaves and fruit.”

“I might get a splinter if I touch you. . . .”



“I’ll surrender my bark.”

“I might fall from your branches if I climb you. . . .”



“I’ll surrender my branches and trunk.”

“Thank you, tree! The world is a better place now!”



“..”

“Now here’s a moral tale I wish everyone would read!”

“One word: Powerful.”

“In a nutshell: A charming allegory about why the mighty should fall.”

COMING OUT WRONG

*Adult Sexuality for Kids
& Adolescence for Adults*

Before his presidential campaign officially fizzled out and Pete Buttigieg stepped down, he received some major headlines by “helping” a 9-year-old boy, Zachary Ro, come out as gay on national television.

During a Q&A session at a political rally in Denver, Colorado, moderator Jena Griswold announced, “The next question comes from Zachary, age 9.” She added, “And this is a really touching question. He says, ‘Thank you for being so brave. Would you help me tell the world I’m gay, too? I want to be brave like you.’”

At this, the audience collectively cheered and “awwwwed,” as if the moment were cute, on par with telling the world you like puppies or love your little brother or sister.

Buttigieg stood still for a moment, looking touched, then asked Zachary to wave if he was in the audience. All too quickly, as if scripted, Zachary himself was ushered onto the stage. His face was somber, and his chest was rising and falling heavily. He gave Pete a bracelet—again, as if he knew he would be meeting Pete at this rally—and Pete immediately put it on.

“Well, I don’t think you need any advice from me on bravery,” continued Buttigieg. “You seem pretty strong. . . . It took me a long time to tell even my best friend that I was gay. Let alone to go out there and tell the world.” He then went on to give the boy some advice. It wouldn’t always be easy, but “that’s OK” because the boy knew who he was, which gave him a “center of gravity.” And he never could know who would be watching him, and who might be encouraged because of him. Lastly, Buttigieg told Zachary he would be rooting for him, and also jokingly asked him not to run for president quite yet—because the boy would probably do better than Buttigieg himself.

TREATING CHILDREN LIKE ADULTS

There are a lot of things about this whole incident that don’t ring quite true. First, the speed with which Zachary was ushered on stage, and the fact that he brought the bracelet, suggest some prior political orchestration. When a reporter caught up with Zachary later, the boy stated, “I just feel inspired by Pete being openly gay and running for President at the same time, and some day I want to be like him.” That is pretty adult language, describing adult ideas.

But the thing that should be truly disturbing is what this whole escapade tells us about the sexualization of children in modern American society. Can a 9-year-old boy really know enough about himself to declare, unequivocally, on a national stage, that he is solely attracted to other males? Is a 9-year-old boy “sexually attracted” to anyone, in the way that adults understand the term? And what happens if, in a few years, he begins to wonder if he made a mistake, that he didn’t really “know himself” after all? How difficult is it going to be for him to go back on this? How will his school friends treat him in the meantime?

We’ve set Zachary up for one hot mess of an adolescence by imposing very adult ideas of sexuality and maturity on a mere child. This happens in countless other ways today as well. One example is state-mandated sexuality education, which is increasingly graphic and adult-themed, and which teaches mere children that to question their sexuality, or even what sex they are, is a normal part of growing up. Another example of our sexualization of children is providing them with contraception: 21 states allow minor girls to have a long-acting contraceptive (usually an intrauterine device, or IUD) implanted without parental consent, and many schools also hand out contraception of other kinds without parents’ knowledge.¹

We say, out of one side of our mouths, that sex is serious, that we should be careful, that consent is crucial, and so on. And yet we entrust mere children with powerful hormonal drugs and devices, and we give them confusing information, telling them they may or may not be a boy or a girl, and that they may or may not be attracted to one sex or the other. Everything is up for grabs.

TREATING ADULTS LIKE CHILDREN

Ironically, at the same time that we push sexual and gender identity on mere children—in spite of research that indicates that many people who identify as gay or trans eventually “grow out of it”²—we are also seeing more adults identifying as children.

A popular concept today is that of “emerging adulthood,” what psychology professor Nancy Darling calls “The Twenty-Something Stage of Life.” In a piece for *Psychology Today*,³ Darling writes, “Although one can argue that historically the transition from childhood to adult responsibilities was long, uneven and muddled, certainly in the mid-century United States it was pretty clear: you became an adult when you (1) finished school, (2) got a job, (3) married, and (4) had children.” No longer. Now, the path to adulthood is much less clear. Now,

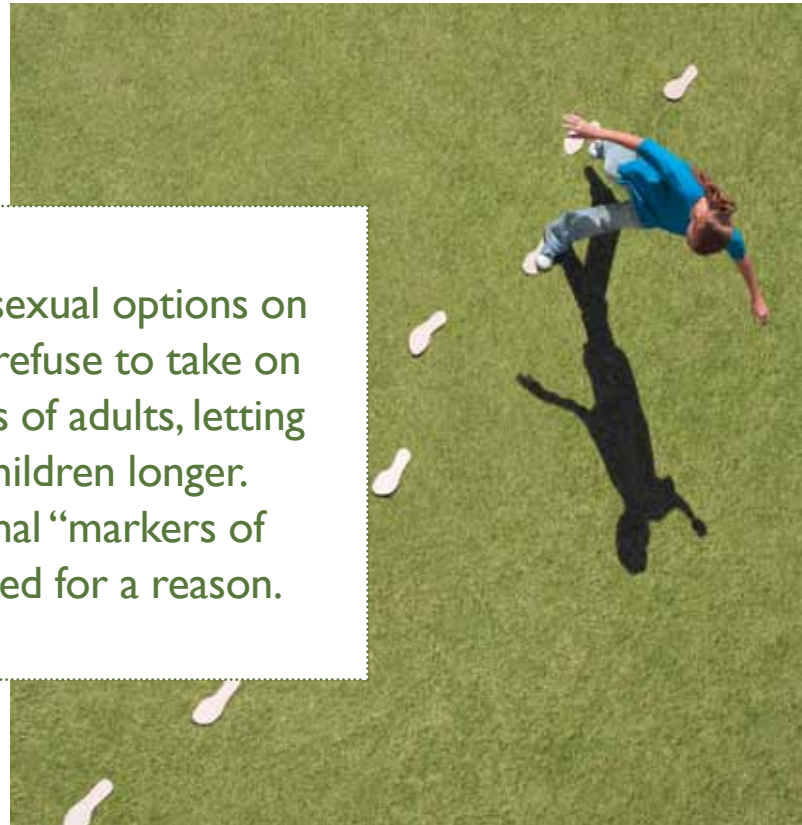
after adolescence, we have a phase called “emerging adulthood,” which is characterized by “diverse experiences,” “lack of long-term commitments,” and “unstable romantic relationships and employment.” College students are taking longer and longer to complete their degrees, more young adults are delaying marriage and children, and increasing numbers are even moving back in with Mom and Dad.

Sounds fun, right? Darling also points out, “Emerging adults use mental health services at high[er] rates than those older or younger than themselves. They have more mood disorders, greater anxiety, and higher rates of substance use.” Our prolonged period of pre-adulthood isn’t making us any happier.

Why not? In a paper entitled, “Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century,” researchers Anne Case and Angus Deaton explore why Americans are dying at younger ages than they were just a few decades ago. As one possibility, they point to young adults’ increased dissociation from family life, from fixed employment (as when a man followed his father into a career), and from the religion of one’s parents. Case and Deaton posit:

These changes left people with less structure when they came to choose their careers, their religion, and the nature of their family lives. When such choices succeed, they are liberating; when they fail, the individual can only hold him- or herself responsible. In the worst cases of failure, this is a Durkheim-like recipe for suicide.⁵

We impose adult sexual options on children. And we refuse to take on the responsibilities of adults, letting ourselves be children longer. But the traditional “markers of adulthood” existed for a reason.



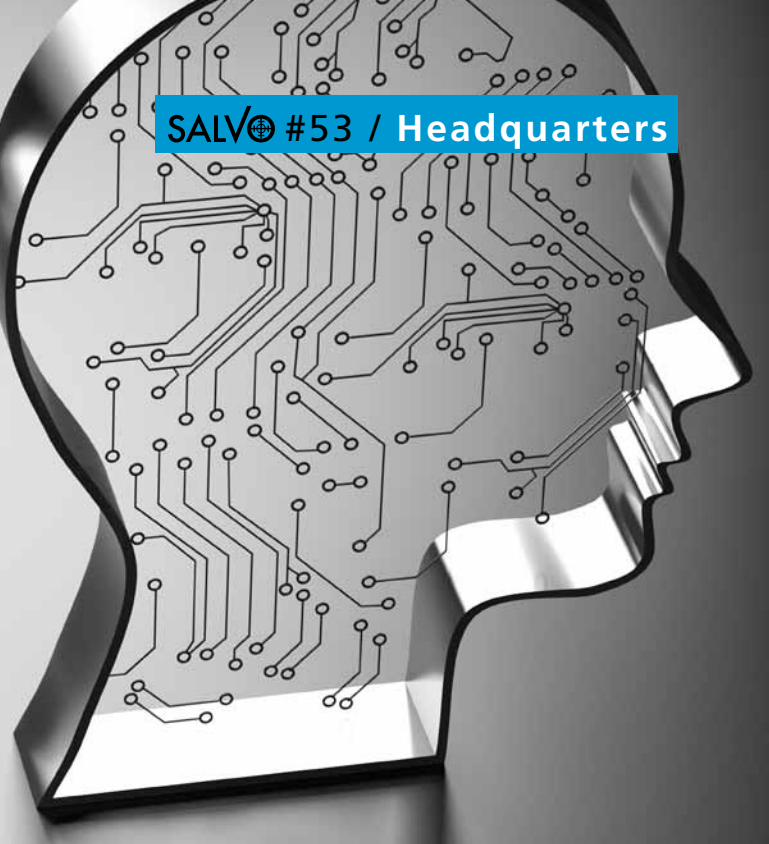
THE WISDOM OF THE TRADITIONAL MARKERS

We have, one might suggest, too many options available. We impose adult sexual options on children. And we refuse to take on the responsibilities of adults, letting ourselves be children longer. But the traditional “markers of adulthood” existed for a reason. God has given us a structure of life that works quite well, that in fact makes most of us happier than remaining single, sowing our wild oats, or trying to figure out who we really are at 29 years old.

It is time to return to a world where adults are adults, act like adults, and step up to protect a child’s right to be a child. ☺

Notes

1. Jacoba Urist, “Schools, Birth Control, and Parental Consent,” *The Atlantic* (Sept. 8, 2015): theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/09/student-health-centers-schools-contraception/403954.
2. Lawrence S. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh, *Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences*, special issue of *The New Atlantis* (Fall 2016): thenewatlantis.com/publications/executive-summary-sexuality-and-gender.
3. (March 11, 2018): psychologytoday.com/us/blog/thinking-about-kids/201803/emerging-adulthood-the-twenty-something-stage-life.
4. This is a reference to *Le suicide*, published in 1897 by French sociologist Émile Durkheim, which is widely regarded as the first methodological study of suicide.
5. Anne Case and Angus Deaton, “Rising Morbidity and Mortality in Midlife Among White Non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st Century,” *PNAS* (Dec. 8, 2015): ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4679063.



