

Hi there.

Below is my response to AJ Derksen's "rebuttal" of Peter McKnight's review of Expelled (<http://www.canada.com/vancouver/news/story.html?id=f022096b-6832-4ec1-929d-92e8bc337364>). Most of the comments are in line, in this color, save for the main point below. Derksen's original is in this font and color.

Best wishes,
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The central flaw in the "rebuttal" below is that it appears, either honestly or disingenuously, to take ID at face value, i.e. to assume that it is truly concerned with finding evidence for *any* form of "intelligent design" behind the physical universe, and not specifically the Christian God as intelligent designer. But it has been shown on numerous occasions that ID = Creationism + Equations + Lies:

- "Consider, to illustrate, that [ID principal] Professor Behe remarkably and unmistakably claims that the plausibility of the argument for ID depends upon the extent to which one believes in the existence of God." (Judge Jones in the Kitzmiller vs. Dover summation. http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Kitzmiller_v._Dover_Area_School_District/2:Context#Page_28_of_139).
- Also at the Kitzmiller vs. Dover trial, it was shown without doubt by NCSE that the "ID" textbook "Of Pandas and People" started life as a creationist book, with the references to creationism simply changed to references to ID.
- Phillip E. Johnson's infamous "Wedge Strategy" document makes it plain that ID is a central tool in the Discovery Institute's stated goal of "renewing" American culture by shaping public policy to reflect conservative Christian, namely evangelical Protestant, values.
- [ID principal] William Dembski freely admits that he believes that "The Designer of intelligent design is, ultimately, the Christian God." (<http://scienceligionnews.blogspot.com/2007/12/christian-god-wins-intelligent-design.html>)

So let's not pretend that ID is anything but a transparent veneer on top of creationism, intended to lend it some morsel of scientific respectability amongst the scientific illiterate.

Dear Mr. McKnight,

Hello. I have not seen Expelled, so I can't comment directly on the film. However, knowing your past pattern of naturalistic thinking in a number of your articles, I thought I'd respond to your own argumentation.

It seems like a strange starting point when commenting on a film review to state that you haven't seen the film in question, but we'll let that slide.

Right off the bat, you call Expelled "anti-science." This begs the question as to how we should define "science" in the first place. As I understand it (and speaking colloquially here), science is the enterprise of connecting the dots between pieces of empirical data, explaining where possible how those data originated and how they relate to one another and the world as a whole. In other words, the scientific enterprise can be boiled down to a synthesis of gathered facts and inferences drawn from those facts.

Well, that's a definition of science. I would have thought that if you're arguing about science, you'd do better to start from a somewhat more established definition than one that begins "As I understand it..." If you get to define your own terms, then you can argue pretty much anything you like.

Wikipedia isn't the perfect fount of all knowledge, but its science articles are pretty thoroughly peer-reviewed. Let's see what it has to say on science:

Science (from the Latin scientia, meaning "knowledge") is the effort to discover, understand, or to understand better, how the physical world works, with observable physical evidence as the basis of that understanding. It is done through observation of existing phenomena, and/or through experimentation that tries to simulate phenomena under controlled conditions. Knowledge in science is gained through research.

Several interesting words to take note of here: "physical", "evidence", "observation", "experimentation", "controlled conditions". So "anti-science" would involve things like "metaphysical", "lack of evidence", "absence of observation and experiments", "lack of controlled conditions". All of these seem to fit ID pretty well.

That, of course, pertains to the objective of science, not necessarily the method. Methodology itself (and I will go over this below) is a pre-theoretical matter; methodology cannot itself be scientifically determined, since that would only beg the question as to the methodology used by the investigation to determine the methodology. A vicious circle if ever there was one.

This is just nonsense. The methodology of science is part of its very framework, not some "pre-theoretical matter" that can be considered separately from science's aims. Science achieves its goals, as stated above, using the very methodology that is regarded as "scientific". There isn't a range of possible ways of "doing" science. There is no vicious circle. The goals and techniques of science are bound together in a way that gives science its enormous power and credibility.

