

## Theories in a race

As a response to Behe's "*Darwin's Black Box*", Barbara Forrest wrote that, "ID is not only creationism but an overtly sectarian religious belief"(Forrest, icb). In his book however, Behe makes it his point not to address the intelligent designer as God. This contradicts the claims made by other ID supporters. William Dembski, the leading intellectual of the movement, stated in an interview that "[he] believe[es] God created the world for a purpose. The Designer of intelligent design is, ultimately, the Christian God." This leads to contradiction within the supporters of ID further leading to questions that will be addressed in this essay. How is the larger dispute between science and religion fueled by ID proponents that are possibly concealed Evangelical Christians that are using science as a means to spread Christianity. The larger dispute pointed to here is whether or not science and religion can co-exist in an inter-related way to answer the questions of the universe. This essay will use Richard Dawkins and Francis Collins as reference points to the dispute between science and religion. Barbara Forrest, Michael Behe and Gregory W. Dawes are used as sources of different points of views on the theory of ID. This is later used to see whether or not these points of views are misdirecting their energy into eliminating other belief systems that seem to contradict theirs, rather than answering questions, such as the reasons behind our existence.

Religion, especially Christianity that puts God as creator, has had tension with science ever since the introduction of evolutionary thought. Scientists such as Richard Dawkins strongly argue that claiming God is the answer to understanding the universe is "demeaning...so trite, ...over simple...and so impotent" (Dawkins, interview). What Dawkins also opposes to, is the God of the Gaps belief, where people attribute God to scientific findings that don't seem to fit with any previously stated explanation. On the other hand, scientists like Francis Collins strongly support the compatibility of religion and science. Collins believes that "faith in God and faith in science can coexist within a person and be harmonious" (Collins, book jacket). This disagreement between these scientists falls in the category of opposing belief systems. Collins

says, “In the twentieth century, in an increasingly technological society, a battle is raging for the hearts and minds of humanity” (Collins, 210). This quote presents the race between differing belief systems that is present in the dispute between science and religion. Some questions they both attempt to answer are related to the purpose of our existence and the reasons behind the way the universe is. It isn’t necessarily correct that only one answers questions raised about our existence, or the universe, but certain people have set distinct lines between what they believe is true and isn’t true. This further increases the gap between science and religion and intensifies the dispute between these two.

This gap does not decrease in the debate about intelligent design either. Most of the arguments hold that either intelligent design is true or Neo-Darwinism is correct, but not both. This shows that there is also a growing gap between ID and Neo-Darwinism, presenting a parallel comparison between this and the growing gap between science and religion. If Neo-Darwinism is modern time evolution, then is ID seen as a religious belief under Christianity? Or is it in actuality, concealed Evangelical Christianity? Michael Behe claims that ID is seen in the “complexity of earthly life,” (Behe, 85). Darwin’s Black Box proposes that certain cellular structures are “irreducibly complex”, and Darwinian evolution does not explain these features, and hence there must be an “intelligent designer”. According to Behe, through scientific observations that show “complexity of earthly life” (Behe, 85) an intelligent designer as the creator is visible. This intelligent designer however is not clearly stated as God in Behe’s book, in fact, Behe says he believes in “evolution by common descent” in the introduction, although he contradicts this later in the book. The basic premise of the book is that “Biochemistry has pushed Darwin’s theory to the limit. It has done so by opening the ultimate black box, the cell, thereby making possible our understanding of how life works” (Behe, preface). David Ussery, an associate professor at CBS in the Institute of Biotechnology, claims that few modern biologists believe Darwinian gradualism can explain evolution, but Behe completely “debunk[ed]” this all together instead of dealing with in in his book (Ussery, cbs). According to Behe, there is an

intelligent designer, but it hasn't been referred to as God in *Darwin's Black Box*. But scientists such as Barbara Forrest identify ID as creationism “[d]espite denials by proponents of intelligent design (ID)”. She claims that “critical analysis by scientists and scholars, as well as statements by the proponents of ID themselves, has established beyond any doubt ID’s true identity as neo-creationism” (Barbara, Abstract). ID's opponents believe that ID is creationism in disguise, but it isn't only the opponents, proponents such as Dembski believe so too. ID’s leading intellectual leader, Dembski, states “the designer of intelligent design is, ultimately, the Christian God” (Barbara, 1cb). Hence, despite Behe's attempt to leave God from any explanations in his book, other proponent figures believe it is God. This undermines his entire book, because he fails to acknowledge that other leaders believe so, and also because he leads readers to that belief but does not state it himself.