Immaterial Mind

Kenneth Miller's Epic Failure of Evolutionary Guesswork

by Richard W. Stevens

Whether young or old, every morning we awaken to the sense of "I am here." That state is called *consciousness*. Scientists and others who hold to a materialistic worldview commonly think of consciousness as a mere function of the physical brain.

Thomas Nagel trenchantly challenged the materialist view of the conscious mind in his 2012 book, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*. Nagel sees consciousness as "both one of the most familiar and one of the most astounding things about the world" (p. 53). Any account of the biological evolution of conscious organisms "must include an explanation of the appearance of consciousness," he wrote.

Since a purely materialist explanation cannot do this, the materialist version of evolutionary theory cannot be the whole truth.

Organisms such as ourselves do not just *happen* to be conscious; therefore no explanation even of the physical character of those organisms can be adequate which is not also an explanation of their mental character. In other words, materialism is incomplete even as a theory of the physical world, since the physical world includes conscious organisms among its most striking occupants. (p. 45.)

The idea that a conscious human mind could have arisen purely by neo-Darwinian evolutionary processes strains the imagination and defies explanation. Yet one scientist thought he could explain it.

Miller's Attempt

Renowned evolutionist Kenneth R. Miller responded to Nagel's book and claimed to answer its challenge in *The Human Instinct: How We Evolved to*

Have Reason, Consciousness, and Free Will (2018). In this book, Miller asserts:

- The fossil record is quite complete; we *know* that rapid skull-size increases evolved in humans over a short geological period.
- With the rapid human skull-size increases there correspondingly came rapid brain-size increases.
- The brain is composed of neurons and other biological structures built from chemical molecules.
- The larger the brain, the more neurons it contains, and the more intelligent is the (human) primate it resides in.
- Consciousness is the subjective sense of being aware of thoughts and of acting with purpose.
- The brain is where intelligence and consciousness reside.
- The chemical molecules that the neurons consist of do not themselves have consciousness.
- Neurons (and related structures) convey electrical impulses and direct the flow of such impulses.
- The brain is composed of networks of interconnecting neurons and related structures, with billions of cells and billions of interconnections.
- When huge numbers of neurons interconnect and transmit electrical impulses among themselves in the brain, there arise functions of operation of the whole brain that would not arise with fewer neurons and fewer connections.

Simply stated, Miller contends that when enough neurons are interconnected, even without a plan, the result is a *conscious mind*. He writes:

No atom, by itself, is ever alive. But when atoms interact with innumerable others inside a living cell, those actions generate the remarkable process we call life. The same . . . is true at an even higher level for the far more remarkable process of consciousness. (p. 167)

He concludes: "Consciousness, therefore, is something that matter does, not something that matter is" (p. 168). Is Miller's view plausible?

— Mind as Matter?

The *Human Instinct* makes many claims about what neo-Darwinian evolution and scientific orthodoxy have allegedly proven regarding the origins and development of life on Earth. The book doesn't try to support those claims; nor does it take account of the monumental rebuttals found in books like Stephen Meyer's *Signature in the Cell* (2009) and *Darwin's Doubt* (2013). Meyer's work not only undermines the

plausibility of undirected evolution resulting in the emergence of physical life-forms, but it also shows that: (1) atoms don't randomly form *information*; and (2) *information* is the fundamental source of DNA and all biological systems.

While *The Human Instinct* does not deal with the evolution of physical life-forms, it does essay to prove that human *consciousness* evolved without a pre-existing plan, program, or direction. Miller contends that consciousness is a by-product of purely physical processes governed by the laws of physics and chemistry.

According to Miller, all mental functions stem from the operation of the physical brain, what we might call biological "hardware." Miller seems inclined to agree that the brain is comparable to a computer insofar as it receives and processes inputs (sight, sound, etc.), extracts information from those inputs, and makes calculations concerning those inputs. He asserts that both perception and consciousness are based on the workings of the brain's cellular components and are thus "explicable in purely scientific terms" (pp. 170–171).

While Miller mentions perception, he doesn't point out that sensory perception is extremely complex. Consider just the senses of smell and taste. Although they are taken for granted by everyone, Gordon M. Shepherd shows in *Neurogastronomy: How the Brain Creates Flavor and Why It Matters* (2015) that these senses involve finely tuned and continuously restored chemical receptor systems, electrically coded signals, and three-dimensional wave forms that are produced and decoded in real time. Just smelling and tasting your morning coffee, for example, can involve the sensing capacity of up to 600 different molecules. While scientists may observe *where* in the brain the electrical activities associated with these processes occur, they cannot explain *how* the physical operations become our personal subjective experiences of taste and smell.

Miller argues that if you add together enough noise, you somehow get information you can use. More astoundingly, he thinks that if you amass and interconnect enough noise-generating neurons, that conglomeration of noise-producing cells will somehow become aware of itself and start observing, thinking, planning, and directing other biological systems to act.

Neural impulses associated with sight, hearing, and touch likewise can be detected and traced in the brain, but *how* the brain actually converts these electrical pulses into thoughts, memories, and understanding is entirely inexplicable in purely physical terms.

When Do Neurons Start Thinking?

Consciousness presents an even more difficult problem than receiving and processing sensory data. If, as Miller believes, consciousness arises merely from the interactions between elements of biological hardware, he ought to be able to show *how* that happens. But he simply posits that consciousness arises when enough neurons and other cells form a mass of electrical pulses and waveforms in a biological mass called a brain.

Put two neurons next to each other—no processing and no consciousness occurs. Gather two thousand or two million neurons together—there is no difference. Physicist Andrew Thomas, in *Hidden in Plain Sight No. 9: The Physics of Consciousness* (2018), explains that neurons operate like transistors connected with wires. Transistors allow for the switching, amplification, and modulation of electrical current. That's just electricity. Amass a lot of transistors emitting a lot of electrical waves and pulses, without a plan or structure, and all you get is noise. Even if your collection of electrical wires carries a variety of frequencies and voltages, you don't get a changed result—you just get multi-dimensional, multi-phasic noise.

Yet Miller argues that if you add together enough noise, you somehow get information you can use. More astoundingly, he thinks that if you amass and interconnect enough noise-generating neurons, that conglomeration of noise-producing cells will somehow become aware of itself and start observing, thinking, planning, and directing other biological systems to act.

Again, that leap from a mass of purposelessly interconnected noisy neurons to consciousness requires a plausible explanation of *how* that leap is made. We have amazingly powerful computer hardware components that can be interconnected, just as neurons are. There is no need to physically build a monster computer to test Miller's conjecture. We can simply think about the *design* that precedes and underlies any large computer development project. At what point would randomly interconnected hardware components, even trillions of them, result in the existence of even a "simple" operating system, like that which powered the 1978 TRS-80 hobby computer, for example, or the 1980s MS-DOS?



This question is not rhetorical. It is not an argument from ignorance but a question that must be asked and answered by Miller and others who claim that undesigned physical matter and undirected processes can result in consciousness or any other human mental function. In his 1997 book *How the Mind Works*, Steven Pinker, the esteemed Harvard neurobiologist, concedes that *sentience*, the most distinctive element of consciousness, remains an "enigma," a "mystery" for which "we have no scientific explanation."

The claim that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" can be true in some instances, but if Miller is to validate this claim regarding consciousness, he must show *how* the greater function of the whole (the brain) is produced by the interactions of the parts (the neurons, etc.). Miller doesn't make that showing. He simply *contends* that a random assemblage of trillions of parts randomly interconnected in a trillion ways becomes something different and monumentally greater than a random assemblage of trillions of interconnected parts. He offers no explanation for why mere hardware, when aggregated to an immense degree, obtains a new function and becomes a conscious thinking machine.

Modern "electronic brains" (i.e., computers) do contain the millions of components and connections that Miller imagines. And these "brains" do respond to commands and perform calculations—but only because they have been *instructed* to do so and in what way to do it. The instructions are called programming, and it takes intelligent agents to conceive of, plan, and write the programs, which we call software.

Software operating systems coordinate the assembly of the components and guide the flow of information, and they host still more software programs to achieve what their programmers imagined.

Software, the encoded collection of data and instruction sets, cannot evolve from hardware, and it cannot be accidentally mutated to create totally new functions. (Test this yourself with the simulation at www.informutation.com.)

The Fatal Focus on Hardware

Miller, who seems stuck in a 19th-century vision of biological life as physical matter only, never concerns himself with how the intelligent programming needed to operate the biological hardware originated.

For example, he asserts: “The three tiny bones (popularly known as the hammer, anvil, and stirrup) in our middle ears derive from jaw structures of reptilian ancestors” (p. 115). He offers no proof of the physical evolution of this development; no step-by-step mutational tale of how the reptilian jaw became the human ear is supplied. More to the point, Miller doesn’t describe how the embedded instructions designed to tell a jaw system how to do the work of *chewing* could be *accidentally and coincidentally* modified to tell the bones to switch over to the work of *hearing*, which involves: (1) receiving sound vibrations at multiple frequencies and in varying patterns, (2) decoding them as discrete sounds, and, crucially, (3) mentally recognizing them as meaningful in the environment. Somehow, over time, jawbones just stopped *chewing* and started *listening* on their own?

The problem of evolutionary processes being able to generate software to direct sound detection and recognition is crucial—and hearing is only one of thousands of human body systems needing such software. Oblivious to this problem, Miller writes: “the nervous system, including the brain, can first be understood as a network of closely linked cells that pass chemical and electrical messages between them” (p. 123).

“Messages”? A message is a symbolic representation of information from a sender who wants something to happen, who expects a receiver to exist, to receive the information, and to act upon it (or to advance to a higher level of knowledge). Every message exists in a context of planned action over a period of time. But planned action isn’t neo-Darwinian; it requires intelligent thought and volition. Undirected, undesigned processes do not plan or purposefully act to obtain a future result—they do not send “messages.”

Books as disparate as Perry Marshall’s *Evolution 2.0* (2015) and Werner Gitt’s *Without Excuse* (2011) make it clear that *no* undirected physical mechanism is known or even conceivable that could create a

code, let alone the necessary encoding and decoding devices. Yet these components are needed to send and receive *any* message. Code systems are fundamental to any software system as well. They are integral to DNA and cell biology.

Worse Than Wrong

Thus, far from explaining how human consciousness evolved by neo-Darwinian means, *The Human Instinct* actually highlights the problems that undercut the naturalistic explanation of *mind*. Indeed, Miller’s proposition falls victim to Michael Graziano’s critique in “Most Popular Theories of Consciousness Are Worse Than Wrong,” where Graziano writes:

You see this trope in science fiction: If you bundle enough information into

a computer, creating a big enough connected mass of data, it’ll wake up and start to act conscious, like Skynet. This appeal to our latent biases has given the integrated information theory tremendous currency. It’s compelling to many respected figures in the field of neuroscience, and is one of the most popular current theories. (*The Atlantic*, March 9, 2016)

Graziano, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Princeton University, observes that the monster neuron data bundle theory “doesn’t actually explain anything. What exactly is the mechanism that leads from integrated information in the brain to a person who ups and claims, ‘Hey, I have a conscious *experience* of all that integrated information!’ There isn’t one.”