What this means is that the choice of a methodology which in turn delimits the range of inferences we'll allow ourselves to draw from the facts comes down to a preference for a given nonempirical, metaphysical worldview.

No, quite the opposite. The techniques of science are as empirical and naturalistic as what science is investigating. They are those techniques that have been shown to work, over and over again. It's the methodology that gives sciences its vast explanatory and predictive power. You don't get to pick and choose the "kind" of science you're doing. You either do science, or you do something else, like astrology or ID.

If one believes ahead of time that only science can determine ultimate reality, and that ultimate reality "must" be strictly empirical/material, then one will automatically disregard any supernatural explanation for any phenomena, even if that explanation is a logically possible inference from the facts.

Very true, but that's bound up with the definition of what science is. If you want to explain something in terms of *supernatural* forces, go ahead, knock yourself out. Just don't call it science. There has never been a case where a supernatural explanation has shown to be the *only* "logically possible inference from the facts," which is why science prevails over pseudo-science

and false science.

Conversely, if one takes a more interdisciplinary approach to the physical sciences i.e., is open to other sources of knowledge besides empirical science then one will allow consideration for more than just empirical explanations.

Yes. They're called "supernatural," "metaphysical," and "religious" explanations. What they're not called is scientific explanations. This is why inventing your own definition of science is dangerous: it just makes you look silly.

The point is this: an insistence on strictly empirical explanation is itself not a scientific stance, because empirical science is incapable of determining ahead of time what our methodology or preferred range of inferences ought to be. Therefore the insistence on strictly natural explanations, in all cases, is an insistence borne not out of science itself, but out of ideology.

Well, this is your opinion. Unfortunately it's not an opinion shared by the millions of scientists working today. If you want to call the established method of science an ideological, that's your prerogative, but it doesn't invalidate science.

There is always more going on in science than the empirical. The very act of reasoning and hypothesizing is a nonempirical act, predicated on nonempirical assumptions.

Even if you grant that, say, the thought processes involved in hypothesizing are "nonempirical", they are *immediately* subject to empirical testing as a filter through which ideas must travel on their way to becoming recognized as scientific. Eureka moments, leaps of imagination, instinctive insights etc. might not themselves be empirical according to our current understanding of human mental processes, but their *application* in the scientific realm most certainly are.

And the reality is that no empirical observation or set of experiments ever yielded the scientific conclusion that we "must" only entertain natural explanations. That's an ideology, Mr. McKnight. Which of course begs the question: What line of reasoning justifies that ideology? It's a very arrogant position, because it presumes we cannot gain knowledge of the world through any source but science, and that there is only one way of doing science. But science by itself can never prove there's only one way of doing science.

It doesn't need to, because it's incorporated into the very definition of what science is. Paragraphs like the one above veer dangerously into post-modernist territory of subjective "truth" and denial of objectivity. You might like science to be like that, but unfortunately it isn't, no matter how you try to redefine it.

As I understand Expelled and, more broadly, the Intelligent Design community as a whole, they are simply trying to be fair-minded toward the data and toward human reasoning, rather than restrict all possible explanations to natural-only. What's more, even the ID position itself is a very open-ended model; it posits only a higher intelligence it does not stipulate that said intelligence must be supernatural.

[Well, it seems that you understand neither Expelled nor ID as a whole. I don't think even its most fervent supporters could accuse Expelled as being fair-minded. The liberties it takes with the truth (in terms of the stories about of the "victims" it portrays, the obscene linking of Darwinist thought with the Holocaust, the deliberately misleading of interview subjects, and the egregious misquoting of Darwin himself) are sufficient to lay any claim of fair-mindedness to rest. As for ID itself, and as I documented at the start, any pretense it ever had to being "fair-minded" in any recognized sense of the phrase has long since been blown apart. Even ID principals have given up denying that ID is an attempt to fit their preconceived notions of a supernatural creator called God to the facts of the natural world.