ID is a religious belief means that the dispute between science and religion finds other grounds to intensify upon. Believers in ID claim that the intelligent designer is behind all that the universe has to offer, whereas non-believers suggest it is just another way for Christians to spread their religion by masking it as science. Behe's book seems to have fueled fundamentalists who argue on literal interpretations of the Bible as the only possible way in which the Earth was created. This fuels the dispute between science and religion by creating more means of disagreement. Religious figures that do not believe in ID are forced to be grouped in the same group as ID proponents which are now seen as concealed Evangelical Christians. Scientists that believe science and religion cannot work together are now provided with another example to undermine religious thought. This further increases the gap between science and religion, and decreases the chances of having a religiously supported scientific environment. Collins tries to minimize this gap by claiming that belief in God and Darwinism thought should not be in conflict. In *The Language of God*, he says, “[as believers, you are right] to hold fast to the certainty that the claims of atheistic materialism must be steadfastly resisted. But those battles cannot be won by attaching your position to a flawed foundation” (Collins, 178). Collins presents

an example of religious followers disclaiming science based just on the Holy Bible and its sayings. He points out that, scientific discoveries should be accepted and not rejected just because the Book of Genesis does not literally seem to fit with it. Both sides are fighting over which one has the better answer. This misdirected energy would rather be spent on answering the many puzzling questions of our universe.

If ID is not a religious belief, then why has this theory become unaccepted in the larger scientific society? According to Karen Bartlet, Behe's ideas are not rejected because they are religious but because intelligent design lacks evidential support. Barbara claims that, "articles describing the evolution of the immune system, cilium, flagellum, blood-clotting system, eyes" (Bartlet) do exist as a response to Behe's claim that "There has never been a meeting or a book, or a paper on details of the evolution of complex biochemical systems" (Behe, 179). These book reviews that oppose Behe's ID set their foundation to be the lack of evidence for his claims in his book. Behe contends that bio-molecular systems are not capable of appearing as outcomes of Darwinian evolution because of their "irreducible complexity". However, Behe does not give evidence that legitimately supports what he is saying. For example, for his irreducibly complex theories on proteins to make sense, there shouldn't be any scientific discoveries that show proteins being explained through any sort of evolution. However, Kenneth R. Miller, reports "that the evolution of proteins can be observed in the laboratory" (Miller, 143). This was accepted and reported in *Science* in 1997 (Pennock). However, Behe did not mention this in his essay that he published in 1998 and 2001 regarding ID (Pennock). Further showing that ID proponents are either unwilling to accept certain mistakes or are simply rejecting scientific observations to make their theories and belief systems seem correct. This reduces ID into a basic belief system ignited as a result of deep religious belief in God, categorizing it simply as a religious thought that was concealed by science to gain legitimacy in the scientific world.

In an essay by Dawkins named *When Religion Steps on Science's Turf* claims that "The God of the Old Testament himself, with his pitilessly vengeful jealousy, his racism, sexism, and

terrifying bloodlust, will not be adopted as a literal role model by anybody you or I would wish to know". Dawkins adheres to insults about God based off of the Old Testament. He agrees later on that we should not judge based on a past and renewed event but his religious stand point is seen here. He does not accept to the attribute of God as the creator of all. Collins believes the opposite. However, the problem does not lie in their beliefs. The problem is that scientists are in a race to eliminate the beliefs that contradict theirs. If both science and religion are equally acknowledged as belief systems that are continually faced with problems to solve, then the followers of each group should deal with the problems with in their own scope of understanding instead of undermining the other set of belief. It shouldn't be a race to get followers for their belief systems, rather a race to unlock the mysteries of the universe through the acceptance of other beliefs as legitimate.

An example to the ongoing focus on discrediting other beliefs is Barbara Forrest's concluding statement in her response to Behe's book. "Scientists must take advantage of this opportunity to cultivate such support and to counteract ID by engaging in pro-science activism, making use of the many resources available to support their efforts" (Barbara, icb). The race should not be in gathering supporters but rather at answering questions of the mysterious universe we live in.

Intelligent design seems to be an attempt in helping solve this problem, but Behe's book is not the best evidential support for ID's followers. Through reviews that have presented ID's biases and mistakes and through Behe's lack of acknowledgment that God is the Intelligent Designer in the theory of ID in his book, the overarching theme of science versus religion is visible. The misdirected energy of this is also seen as scientists are focusing their attention on which belief is saying what instead of focusing on understanding our universe better. Scientists should be reaching conclusions and answering them based off of how much they've found out not based off of which belief system leads to what sets of ideas. We have taken a leap into a race

amongst one another in an attempt to eradicate opponents, when we could realize the futility of legitimizing belief and come back into the race to know more about the universe.

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