Nagel was right: “Consciousness is the most conspicuous obstacle to a comprehensive naturalism that relies only on the resources of physical science” (*Mind and Cosmos*, p. 35). Consciousness, if it has any material form, cannot be hardware alone but must also involve software. Yet software can neither originate from nor be functionally modified by neo-Darwinian means. It is always designed.

Miller’s attempt to explain “how we evolved to have reason, consciousness, and free will” totally fails to show that the human mind evolved to its present state of amazing. ○

Nagel was right:
“Consciousness is the most conspicuous obstacle to a comprehensive naturalism that relies only on the resources of physical science.”



Serving the Imperfect

The Stark Choice Between Compassion & Fear-Fueled Modern Eugenics

by John D. Martin

The use of non-invasive pre-natal testing (NIPT) to diagnose genetic disorders in unborn babies has been making inroads in obstetric medicine for most of a decade now. As acceptance of the technology

has grown, public debates over the costs of such tests have erupted in Europe and North America, with many people arguing that they should be covered by government-subsidized healthcare systems.

In Canada, Germany, France, and the UK, the subject has also fueled debates about the ethics and fairness of performing such tests for the purpose of weeding out persons with genetic disorders, such as Down syndrome or Turner syndrome. The Canadian magazine *Public Policy Options* noted that, "as the use of NIPT increases, concern grows that it could well enable discrimination toward people with Down syndrome." The pro-life group Live Action reported that such discrimination was

In the eyes of NIPT advocates, and their disappointed customers, the very existence of a life with suffering—even a brief life with suffering—is too much an affront to their personal comfort to be allowed. A child who suffers from Trisomy 18 or 21 must not be allowed to make moral demands of them, to ask them to extend themselves in mercy and compassion.

being encouraged in Wales through the routine distribution to women receiving NIPT of a pamphlet that was "overly focused on the medical problems associated with the screened-for conditions." The pamphlet was later withdrawn when Down syndrome advocacy groups protested.

In early 2019, the BBC news reported on a case in which a woman received a false diagnosis of Turner syndrome from an NIPT test. Fortunately, the woman was aware of how inaccurate the tests could be and decided to continue the pregnancy anyway. The baby she then gave birth to did not suffer from Turner.

A good outcome like this, however, is relatively rare. What is likely to become more

“as the use of NIPT increases, concern grows that it could well enable discrimination toward people with Down syndrome.”

—Public Policy Options

common is the sort of outcome an Irish couple experienced last summer. These parents suffered the horror of learning that the NIPT diagnosis of the child they had just allowed a doctor to abort had been wrong. The test indicated that their child had Edwards syndrome, or Trisomy 18, and doctors told them that there was no hope for treatment or for their child to have much of a life at all.

It was later discovered, however, that there had been nothing wrong with the child—no genetic abnormalities, no physical defects. The diagnosis had been based on the results of a procedure called chorionic villus sampling (CVS), in which cells taken from the placenta are checked for chromosomal abnormalities, but in this case the test results were wrong. Yet the child was still killed, culled like a sickly calf or runt piglet, and if the defect *had* been present, those doing the culling would likely have felt as little remorse or regret as any hard-bitten, financially strapped farmer.



A Merciless Ethic

But the Irish couple’s doctors were neither hard-bitten nor financially strapped. They were well-educated, well-heeled members of the medical profession, whose very foundation is supposed to be an ethic of compassion toward the weak and suffering. But in many places in the West, this ethic has largely been replaced with an ethic of utilitarianism, which justifies hunting down and killing those who suffer. The driving idea behind recent public policy developments in both Europe and the United States seems to be that the earlier a sufferer can be found and eliminated the better. Hence the push to identify and kill persons with genetic defects while still in the womb.

This excerpt from a blog posted in 2015 on the Brown University website puts the matter bluntly:

[T]he only way to prevent genetic disorder is to prevent the birth of an individual at risk; therefore, when a woman feels that she is absolutely unable to care for a child with a chromosomal abnormality she will abort. This can happen even if a woman is aware of the high risk of the positive result being incorrect because *any risk is too much risk*.¹ (emphasis mine)

The default justification for performing the tests in the first place is to allow parents to make “an informed decision” on whether or not to have their son or daughter killed should the child prove to be handicapped.

The implication is that deciding to burn, poison, or dismember to death an inarguably defenseless and innocent person because that person is afflicted with a genetic disorder can be morally justified on the basis of risk; i.e., it is assumed that avoiding the “risk” of feeling overwhelmed by the care requirements of a disabled child is a legitimate justification for murder. Note how the excerpt ends: for people who hold this mindset, *any risk is too much*. It is unfortunate that NIPT might lead to the killing of a normal, healthy child, but that risk is worth taking because avoiding the risk of having to extend compassion to a disabled child is paramount.

And in fact, prenatal screening for Down syndrome has already led to an increase in abortion in the UK and elsewhere. Though there will be false positives and false negatives wherever NIPT is used, the default justification for performing the tests in the first place is to allow parents to make “an informed decision” on whether or not to have their son or daughter killed should the child appear to be handicapped.

And there is little question now of what healthcare officials in, say, Ireland, England, or the EU consider “an informed decision”: when a test result is positive (even though it may later prove to be false), they will advocate for termination. In fact, given that public support for NIPT has been increasing, the question now being argued over is whether or not such testing should become standard procedure in prenatal healthcare.

Fear of suffering is a powerful force that those selling a “solution” to must keep at a high pitch; hence, ads simply suggesting that children with Down syndrome can lead happy lives have been banned in France.

A Tool for Targeting Disabled Children

“Reproductive rights” activists are, of course, pushing for this. But they will first have to sell people on the reliability of the tests, and they are not above fudging the statistics to be able to claim that false positives are almost unheard of. One blogger on *The Pregnancy Lab* website noted that some studies claim a 99 percent accuracy rate for NIPT tests even though the positive predictive value (PPV) of a test, i.e., its ability to accurately detect a genetic anomaly, varies

depending on the disorder being looked for. The blogger cited the disparate PPVs emerging from tests for Trisomy 21, 18, and 13 that had been reported on in the journal *Nature*:

The PPV for T21 was highest at 93% followed by a 64% PPV for T18. The PPV for T13 was only 44%. Given the prevalence of each of these conditions, these data aren’t all that surprising but they are still rather alarming. Why? Because several studies have claimed NIPT tests are >99% specific (e.g. ~1% false-positive rate). As the authors of the study described here state: “To an average clinician, the claim that a test is >99% specific



leads him or her to expect that the false-positive rate will be $<1\%$.”²

While it is laudable to alert people to the fact that NIPT tests aren’t as conclusive as they may be touted to be, this kind of reporting is still disturbing because it treats the incidence of a false positive, which will almost certainly lead to an abortion, as less of a tragedy than a false negative, which will likely lead to the birth of a handicapped child.

Hence, medical researchers are focused on optimizing the PPV of NIPT because, once it becomes high enough, it can be used with confidence to detect “defective” children and target them for abortion. NIPT will thus become the perfect tool for a genocidal philosophy aimed at exterminating certain sub-sets of humanity. The high PPV, the test’s accuracy in detecting *lebensunwertes Leben* (“life unworthy of life”), is the selling point—today, in the industrialized and technologically advanced countries of the world; tomorrow, in every place to which the procedure can be exported.

Fears & Fear-Mongering

In Germany, where I live, a public-health policy fight has been roiling for the last decade or so over the question of whether to allow pre-natal testing of any kind and, if so, what tests should be allowed, who should pay for them, and how and to what degree should they be allowed to guide medical decision-making. This debate has been circumscribed by the fear of a return of *Eugenik vom Unten*, literally, “eugenics from below,” the Nazi-era practice of eugenic selection to control who breeds and who doesn’t. That fear has placed a significant restraint on Germans’ acceptance of this newest perversion of medical ethics.

In France, however, that fear is not felt as much, while another fear is being exploited. French officials use a marketing strategy whose aim is two-fold: on the one hand, to gin up the fear of having a disabled child, and on the other, to deceive parents into thinking that killing their disabled child is the most moral act they can perform. These “defective” children, as identified by NIPT, would only suffer if allowed to



live, and suffering must be eliminated—by eliminating the sufferers. Fear of suffering is a powerful force that those selling a “solution” to must keep at a high pitch; hence, ads simply suggesting that children with Down syndrome can lead happy lives have been banned in France.

One can see this fear-mongering at work in the rhetoric used by a group of women in Denmark who received false negatives from NIPT and are now burdened with the care of a child with Down syndrome. Here is how one member of this group framed the “problem”:

... that is what lurks behind all the language of “choice”: the promise of a life free from the valid demands for mercy and compassion made by one’s own offspring, should those offspring suffer from a detectable defect.

We are convinced that all parents like us hope, above all else, to give birth to healthy children. We have been ready to undertake all the best possible and recommended procedures to guarantee this. We have put our trust in the assurances of the NIPT test manufacturers as well as our doctors, often pulling out of invasive tests in favour of NIPT believing that we will receive equally reliable results. However, that has not been the case and the number of people in our group clearly demonstrates that the risk of not detecting Trisomy 21 via the NIPT test is far

greater than attested by some manufacturers. *A false negative NIPT has deprived us of the possibility of taking an informed decision as to our future motherhood* and the need to prepare ourselves for bringing a child into this world burdened with Trisomy. Our hopes for a healthy child, hopes and plans for our life and ambitions for the future have been destroyed. *Our lives now revolve solely around having to bring up a child with Down syndrome and feeling deprived of all hope* and being left without any help and care by the manufacturers of NIPT. *We are too scared even to think what is going to be when we will no longer be here to support our children.*³ (emphasis added)

Notice whose “hopes and plans” are *not* mentioned here as being worthy of consideration: the babies who were born because an inaccurate test result deprived their mothers of the opportunity to kill them for being defective. These tiny persons would not have received even the most basic form of compassion, being allowed to live, if their mothers had known of their condition before giving birth.

In the eyes of NIPT advocates, and their disappointed customers, the very existence of a life with suffering—even a brief life with suffering—is too much an affront to their personal comfort to be allowed. A child who suffers from Trisomy 18 or 21 must not be allowed to make moral demands of them, to ask them to extend themselves in mercy and compassion. Rather, to this mindset, if a child’s suffering cannot be eliminated through treatment of

its physical causes, then it must be eliminated by forcing the child to suffer to the ultimate extreme, the suffering of death.

The healthy and the strong must not be asked to embrace the sickly and the weak in their struggles and pain, but must forever be released from such intrusion into their otherwise comfortable lives. And parents must be made to feel good about their decision to terminate their defective child before his suffering becomes noticeable to them.

Another False Solution

What’s being sold in all these examples is really the desire for a family life unburdened by the demands of compassion. Advocates of NIPT, of course, don’t want to think of themselves as selling fear and self-serving justifications for hard-heartedness, but that is what lurks behind all the language of “choice”: the promise of a life free from the valid demands for mercy and compassion made by one’s own offspring, should those offspring suffer from a detectable defect. NIPT is consequently just the latest, well-marketed product promoting a philosophy that sees itself as leading the way to the perfection of man and his world. And like every other “solution” to the problem of human imperfection apart from Christ, this one ends with the shedding of innocent blood. ☹

Notes

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The Speciation Enigma

The Presumed Evolutionary & Fossil Record Trees Are Strikingly Divergent

If observations or experiments produce “strikingly divergent results” from what a scientific model predicts, what does that tell us about the viability of the model? A new study on speciation and extinction rates suggests that the widely accepted naturalistic scenario for life’s development may be less sturdy than the community of biologists has resoundingly affirmed.