Therefore even a naturalist could be an ID proponent.

Good luck finding one! Quite the opposite is really the case: the vast majority of scientifically literate Christians embrace evolutionary theory and reject ID. As Dembski has observed, devout evolutionists are no friends of ID. ID support is limited to a tiny minority of fundamentalist "scientist" believers and a larger number of the scientifically illiterate from the general population who can't be expected to know any better.

All ID theorists ask is this: If there are, among various natural phenomena, various indicators of intelligence, should we not take those into consideration? Is it unreasonable to posit a designer of some kind (without necessarily limiting that "designer" in terms of theology) as an explanation for those indicators?

And if they'd uncovered any of those indicators, maybe they'd have a point. Behe's irreducible complexity has failed time and time again to find a credible instance. Dembski's various theories around "specified complexity" and the "design inference" have likewise failed miserably in standing up to scrutiny by experts in the particular mathematical sandbox he likes to play in. The reason is that IDers work backwards: they take their preconceived notions, and then try to work back to theories that might fit the facts to them. Scientists take the facts and come up with hypotheses to explain them, and make predictions to test those hypotheses.

Are you proposing that that's an unreasonable way to think about nature? If so, why?

Because it's not scientific. You're welcome to *philosophize* about those things, or be honest and explain them in terms of religious faith, but don't try to shoe-horn preexisting notions about supernatural design into a scientific framework, because your notions will be squeezed out of shape and you'll have to limp through life, dragging along a crippled world view.

You mock the notion of "a giant conspiracy to banish intelligent design theory from the halls of academe," without, apparently, being at all willing to consider precisely those cases (and they are numerous) in which highly qualified scientists testify of having been blackballed over their ID theorizing. People like you regularly ignore such cases as if, for some reason, they just don't matter, or don't count in the scheme of things. Why do you do that?

McKnight doesn't have to rebut directly the ludicrous blackballing claims because it's been done very thoroughly by the NCSE and Scientific American, to name but two. Why go over the same old ground, repeatedly revealing the same discredited cases to be the trumped-up accusations that they are?

You go on to assert that “ID is the latest form of creationism, as it states that the apparent design in nature reveals that there must have been a designer. While proponents insist that ID has nothing to do with religion, they inevitably conclude that the designer is none other than the Judeo-Christian God.”

This is a caricature but of course you won’t recognize it as such, because you’re not, in my estimation, a fair-minded thinker.

It not a caricature: it’s the documented view of the DI and most ID principals. If anyone is out of touch with ID in this debate, it’s you. You seem to be taking the most naive view of the IDers’ claims and motives possible, which doesn’t say much for your own insight into the issues.

It is not surprising that creationists would subscribe to some version of ID theory, since obviously creationists view God as, among other things, an intelligent designer! However, you are being unfair to the ID model itself, which merely posits a higher intelligence having had a hand in the development (however long or meandering it may have been) of what we’ve so far been able to observe. The ID model by itself is very bare-bones: it simply does not demand that the designer must be supernatural or equated with the God of the Bible. Sure, a Jew or Christian (or Muslim) will equate the designer with God, but a naturalist could just as easily equate the designer with a super-evolved alien.

Only in the fairy-tale version of ID were people actually believe the most superficial claims originally made of it. Back in the real world, we know what you say is just not the case. Please publish a list of ID advocates who believe that the “designer” is a super-evolved alien.

The main question to be honestly considered and which anti-IDers are not honestly considering is this: Are there actually indications in various physical phenomena of an intelligence at work? That’s it. Why should sincere, objective scientists be afraid to pose and explore such a question?

They’re not afraid. They just find such questions wanting when they apply the scientific training that they’ve been taught to use when investigating such issues. ID has been shown time and again to be pseudo- or false-science, so it couldn’t be considered as a starting point for these types of investigations. Where, then, should the scientists start? What are the observable phenomena? Where is the physical (or at least observable) evidence that scientific inquiry demands? The whole question of there being a “design” behind the universe, or even life as we know it, is so lacking in any evidence that it can only remain in the realm of philosophical or religious speculation, not scientific inquiry.