ABOVE: Detail of a fossil of *Seymouria baylorensis*.

Standard Model Predictions

A fundamental tenet of all naturalistic models for the history of Earth’s life is that natural changes in the genome of living things will be responsible for the observed changes in their physical body structures (morphology) over time. Consequently, evolutionary trees, or phylogenies of the presumed past history of life have been constructed from the genomic patterns observed in today’s life-forms. A key component for building these phylogenetic trees is a set of assumptions about the rate of naturally occurring changes (mutations) in those genomes. Evolutionary biologists refer to the rates at which genomes change as molecular clocks.

If researchers assume that strictly natural processes are responsible for the changes observed throughout life’s history, then their phylogenetic trees should match both the morphological changes and the timing of those changes as observed in the

fossil record—the paleontological trees. However, evidence, both old and new, shows significant mismatches between phylogenetic and paleontological trees—and not just in the case of one or a few life-forms. In an open-access paper published in *Nature Communications*, a team of four computational biologists and biochemists led by Daniele Silvestro and Rachel Warnock acknowledge this discrepancy.¹

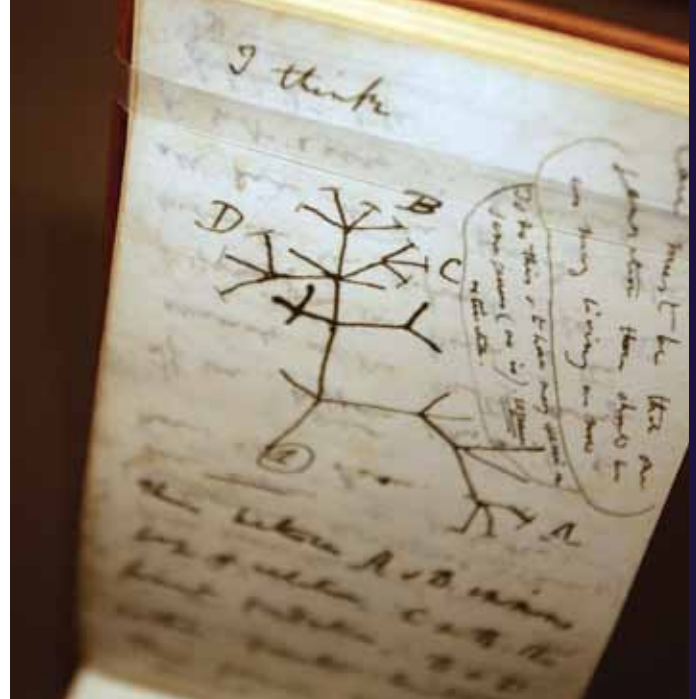
The fossil record and molecular phylogenies of living species can provide independent estimates of speciation and extinction rates, but often produce strikingly divergent results.²

Divergence Is Real & Striking

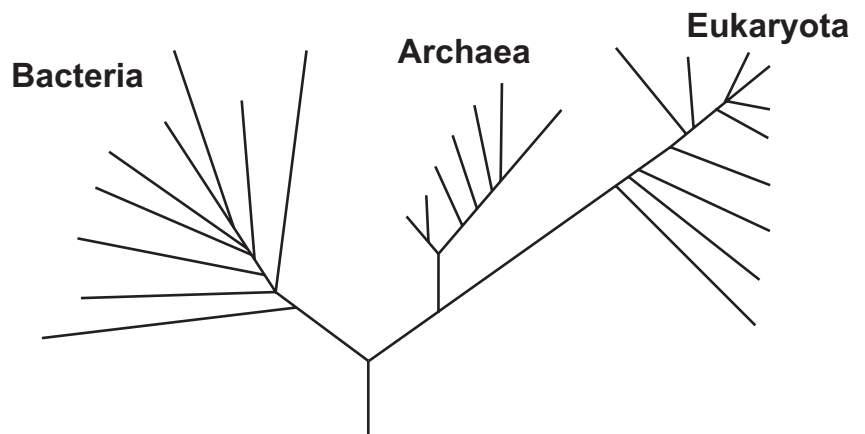
Because biologists use over a dozen different definitions of *species*, the members of the Silvestro-Warnock team clarify, in their paper, what they mean by the term. They define a species as “an identifiable taxonomic unit (a lineage) that can persist through time, give rise to other species, and become extinct.”³

The team begins by affirming that since “extant [still existing] and fossil species are samples of the same underlying diversification [variation-yielding] process,”⁴ a strictly natural diversification process would predict that in all cases, the phylogenetic (presumed evolutionary) trees should match the paleontological (fossil record) trees. However, evolutionary biologists must now acknowledge the reality of frequent and striking differences between phylogenetic and paleontological trees.

An example of the naturalist's problem is that the number of existing mammal species at the time of humanity's origin was a little more than 8,000, while today the number is only about 4,000. Of those remaining 4,000, not even one is a new species that did not exist at the time of humanity's origin.



ABOVE: An example of a simple phylogenetic tree of life from one of Darwin's notebooks. **BELOW:** A proposed phylogenetic tree of life showing the separation of bacteria, archaea, and eukaryotes.



The Silvestro-Warnock team cited a recent study of currently existing terrestrial Carnivora.⁵ There, the mean species longevity, based on fossil evidence, is an estimated 2.0 million years, contrasted with the estimated 9.8 million years derived from phylogenetics (or, calculated natural changes in the genomes). The team also cited a study demonstrating inconsistencies between phylogenies and fossils for primates.⁶ They noted that, at least for mammals, the occurrence of congruence is actually rare.⁷

Speciation rates derived from phylogenetics consistently exceed those derived from the fossil record, while calculated extinction rates are consistently lower than speciation rates. Perhaps the best studied example of the problem comes from research on cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises). The Silvestro-Warnock team cited these unexpected research findings:

Phylogenetic estimates of diversification rates among cetaceans suggest speciation has exceeded extinction over the past 12 Myr [million years]^[8] implying diversity has increased towards the recent. In contrast, analyses of the cetacean fossil record indicate extinction has exceeded speciation over this same interval, and that the diversity of cetaceans was in fact much higher [in the past] than it is today.⁹

In other words, the naturalistic evolutionary model based on standard phylogenetics predicts that the introduction of new species will exceed extinctions, but the fossil record shows that the reverse has occurred.

The research team made no comment on another of its observations: discrepancies between phylogenetics and the fossil record appear to increase with the complexity and adult body size of the genus. It seems worth noting that this correlation would, in fact, fit the predictions of a model that allows for the involvement of an intentional Creator.¹⁰

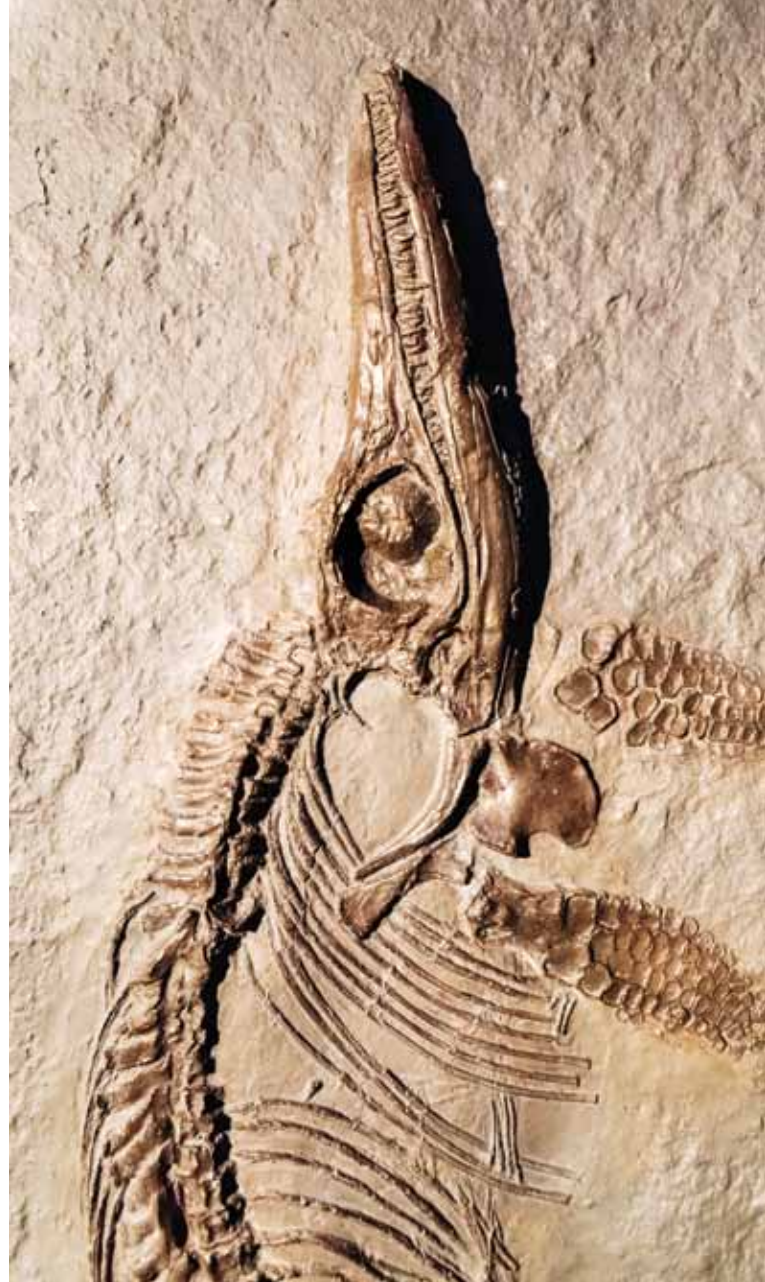
Silvestro, Warnock, and their collaborators do point out that other researchers have attempted to explain the discrepancies, suggesting that perhaps they result from underestimates of the statistical and systematic errors in the research methodology. However, the reported discrepancies appear much too large to fit this proposed explanation.¹¹

An Attempted Reconciliation

The Silvestro-Warnock team suggested that many of the discrepancies between phylogenetics and the fossil record are due to sensitivities to different speciation modes. They identify three distinct modes of speciation that can leave behind fossil evidence without impacting the calculated phylogenetic trees:

1. Budding: a speciation event that gives rise to one new species while the ancestral species persists.
2. Bifurcation: a speciation event that gives rise to two new species that replace the ancestral species, which then becomes extinct.
3. Anagenesis: evolutionary changes along a lineage that result in the origination of one new species and the extinction of the ancestral species.

They also point out that extinction without replacement is a frequent occurrence. In other words, many species become extinct without leaving any descendants. The fossil record includes extant and extinct species, whereas phylogenetic trees typically include only extant species.



ABOVE: Detail of a fossil of *Ichthyosaurus*.

Silvestro, Warnock, and their team propose a model that unifies the three modes of speciation and extinction in a single “birth-to-death chronospecies” process, or BDC. Yet their model suggests that phylogenetic and paleontological speciation and extinction rate estimates will be equal only if *all* speciation has occurred through the first of their three listed modes of speciation. They write:

[E]ven in an ideal scenario with fully sampled and errorless data sets, speciation and extinction rates can be equal across phylogenetic and stratigraphic inferences only if *all* speciation events have occurred through budding [the first speciation mode in their list] and *no* speciation has occurred through bifurcation or anagenesis [the second and third speciation modes in their list].¹² (emphasis added)

To salvage a reconciliation between phylogenetics and paleontology, some evolutionary biologists will insist that some unknown natural process must exist. However, it seems highly unlikely that a natural process of sufficient magnitude to achieve this grand-scale reconciliation remains undiscovered.

Also, according to their BDC model, phylogenetic analysis indicating an extinction rate equal to zero does not necessarily imply that extinction did not occur.

More Problems

The team's BDC model establishes that, relative to the fossil record, phylogenetics always underestimates extinction rates. The fossil record, which remains largely incomplete, also underestimates actual extinction rates. Much higher extinction rates, however, pose a serious challenge to all strictly naturalistic models for Earth's life—for the obvious reason that higher extinction rates require higher speciation rates to explain the increasing diversity of life observed in the fossil record.

This requirement of higher speciation rates proves all the more problematic for a naturalistic scenario describing the emergence of Earth's most advanced species. For mammals, birds, and advanced plants, the observed extinction rates far exceed the

observed speciation rates during the era of human history. According to Genesis 2, God ceased from his work of creating new life-forms once he made humanity; since then (the seventh day), he has allowed natural processes to continue operating.

An example of the naturalist's problem is that the number of existing mammal species at the time of humanity's origin was a little more than 8,000, while today the number is only about 4,000. Of those remaining 4,000, not even one is a new species that did not exist at the time of humanity's origin.

A Reasonable Reconciliation

Thus, the Silvestro-Warnock BDC model exposes a fundamental limitation of naturalistic explanations for the history of Earth's life. Given that all naturalistic models require more than one speciation mode, and given that the only way to reconcile phylogenetics and paleontology is to posit just one speciation mode, it would appear that something other than strictly natural processes must have been involved in the speciation process.

To salvage a reconciliation between phylogenetics and paleontology, some evolutionary biologists will insist that some unknown natural process must exist. However, it seems highly unlikely that a natural process of sufficient magnitude to achieve this grand-scale reconciliation remains undiscovered.

On the other hand, a worldview perspective based on biblical revelation is open to the idea that a supernatural, personal Creator intervened at various times throughout life's history to replace life-forms driven to extinction by environmental changes. This possibility fully reconciles the observed "discrepancy," and it brings to mind a verse from Psalm 104, the most comprehensive of the creation psalms:

How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. (104:24) ☉

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TWELVE STEPS FORWARD

The Trends in Science Continuing to Aid Intelligent Design

I have been asked to produce a second edition of my 2005 book, *By Design or by Chance?* So much has happened in recent years that I certainly won't be staring at a blank screen for long. ID has grown in depth and sophistication—and Darwinism seems to have shrunk. It's still taught in schools, to be sure, but schools are the last place to look for innovation. More and more science media releases tell me that new findings in the life sciences are "unexpected" and "challenging"; fewer than ever claim to prove Darwin right.

But which events in the onrushing tide have mattered most? Let me begin by asking, what science discoveries—had they occurred—would make ID untenable? How about these: Life forms turn out to be much simpler than we thought. An infinite number can randomly swish into or out of existence quite easily on an infinite number of planets in the multiverse we now know we live in. Not only that, but an easily detected psychological quirk explains why some humans attribute these inevitable random movements to the operation of a superior intelligence. Human intelligence turns out to be an illusion anyway. Human consciousness has been shown to be a mere mechanism of a complex brain that maximizes its own survival by generating apparently meaningful information.

Science did not go there. So let me note a few—well, actually a dozen—places it did go. Each could be a chapter in a book.

I. GENE SURPRISES

The year 2000 saw a huge push to complete the human genome map. The first big surprise to sink in was that humans have only about 20,500 genes. Water fleas have 31,000. Humans have 46 chromosomes, but ferns have 630. Hmmm.

Meanwhile, in recent years, much of the vast mass of "junk DNA" celebrated by Darwinians as evidence for their theory has been shown to have functional elements. Perhaps most "junk DNA" is functional. We should not, of course, expect all of our genetic library to be functional because any active system will have some non-functioning elements at any given time.

As if that weren't enough, we began to hear about "de novo" genes—genes that arise with no apparent ancestors. "Orphan genes pose a tough evolutionary problem," notes Thomas Deane of Trinity College Dublin. "They don't look like other genes, so where do they come from? One idea is that they can originate seemingly from nothing: over long, evolutionary timescales, a completely novel gene can emerge de novo out of a region in the genome that is made up of junk DNA."¹

As a result of such discoveries, conventional "evolution" mantras have not aged well in the age of genome mapping. Consider: "We are 98% chimpanzee. Rats and mice differ more genetically than humans and chimps." If so, a great deal that we need to know about a life form is apparently *not* found in its genome. And what *is* found there may not support conventional assumptions about evolution.

2. UNEXPECTED CHANGE MECHANISMS

The evidence for evolution is not what we were told to expect. For example, life forms, especially simpler ones, can simply transfer information horizontally, sometimes across species (horizontal gene transfer). Genes sometimes change as an organism ages or encounters stresses and are then passed on in a changed form (epigenetics).²

Devolution plays a large role in the history of life as well, as Michael Behe has noted in *Darwin Devolves* (HarperOne, 2019). That is, life forms often improve their survival chances by breaking or blunting complex equipment, thereby becoming simpler. But then where did their original complexity come from? The opposite trajectory—natural selection acting on random mutations (Darwinism)—seems far more prominent in rhetoric than in demonstrated examples.



3. THE TIME CRUNCH

As we learn more about the history of life, we run into crunch time. Systems that we thought were of comparatively recent date turn out to have appeared much earlier in Earth's history. For example, green seaweed plants have recently been dated to a billion years ago, 200 million years earlier than previously thought.³ We run into the same situation with animals.⁴

If we assume that our current dating methods are correct, Earth is actually less than four and one-half billion years old. And if Darwinism is correct, natural selection acting on random mutations has to have produced complex, interlocking systems within that shorter period of time. Was it enough? The probability is becoming specific enough for calculation—likely with dismal results for Darwinism.

4. CELLULAR TIME CRUNCH

We seem to be discovering new layers of interlocking complexity in life forms every year, for example, in cell systems and brain systems. This year we learned about an “elaborate system” for repairing DNA in cells. “The findings further challenge the belief that broken DNA floats aimlessly.”⁵ And even the axons in our nerve cells are “smart PCs.”⁶

Again, the odds of these systems developing within the existing time frame, with no purpose or foresight, are looking worse all the time.



5. TOO LITTLE PROGRESS

Eminent chemist James Tour in 2016 summed up what everyone really knows about origin-of-life research: we're just stymied. “Those who think scientists understand the issues of prebiotic chemistry are wholly misinformed,” Tour wrote. “Nobody understands them. Maybe one day we will. But that day is far from today.”⁷

This wasn't supposed to happen, folks. We were supposed to be making rapid progress, once we adopted a purely materialist approach.

6. INFORMATION HORNS IN

The role that information plays in life has become ever clearer, but we lack any clear way of making information coincide with matter and energy in a way that preserves materialism. As Sara Walker and Paul Davies put it in 2013, musing on the origin of life:

The manner in which information flows through and between cells and sub-cellular structures is quite unlike anything else observed in nature. If life is more than just complex chemistry, its unique informational management properties may be the crucial indicator of this distinction. Unfortunately, the way that information operates in biology is not easily characterized.⁸

7. WANTING: THE INEXPLICABLE SUPERPOWER

The origin of life issue raises philosophical issues as well. Life forms *want* to stay alive. How did "wanting" things emerge? Rocks don't resist becoming sand but plants resist, by many subtle strategies, becoming insect food. Why? At *New Scientist*, we are now told that wanting things is a "superpower" that physics can't explain.⁹



8. STILL TALKING ABOUT ADAM & EVE

Adam and Eve are not merely dismissed as myth. The arguments today center on specific assertions about them. A recent reviewer at the *Nature: Ecology and Evolution* blog of S. Joshua Swamidass's book, *The Genealogical Adam and Eve* (IVP Academic, 2019), which argues for their existence (albeit along with evolved humans), notes, "Given the surprisingly recent date at which shared genealogical ancestors arise in populations, it was well worth exploring how this might fit with the age-old belief in Adam and Eve. Joshua Swamidass does this in a highly detailed and truly inter-disciplinary manner."¹⁰

The remarkable thing is that, after all this time, we are still talking about Adam and Eve. Clearly, materialist visions of human origins have not put forward anything that convincingly replaces an original pair. And in fact, as Ann Gauger outlined in "Mom Genes" in *Salvo* 51, she and Ola Hossjer have developed a mathematically based population genetics model showing that a single couple—i.e., Adam and Eve—could indeed have been the sole progenitors of the whole human race.



9. THE TOUGH NUT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

With the human mind, as with so much else, modern science has betrayed the materialists. Neuroscience has given us people who live with only part or half of a brain,¹¹ showing that the human mind is not divisible, like a machine. Consciousness, meanwhile, has been renamed the "hard problem" of consciousness. Reporting on a conference, a reporter for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* asked in all seriousness if the current direction was doing "real harm to the field of consciousness studies."¹² Possibly, but what else has materialism (naturalism) got?



10. FINE-TUNING HAS EVIDENCE

The fine-tuning of the universe and of Earth for life has become ever clearer in the past decade and a half simply because that's the pattern and we know more about it.¹³ Materialists respond by doubling down on the assertion that there could be infinite universes that (randomly) have no life. So we must decide between masses of evidence for fine-tuning and no evidence for infinite lifeless universes (but we can retain materialism).

We are constantly being told that cosmology is undergoing one crisis or another. But perhaps the main crisis is a refusal to face the burden of the evidence.¹⁴

11. NEW ATHEISM FADES

New atheism, a key movement that promoted Darwinism over design for decades, to broad public acclaim, seems to be fading now. One disappointed atheist, Scott Alexander, laments that the joining of atheism to various social justice causes around 2012 was at first greeted with much fanfare, but then:

As far as I can tell, it eventually ended with the anti-social-justice atheists stomping off to YouTube or somewhere horrible like that, while most of the important celebrity members of the public-facing movement very gradually turned into social justice bloggers.¹⁵

It doesn't sound as though the "important celebrity members" felt that atheists had a message of their own any more. Indeed, Alexander complains that atheist blogs have just turned into "'blogs by atheists about social justice.' The whole atheist movement is like this."



12. ALTERNATIVES BEING SOUGHT

Lastly, relative to fifteen years ago, a number of new voices in science are looking for alternatives to a Darwin-dominated academy. Many have become involved with the Third Way, seeking alternatives to Darwinism that are not really design. Suzan Mazur, an independent journalist, has been providing considerable on-the-ground coverage of their work and thinking.¹⁶

Meanwhile, *Scientific American* has been giving space in recent years to op-eds and interviews promoting panpsychism (all matter is conscious).¹⁷ That trend looks like evidence of desperation with the materialism of which Darwinism has been such an emphatic and widely promoted element.