What should probably not surprise me, yet never fails to cause me a great deal of dismay and frustration, is when people like you insist that only one type of explanation for any natural phenomenon is allowable at the table of discussion, otherwise it’s “not science.”

Yes. It seems as though you’ve stumbled upon the definition of science after all. Well done.

Do you not see that you are subscribing not to empirical evidence but to an ideology? Do you not see that this is the imposition of group-think on scientists, rather than allowing

individual insights to see the light of day? Is the imposition of an ideology really the best way to enhance humanity's body of knowledge?

Science isn't an ideology; it's a methodology. No-one is stopping IDers from pursuing their dubious beliefs (in spite of Expelled untrue claims to the contrary). If they ever manage to come up with theories that stand up to scrutiny, that have any kind of predictive power, and be shown to be derived from the available evidence rather than being reverse engineered from preexisting beliefs, then maybe the wider scientific community will start to take notice.

You claim: "Scientific theories must yield testable hypotheses that is, they must make predictions and we must be able to test whether those predictions come true. But since we never know what God will do next, there is nothing to test, no way of knowing whether the evidence supports or refutes the theory. This explains why ID has failed to produce an empirical research program."

Tell me: do evolutionists know what evolution will do next? Of course not.

In general terms, actually they do. They know the *kinds* of thing that evolution can do. They understand that chance mutations in the genome will very occasionally cause an advantage in the phenotype which will be naturally selected and result in the evolution of the species. This has been *observed*. In many cases, it's even possible to predict what the approximate outcome of a specific mutation will be, from knowledge gleaned through microbiology research and projects like the Human Genome Project. Can scientists predict what specific random mutations will occur? By definition, no, but that doesn't impinge on the predictive power of evolutionary biology as a *science*.

One of the bedrock features of evo-theory is its randomness. Assuming evolution is real, and imagining that someone with our level of intelligence but with no prior knowledge of Earth history could travel back in time to witness the appearance of the very first lifeform(s) on Earth, that investigator could never predict that the process would ultimately produce the world we know today.

Very true, as Stephen Jay Gould commented upon this with his "replaying the tape" analogy. It's a very powerful argument against there being a God who created us "in his image". Another run of the program that is evolutionary history would not be guaranteed to even result in sentient life, let alone intelligent life (though some disagree with that, seeing intelligence as "inevitable").

It would merely be one logical possibility, within a myriad logical possibilities. So by your own standard, evo-theory thus gives us "nothing to test, no way of knowing whether the evidence supports or refutes the theory."

Simply untrue. The current state of the biosphere is not a test of evolutionary theory. There are thousands of experiments, genome analyses, fossil analyses, observations of change within species and through speciation that validate evolutionary theory. It's actually rather sad to see anti-evolutionists repeating such time-worn inanities as "there's no evidence for evolution."

And for your information ID theory does furnish a testable hypothesis: it says that when we look at various phenomena we will find evidence of an intelligence at work, rather than utter randomness.

This is a false dichotomy. The options aren't restricted to utter randomness and an intelligent designer, therefore ID cannot make the prediction you claim. One of the major failings of ID is that it *can't* distinguish between design and complexity derived through other means, such as self-organization and the natural selection of chance mutation (whereas both of those have been shown time and again to lead to complexity).

And ID theorists spell out ahead of time what they consider earmarks of intelligence.¹ Why would you deny that that can be tested, Mr. McKnight?

Possibly it can be tested, but what is the value when we're testing what "[ID proponents] consider" the signs of intelligence. Since IDers are working backwards from their conception of an intelligent designer and designing their theories to fit observations to those beliefs, there would seem to be little to gain in testing them. On the other hand, if a team of unbiased scientists from the fields of neuroscience, information theory and cognitive psychology could hammer out such a definition, then maybe we'd have something worth testing. But then, given that computers routinely fool people into thinking they exhibit intelligence, it seems it would be very hard to craft a robust theory of intelligence.