NOT ESSENTIAL AFTER ALL?

So far, I have isolated twelve trends that are making a difference—hardly an exhaustive list, to be sure. These trends do not prove design in nature; they point to design as a reasonable assumption in science.

As it progresses, science is creating more such trends. Which, in turn, raises the question of why, exactly, the assumption that the universe and life forms are not designed is supposed to be essential for science's progress. If you enjoy watching antiquated establishments squirm, the next few years should be a good deal of fun. ☺

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WATCHING OUR MAKER

Both Theology & Science Undermine New Conjectures About God & Evolution

It's easy to see modern evolutionary theory and Christianity as mutually exclusive. After all, evolutionary theory attributes the origin of all the species around us to a blind process fueled by accidental genetic mutations. Christianity teaches that a creative intelligence, God, created all this. Nevertheless, there are many sincere Christians who embrace some form of Darwinism and attempt to reconcile it with their Christian faith. They would say that Darwinism and faith in the God of the Bible are completely compatible.

Are they completely compatible? And are there good reasons for Christians to graft modern Darwinism onto their Christian worldview?

THE "FULLY GIFTED" VIEW

Many Christian evolutionists argue that a Darwinian evolutionary model is actually theologically superior to the traditional idea of God working directly to

create various plant and animal forms. The argument goes like this: *Our all-wise, all-powerful God could and would have rigged the beginning of the universe so cleverly that he wouldn't need to intervene later to create life. Instead, it would all simply unfold from that first cosmic seed. Only when God was ready to exalt one of the ape-like species by investing it with an immortal soul did he need to intervene. In between he could just let his wonderful universe do its evolutionary thing.*

On this view, there appears to be a good theological reason to expect only unbroken material causes when studying nature. This view appears to be rooted in two tenets of orthodox Christian doctrine—God's omnipotence and his unsurpassed wisdom. Howard van Till calls this evolutionary view of creation "fully gifted creation."¹ It's a creation that doesn't need follow-up tinkering to generate life because, well, the creation is "fully gifted."

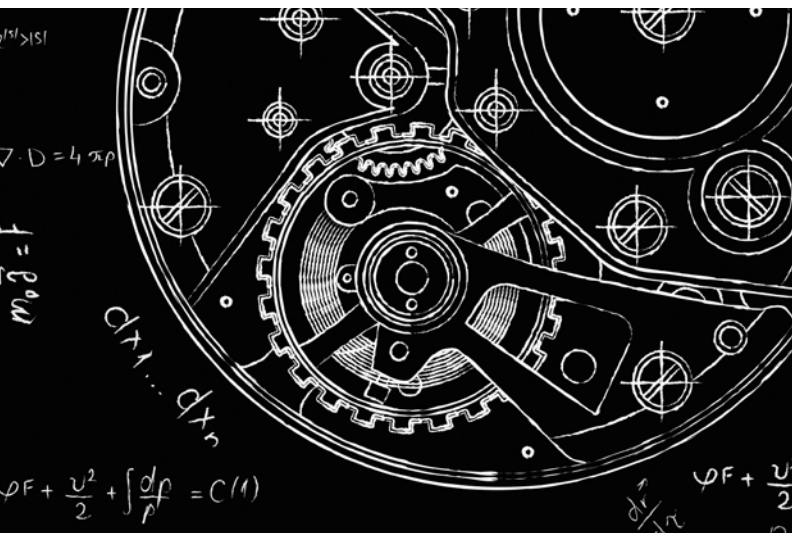
Notice that the phrase "fully gifted creation" implies that the more traditional view of God's creative activity in Genesis involves a *deficiently* gifted creation. There are two problems with van Till's understanding: (1) the theological reasoning breaks down when pressed, and (2) the scientific evidence points in a different direction.

A CRUCIAL INCONSISTENCY

First, notice that this "fully gifted creation" has a lot in common with the old "watchmaker" view of the creator: God as the master craftsman who created the perfect cosmic mechanism and so has been able to just let it run without additional tinkering. This is modern deism, not Christian theism. In the latter, the Maker of heaven and earth doesn't want to wind up the world and leave it be. He wants to stay personally involved with his creation. He wants to get his hands dirty. His relationship to his creation is more like that of a gardener to his garden, a loving father to his children, or a lover to his beloved.

The watchmaker metaphor helpfully reminds us of the many mathematical regularities of God's world. But as with all theological metaphors, we need to remember its limitations and employ additional metaphors that reveal other aspects of God's relationship to his creation.

Some who advocate "a fully gifted creation" would object that they see God not as a distant designer but as one "in whom we live and move and have our being,"² a divinity immanent but never tinkering. This formulation also runs into difficulties. It assumes that a God who is simply immanent is superior to a God who is immanent but also active in



ways not reducible to mathematical regularities. This is hardly obvious.

The formulation also fails to remedy a crucial inconsistency. The “fully gifted” argument makes use of an important tenet of traditional Christian theism in one part of its argument, but rejects that same tenet in another part.

According to orthodox Christian theism, God invented and transcends the time in which we exist—past, present, and future. The idea of God transcending our space-time continuum is a mind-boggling one, but it’s biblical. In Psalm 90, Moses says that to God a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day. God also describes himself as the I Am. He somehow knows about and predicts events hundreds of years in the future. In the book of Revelation, God the Son calls himself the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. And in John’s Gospel, Jesus uses a surprising verb tense when he tells his listeners, “Before Abraham was born, I Am!”

We can use the idea of God being over and above the time of this universe to help us begin to grasp how he could exist before the space and time of our universe came into being in the Big Bang. So far, so good. Many theistic evolutionists also use this idea to explain how God could know that his finely tuned new universe would one day evolve to generate our Sun, planet Earth, the first living things, and, eventually, a species suitable for an immortal soul made in the image of God. If God is outside of time and all-knowing, he can see the past, present, and future of every possible universe he might create, all in a single heavenly glance.

Again, so far, so good. But now here’s a problem: If we agree that God stands over and above time past, present, and future, why criticize the design theorists who argue that the maker of the universe

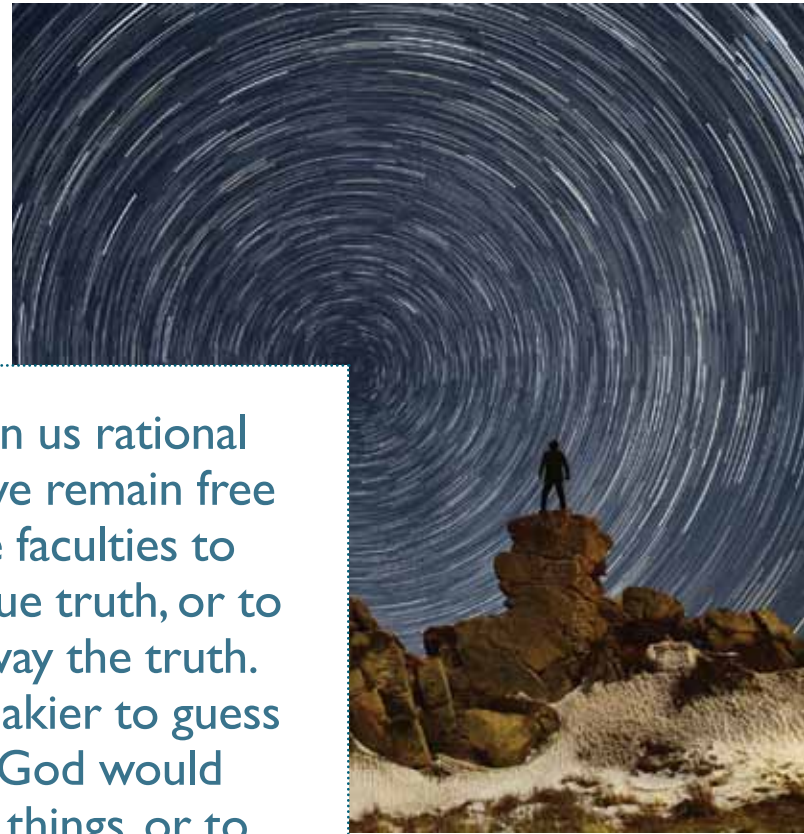
God has given us rational faculties, but we remain free to use those faculties to rationally pursue truth, or to rationalize away the truth. Surely it’s shakier to guess about how God would have created things, or to conjecture about what he would or wouldn’t have chosen to reveal through nature, than simply to go to nature and see what it actually does reveal.

appears to have done some of his design work between the origin of the universe and the origin of humans? If God stands over past, present, and future, there is a sense in which all of his design work occurred in

the eternal present of the “I Am,” whether that work occurred “all at once” 14 billion years ago or at different points throughout the history of the universe. Theistic evolutionists treat God as time-bound when it suits their argument, and beyond time when it suits their argument. That’s faulty reasoning all the time.

KEPLER’S APPROACH

Now on to the second problem. Humility cautions us against placing too much confidence in our judgments about how God would have done things. In previous centuries, many people were convinced that a perfect God would construct our solar system so that the planets revolved in perfectly circular orbits. It turned out that they follow an elliptical path instead—nearly circular but not quite. Johannes Kepler



(1571–1630) hit upon this truth in part because he was willing to entertain the possibility that he couldn't determine deductively how an all-wise and all-powerful God would construct the solar system. He had to study nature, to listen with great care to what it might tell him, and from that try to discover how a free and powerful God actually did it.

Kepler's approach is representative. One way in which Christian theology helped to birth the scientific revolution was by insisting that God was free to create however he wished, within the guidelines of his own good and reasonable nature. This meant that scientists would need to carefully test their ideas about how God had designed some particular feature of nature to see if they had guessed correctly. They couldn't just work the problem out deductively. This encouraged observation and testing.

THE QUESTION OF PROGRESSIVE CREATION

Some theistic evolutionists insist that the Creator would not act progressively in the history of Creation, and moreover, that he wouldn't leave behind powerful physical evidence of his designing work, lest it leave no room for a leap of faith. Such a judgment sits uneasily with biblical passages such as we find in Genesis 1, Psalm 19, and Romans 1.

Genesis 1, whether one takes it literally or more poetically, most naturally suggests a God who created progressively, not simply in a solitary burst of creative action at the beginning instant of the universe. Psalm 19 plainly says that the heavens declare the glory of God, and indeed that nature pours forth speech testifying to his might and glory. Many centuries later, the Apostle Paul seconded this in his letter to the Romans, where he writes that the wicked are without excuse, even those who have never encountered inspired Scripture, because "what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made."

Are we to assume that this was true for David standing under the stars, and for the early Christians to whom Paul wrote, but that it is somehow less true for scientists carefully studying the creation with powerful microscopes and telescopes? If nature as observed by the naked eye points plainly to God's eternal power and deity, it does so all the more when observed with the tools of science. These tools reveal to us everything from the astonishingly fine-tuned constants of nature for life to the many astounding

molecular machines we find illuminated by our most advanced microscopes, biological machines that defy evolutionary explanation. And as we probe deeper into these "machines," we find biological information and genetic coding so advanced that Microsoft founder Bill Gates conceded that it was well beyond anything human software engineers have ever designed.³

THE CRUCIAL STEP OF FAITH

But all this still leaves us with the objection that such evidence leaves no room for a leap of faith. For Jews and Christians who take the miracles of the Bible seriously, the objection proves too much. The Israelites who witnessed the ten plagues and walked through the Red Sea on dry ground—were they robbed of the ability to make a "leap of faith"? Not at all. They knew there was supernatural power out there, but they remained free to trust or mistrust that divine power. Many of them chose to mistrust it, to view God as every bit as mercurial and faithless as they themselves were.

Their faithlessness cost them entry into the Promised Land. As James explains in his New Testament letter, believing in the existence of God isn't the crucial step of faith. "Even the demons believe that much," he points out. But they don't love and trust God. Faith, then, is much more than bare intellectual assent to the proposition that God exists. And that, in turn, means that evidence for God in nature—even powerful evidence—does not force one to have faith in the Creator.

Also, it's clear that however powerful the evidence in nature for a cosmic maker may be, humans remain free to deny this evidence, and to heed instead whatever their itching ears want to hear. God has given us rational faculties, but we remain free to use those faculties to rationally pursue truth, or to rationalize away the truth.

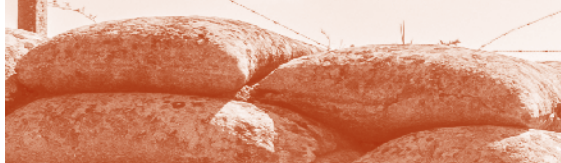
Given all of the above, surely it's shakier to guess about how God would have created things, or to conjecture about what he would or wouldn't have chosen to reveal through nature, than simply to go to nature and see what it actually does reveal. The great founders of modern science, most of them Christians, and all of them believers in God, did precisely this. ☺

Notes

1. See Howard J. van Till's "The Fully Gifted Creation," in *Three Views of Creation and Evolution*, ed. J. P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds (Zondervan, 1999), 159–218.

2. The quotation, spoken by the Apostle Paul in Acts 17:28, is from a Greek poem attributed to Epimenides the Cretan.

3. *The Road Ahead* (Penguin, 1996), 228.



Outrage or Insight?

A Timely Lesson on Not Placing Passion over Reason

by Joshua Steely

College was quite a learning experience for me. That ought to be a tautology, but I'm concerned that in an important sense it may not be. In my case, I had many excellent professors, who taught me not only the material at hand, but also how to think and learn and live. Yet one of my most memorable lessons came not from a professor, but from a TA (teaching assistant), who taught me very pointedly how not to substitute outrage for critical engagement.

As a general rule, undergraduate students preferred dealing with the professors rather than with their TAs. I preferred especially not to have my assignments graded by TAs, for they were usually graduate students in the field, who knew much more than the undergraduates and much less than the professors. It seemed to me that they were advanced enough to know how bad the undergraduates' work was, but not how little to expect from undergraduates. It was better to deal with professors, who knew that you knew nothing but expected you to know nothing.

The particular TA of memory had the task not only of grading our responses to assigned readings, but also of delivering the lecture one class period—a rare treat among TAs' behind-the-scenes labors, and a valuable exercise in their development as scholars. This was an opportunity not to be wasted, and it was not.

I remember more of that lecture than of almost any other I heard in college. The TA spoke about a social issue and shared his own experiences in the matter. At one point, he mentioned an unsavory comment someone had made to him in the past and then waxed

vehement about it, exclaiming something to the effect of "What's with that?!" and throwing his water bottle across the room in a display of outrage.

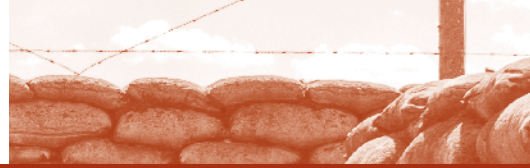
Naturally, I was impressed. Such passion! It was the sort of thing that twenty-somethings find deeply inspiring.

The Moment of Enlightenment

I proceeded to bring his enthusiasm to bear on my coursework. In my written response to our next assigned reading, I let my own righteous indignation flow. I do not recall either the topic of the reading or any specific points in my response—just that the general tenor of it was an outraged "What's with that?!"

All of this is prelude to the moment of enlightenment, which came when I received my essay back, inscribed with the evaluation—by the TA, of course. He wrote something like this: "You need to find a more mature way to express your critique."

It was a profound moment for me, because he was right, and I knew it. His critical pen burst my self-righteous bubble, and I saw my response for what it was:



juvenile. There was a prominent caveat in my mind, of course; namely, that I had learned this manner of critique from his own example. But that did not affect the correctness of his evaluation. He was still right.

I think there was also a good lesson for him to learn that day about the impact of certain pedagogical methods, but I'll probably never know if he learned it or if he even realized that I had been aping him in my outrage. But that's neither here nor there. The point is that I learned the lesson from him, and I recite it here and now: Outrage is no substitute for critical thinking. Even bad ideas are better examined carefully and dissected critically than shouted down angrily. This is an invaluable lesson for the school of life, to take a discerning approach when dealing with a world of ideas.

Unvalued & Untaught

Yet this is not, apparently, a lesson valued by contemporary society. It is not a lesson that contemporary education is instilling in students. Moving from my personal anecdote to the broader environs of



the American public square brings into view a disturbing feature of our society: our public discourse places a premium on outrage. Even more significantly for the future, our educational system places a premium on outrage.

For this is what the rise of high-exposure teenage activism reveals—not that kids easily get caught up in the excitement of promoting a cause, which is only

politicians to pop stars, sloganeering substitutes for substance and being offended is the order of the day. The leaders have modeled placing passion above reason, and the youth follow.

Still a Necessary Lesson

In this way our cultural elites and media differ radically from my old TA. I do not know whether he saw

The young activists have learned their mode of engagement from their elders. Juvenile outrage fits within our public discourse because it echoes so much of the adult contribution. From politicians to pop stars, sloganeering substitutes for substance and being offended is the order of the day.

natural, but that adults fan the flames of their passion rather than gently redirecting their energy to the urgent task of learning to think critically and calmly.

In a society with a healthy public discourse, teenage activists would not be featured on major media, for several reasons. First, we would be concerned to protect young people from the effects of media exposure on their development. Second, we would have the decency not to embarrass young people by broadcasting them spouting their juvenile opinions. And third, we would have a public discourse grounded in reasoned critical engagement, where youthful outrage would have no place.

Such is not, obviously, the state of public discourse in America today. On the contrary, the young activists have learned their mode of engagement from their elders. Juvenile outrage fits within our public discourse because it echoes so much of the adult contribution. From

in my work a reflection of himself; what matters is that he saw something that needed to be corrected, not applauded, and he gave that needed correction with appropriate directness. That is something our universities, media, and leaders seem either unable or unwilling to do. Perhaps they never learned this lesson themselves, or perhaps they simply know how to play the game, and victory and popularity are more important to them than truth.

The fact remains, this is a critical lesson that we all need to learn: outrage is not the same thing as critical thinking, and being passionate is not the same as being right, or even reasonable. As I look at American culture, I think we are failing to teach that lesson to many of those passing through our educational system; quite possibly we are teaching them the opposite. This sort of failure usually has consequences.

But that's a lesson for another day. ☉

It Only Gets Deeper

A Review of *The Mystery of Life's Origin: The Continuing Controversy*

by Terrell Clemmons

In 1984, three scientists, chemist Charles Thaxton, physicist Walter Bradley, and geochemist Roger Olsen, published *The Mystery of Life's Origin: Reassessing Current Theories*. They examined then-current origin-of-life theories and argued in extensive detail that all scenarios thus far proposed had failed. Moreover, there was a shortcoming in any theory involving purely chemical processes acting on non-living materials, and the flaw was not merely ancillary but *fundamental*. The central problem, they said, was the problem of the origin of the *biological information* necessary to build the first living cell. They concluded that an adequate theory required a source of information capable of building substantial chemical complexity. In other words, an intelligent cause was necessary.

Thirty-five years later, this central problem remains. And so, the book has been republished. *The Mystery of Life's Origin: The Continuing Controversy* contains the full text of the original, lightly updated, plus several new chapters elaborating on the state of the debate today. Here's a sampling:

- In "We're Still Clueless About the Origin of Life," synthetic chemist James Tour says that the problem is only getting bigger as more is learned about the complexity of the cell. He also sharply criticizes the overconfidence and exaggerations emanating from the origin-of-life community, which mislead the public about the state of current knowledge.
- In "Textbooks Still Misrepresent the Origin of Life," Jonathan Wells shows how high-school and college textbooks are *still* misleading students as well, especially with

respect to the 1952 Miller-Urey experiment.

- In "Thermodynamic Challenges to the Origin of Life," physicist Brian Miller argues that all origin-of-life scenarios appear to be "thermodynamically implausible." In simple terms, the second law of thermodynamics says that, left alone, a system will always progress from order to disorder, never the reverse. Yet, all origin-of-life theories propose some manner of "the reverse."

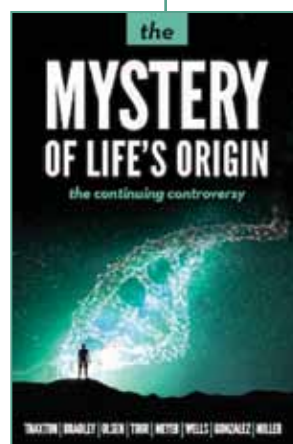
In the final chapter, Stephen Meyer expands on the central problem of biological information. When biologists use the term "information," they are referring to two real features of

living systems—complexity and functional specificity. The two are related. By the 1960s, biologists had discovered that proteins had extraordinarily complex, irregular, three-dimensional shapes, and that a given protein's unique shape determined its function. They also knew that the instructions for building proteins lay in the arrangement of nucleotide bases along a section of the DNA molecule. Put differently, the coding regions of DNA contain information that functions like a software program specifying the precise form and function of a protein molecule. This is what is meant by *functional specificity*.

From there, Meyer evaluates the competing types of explanations proposed to date and shows that all are inadequate. And finally, like the three original authors before him, he puts forth intelligent design as a more causally adequate explanation for the origin of the specified complexity we see in large biomolecules such as DNA, RNA, and proteins. This is not, as ID critics say, a "God of the gaps" argument or an argument from ignorance. Rather, as Meyer explains, "Experience shows that large amounts of such information (especially when digitally or alphabetically encoded) *invariably* originate

from an intelligent source . . . intelligent activity is *the only known cause* of the origin of functionally specified information."

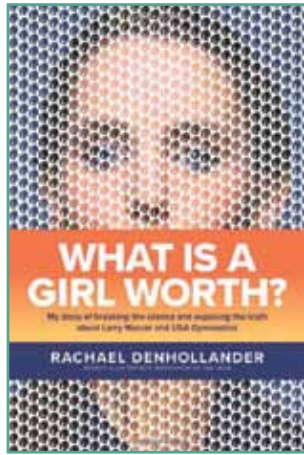
Mystery is a devastating critique of naturalistic origin-of-life science, made all the more formidable by the 35-year history behind it. It's an excellent resource for equipping a new generation of scientists to consider intelligence as the source of the information at the heart of life. ☺



Raising a Strong Daughter in a Toxic Culture: 11 Steps to Keep Her Happy, Healthy, and Safe

by Meg Meeker, M.D.