Would you argue that intelligence never leaves any signs of itself? The converse, of course, is that if ID theory is wrong, then all is randomness and that, too, should be empirically demonstrable. Therefore I must ask you: What evidence can you show me that all phenomena are, at base, totally random?

The question isn't whether intelligence leaves signs of itself; it's: does it leave signs that can be inferred as being distinct from a set of natural processes. Paley's watch and tornado-through-the-junkyard arguments don't help here because we're not trying to distinguish human intelligence, rather an intelligence that acts on the natural world in myriad tiny ways to produce what we observe today. Science needs only to show that the known (or possibly as yet unknown) laws of nature, when applied to the known materials of nature, can lead to the results we see today. Evolution is concerned with demonstrating a subset of that picture, and does so powerfully, given some starting assumptions that are continually being whittled down. The point is that science is nowhere near close to need to fall back on an intelligent designer to explain what we observe. Only people with a preconception of such a designer require it to be part of the explanation.

And the case for randomness would have to apply as well to human activity, since, according to the scientific establishment, all natural phenomena must be amenable to natural explanations, and "all natural phenomena" must logically include all human activity. That would mean that scientific investigation is controlled by randomness, which would logically make all conclusions suspect.

You are confusing randomness in the small (indeed in the quantum realm) with randomness in the macroscopic world. Humans live in the macro world. Even their brain processes, resulting from the firing of billions of neurons are macroscopic events, the individual electrical impulses being the aggregate effect of trillions of molecular interactions. Since it's clear that humans don't behave randomly, save for people with brain malfunctions, it's hard to see what you're getting at. Randomness averaged over billions of events gets smoothed out into much more predictable behavior. The randomness that plays a part in evolution is at a totally different scale, both spatially and temporally, from everyday human experience, so at best your point seems to be a category error.

Random evolution would also mean that your own thoughts and actions are controlled by randomness.

Why? The randomness of evolution refers to random mutations of the genotype, that have macro effects on the phenotype, some of which are naturally selected for when they confer a reproductive advantage. How, other than through sheer willfulness, can you infer that this process lends randomness to “thoughts and actions”? Again, you seem to misunderstand the role of randomness both in evolutionary theory and at the level of quantum physics.

Do you really wish to view your writing as based on randomness? In order to avoid that conclusion you would have to subscribe to the related evo-theory known as “emergence,” by which the property of intelligence emerges at a certain threshold of creaturely development.

Another false dichotomy, because your invocation of “randomness” is irrelevant to the macro nature of resultant living creatures that derive from those random processes at the molecular level. On the other hand, such randomness, when honed through the power of natural selection, does lead the complexity that allows McKnight to exhibit the intelligence that allows him to write articles.

We immediately run into two problems here. For one, the theory of emergence is utterly nonempirical. It furnishes no predictions and cannot be tested.

Which is not a problem, because you’re the only on saying it’s necessary.

We cannot show in the fossil record (presuming that Darwinian evolution is real) when intelligence “emerged” from nonintelligence. And we currently are unable to look at any nonintelligent object or species and predict on evolutionary terms when that object or species, or others like them, may give rise to “emergent” intelligence down the road. Therefore by your standards the theory of emergence is unscientific and should not be taken seriously, or should be viewed as religion or metaphysics, to whatever degree one might take that seriously. Therefore, in turn, in order to uphold your own thoughts and actions as non-random, you will have to view your personhood from a religious point of view.