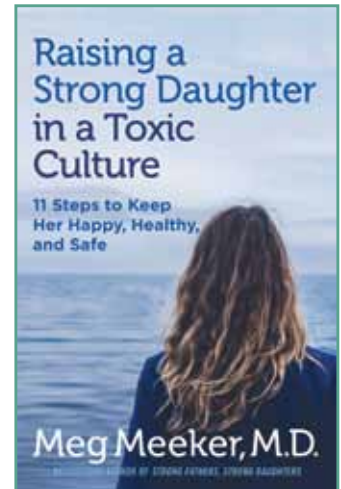
Meg Meeker is an author, mother of four, and practicing pediatrician with more than thirty years' experience. This book is pure, commonsense, jargon-free wisdom for today. What questions are girls asking? What roles do mothers and fathers play? How should you approach issues related to God, mental health, feminism, screens, social media, and sex? If you have a daughter, this is one you'll want to buy and keep.



What Is a Girl Worth? My story of breaking the silence and exposing the truth about Larry Nassar and USA Gymnastics

by Rachael Denhollander

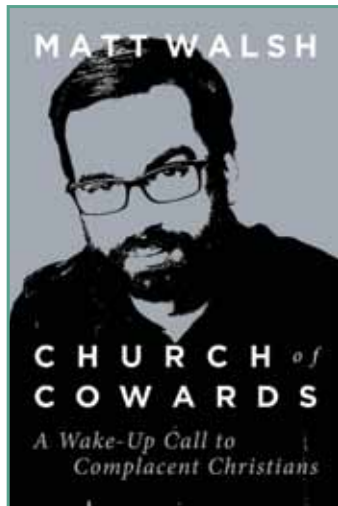
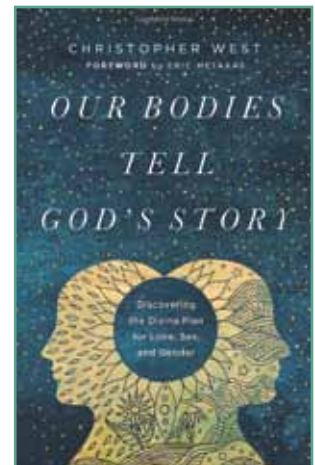
Larry Nassar, former USA Gymnastics team doctor and Michigan State University physician, abused hundreds of child athletes over a period of decades. Rachael Denhollander, now an attorney and homeschooling mother of four, was the first to come forward and formally accuse him. Her story is riveting, both as legal drama and as a wrenchingly honest portrayal of the effects of abuse and betrayed trust.



Our Bodies Tell God's Story: Discovering the Divine Plan for Love, Sex, and Gender

by Christopher West

Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body" taught that the sexual communion of husband and wife in marriage is a picture of the gospel writ in human flesh, meant to tell the story that God wants to marry us so that we may enter into his eternal, divine communion of self-giving love. Here, West unpacks this "profound mystery," giving contemporary readers a deep-dive reflection on the meaning of life, marriage, and sexuality.



Church of Cowards: A Wake-Up Call to Complacent Christians

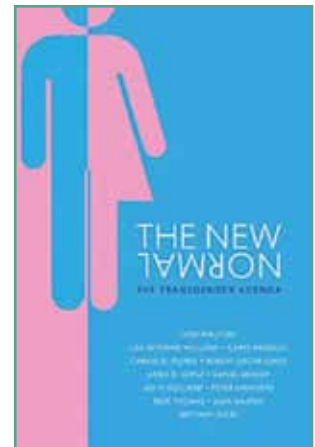
by Matt Walsh

Much of American Christianity is wallowing in a fog of self-deception, complacent false confidence, and comforting but perilous delusions, says Walsh. Like a fire-in-the-belly preacher, he takes on the "Gospel of Positivity," cheap repentance, gutless capitulation to passing fads, and more. Some might say he paints with too broad a brush, but if you love Christ and his Church, you will probably find Walsh's bracing analyses refreshing.

The New Normal: The Transgender Agenda

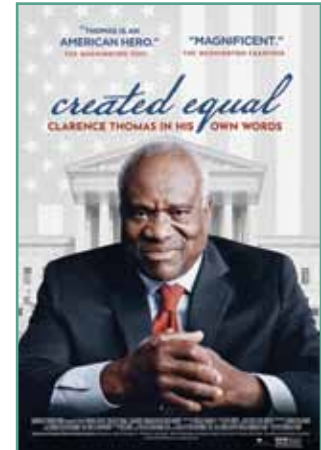
by Dr. Lisa Nolland, Dr. Carys Moseley, et al.

Beliefs about sex and gender will either be grounded in *objective, observable, biological truth* (and, for many, the biblical creation account, which is seamlessly consistent with biology), or they will be based on subjective *feelings or opinions*. Transgender ideology completely overthrows the former in favor of the latter. This collection of essays will help you analyze, evaluate, and respond well to the massive confusion the trans dogma brings.



Created Equal: Clarence Thomas in His Own Words

Although his public persona has always been quiet and unassuming, Justice Clarence Thomas has all his life defied others' expectations in order to follow the course he believed God had put before him. This remarkably personal memoir, tracing his life from a humble childhood, through racial tensions, to hideous political opposition from the moment of being appointed to the High Court, is both an inspiration and a lesson in perseverance and tenacity.



Film Blips 

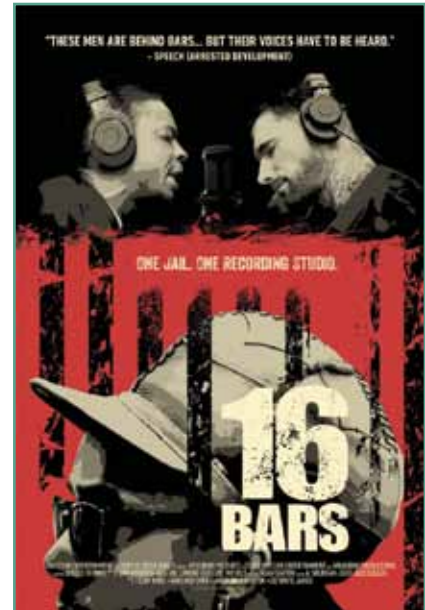


American Factory

In 2016, Chinese-owned Fuyao Glass America reopened a shuttered GM plant in Ohio. Hailed as a new day in global cooperative enterprise, it was to be jointly run by Chinese and American managers. Largely shot "on the floor" from the perspective of hourly workers, *American Factory* captures, but does not comment on or interpret, a wide range of cultural differences that arose, making it interesting viewing from an international business and cultural analysis standpoint.

16 Bars

Todd "Speech" Thomas of the hip hop group Arrested Development built a makeshift recording studio in a Richmond, Virginia jail and spent two weeks helping inmates record their own music. This film follows four of the inmates, revealing their complex backstories of struggles with abuse, trauma, and addictions, as well as their talent, pathos, and deep desire to reenter mainstream society from a place of health.



the inmates, revealing their complex backstories of struggles with abuse, trauma, and addictions, as well as their talent, pathos, and deep desire to

A Hidden Life

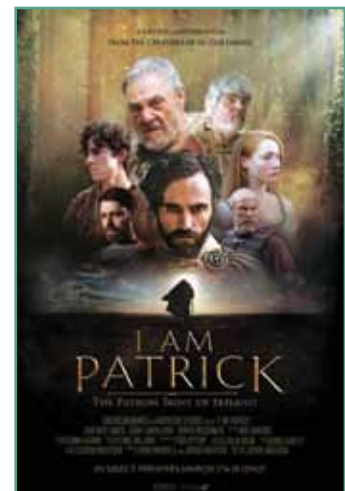
Franz Jägerstätter was a hardworking Austrian farmer minding his own business until the Germans annexed Austria in 1938. His refusal to pledge loyalty to Hitler provoked controversy at every turn and ultimately resulted in his execution in 1943. Stunningly beautiful and understated, this feature film quietly raises haunting questions about conscience, conviction, and moral courage under crushing pressure.



I Am Patrick: The Patron Saint of Ireland

There is no earthly way to measure the impact of the life of St. Patrick, fifth-century missionary to Ireland, on the world. But we

can learn from it. Based on his own writings, this documentary blends dramatized reenactments filmed in Ireland and expert commentary to chronicle for modern audiences this one hard, but relentlessly purposeful, life of devotion to God.





Home Stuck

The Coronavirus Reveals an Intolerance of Solitude

by Emily Morales

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed an area of sickness in our country that goes beyond a fever, dry cough, and pneumonia-like symptoms. With the high, penetrating resolution of an MRI, COVID-19 has exposed our intolerance of solitude and our inability to make the most of our own company. Unfortunately, without a change of heart, the pathology of our inability to endure times of solitude will outlive the virus itself.

In an article by the American Psychological Association, it was reported that social isolation can increase the health risks of people as much as smoking fifteen cigarettes a day.¹ Other studies have linked prolonged social isolation with the onset of cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and even obesity.² As if the physical syndromes were not bad enough, mental health issues such as low self-esteem, depression, and cognitive impairment can also be triggered by prolonged loneliness.

The concern about prolonged social isolation is understandable; what is remarkable is all the attention it has been receiving because of those who have had to shelter-in-place for a few weeks. A mere three or four days into the order, I became aware of many who through social media expressed complaints of "boredom," "depression," "anxiety," and a lack of things to do in their own homes—with their own family members.

Some have opined that humans lack the mental tools to manage this kind of isolation. But we do possess the tools, and human history is replete with examples of people regularly man-



aging periods of isolation. Consider those who lived in northern temperate zones up until about a hundred years ago. It was not unusual for a Wisconsin family (remember Laura Ingalls Wilder?) to be holed up in their house for months at a time, enduring punishing winters. The difference is that they were prepared for this type of seasonal isolation, passing the time with handcrafts, reading, playing tabletop games, and family devotions.

Recognizing then, that humans have some capacity for managing periods of solitude, what is it about our own culture that has led us to develop such intolerance for it? There are certainly many factors; some would argue that the institution of public education is one of them, and others would point to the impact of the media.

John Taylor Gatto, an American author and award-winning schoolteacher, in his book *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*, argues that the consequences of public education are such that the institution of the family has been undermined, and children have no tolerance for solitude—for spending time with their own thoughts. Children are not only tied up during the school day (imbibing toxic and hidden curricula), away from families and their own thoughts, but they are occupied at home as well, having to spend the evening hours on intrusive homework. The overreaching arms of public education then, put a stranglehold on family life and hamper students from entertaining themselves with hobbies, interests, and subjects they are passionate about.

Gatto first wrote this in 1992, well before the age of the smart phone. One could maintain that the new media accomplish many of the same things that Gatto charged public schools with doing. After all, how many times have we witnessed family members *together*, not conversing with one another, but gazing at and swiping on their cell phones with rapt attention? And to drown out the sounds of our own musings, do we not sometimes pop in earbuds?

It's likely that both the media and public education have had their parts to play, but they do not explain why so many people seem to *fear* solitude like the plague. Maybe, just maybe, too many of them are *uncomfortable* with their own thoughts and serious introspection. But solitude can also be an opportunity, even an invitation, to do something few officials have suggested: pray. ☯

Notes

1. apa.org/education/ce/social-isolation.pdf.
2. apa.org/science/about/psa/2017/09/loneliness-sick.

Oh my!

I can't believe I typed like that before.



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