Nonsense overload here. Emergence is a lot more than a theory about the appearance of intelligence. It deals with (in the strong case) the emergence of properties of systems that cannot be ascribed to the individual components of that system. Many such systems are known, both in the natural world and in human endeavors. Emergence can be applied convincingly, though not definitively, to the advent of intelligence from the complexity of the neural network of the brain. No-one would claim that emergence is a pseudo-science along the lines of ID, though that accusation might be leveled at some of its applications. In any case, there is no argument for saying that human thoughts need a religious (not a designer?) explanation. Science doesn’t work by turning to God when phenomena are hard to explain. That’s the province of the religious.

But a second problem is that if one subscribes to the theory of emergence, one also then undercuts his own case against ID theory. ID theory simply argues that we can identify patterns of intelligence. Emergence theory likewise presupposes that we are able to

differentiate between intelligence and nonintelligence, so as to know when an entity is, indeed, “emergent.”

Emergence makes no such presupposition. Emergent properties may or may not be regarded as “intelligent”. The canonical example of the former is the emergence of human (and other animal) intelligence from the complexity of the brain. Most other emergent characteristics, like the hexagonal pattern of beehive cells or flocking/swarming behavior would certainly not be regarded as intelligent. Intelligence is a label we apply to certain kinds of emergent behavior; it has nothing to do with emergence itself.

Therefore the emergent theorist implicitly agrees with the ID theorist that intelligence is discernible but if intelligence is discernible, then we have a rational basis for entertaining the very question ID asks: Can we see signs of intelligence in the natural history and phenomena of the cosmos, especially in biological entities? Refute that line of reasoning, if you can.

The falsity of your first statement refutes the line of reasoning. In any case, as I stated previously, if a robust, workable definition of intelligence (or more precisely, evidence of intelligent action) could be derived, no scientist would balk at applying to any number of natural systems. So far, no such definition seems to be available, or indeed necessary.

I should add that the best known proponent of ID theory, William Dembski, has argued that

there is no merit to Eugenie Scott’s claim that intelligent design is untestable or hasn’t put forward any “testable models.” Intelligent design’s claims about specified and irreducible complexity are in close contact with the data of biology and open to refutation as well as confirmation. What’s more, as a framework for doing science intelligent design is more robust and sensitive to the possibilities that nature might actually throw our way than Darwinism, which must view everything through the lens of chance and necessity and take a reductive approach to all signs of teleology in nature.²

Refute that line of reasoning, if you can.

As discussed previously, insofar as IC has made any refutable claims, they have been refuted. Even in the face of difficulties of tracing the evolution of, say, bacterial flagella (not much fossil record for bacteria), very plausible evolutionary routes to it have been proposed. ICs whole argument is flawed, for the simple reason that “incomplete” systems don’t have to perform the same function as the “final” one we see today. Dembski can *claim* what he likes about the robustness and sensitivity of ID; the proof is in the pudding. The theory has been found wanting in almost every area in which it ventures an opinion, and its lack of explanatory or predictive power is ample indicated by the dearth of papers that apply it, even from the DI.

I agree that “science” and “religion” are two different things. What I submit, however, is that they need each other. By that I mean that science cannot proceed without certain nonempirical assumptions about the way the world works.

It seems to be proceeding along quite nicely so far. "Challenging" is not the same as "Impossible". It's antithetical to science to throw up your arms and say, "OK, God did it." That's the stance that ID, under the covers, takes. It's also interesting that after all your railing about ID not implying a supernatural creator, you're suddenly comparing science and religion. (If you're saying that science currently *does* proceed with the help of metaphysical assumptions, that stems purely from your flawed definition of science.)

Those nonempirical assumptions may seem reasonable to us, but they are, nevertheless, nonempirical, nonscientific, metaphysical. Thus we are faced with a worldview battle: a conflict between different metaphysics. Tell me: which metaphysic is preferable, naturalism or God? And on what basis can you defend your answer, since it cannot be a scientific basis?

False dichotomy. Science is only non-empirical according to you. Trying to argue that naturalism is metaphysical is just like saying atheism is a religion: nice try, but you're fooling no-one.

As to the construction of *Expelled* itself, you write that "Stein interviews well-known atheist biologists such as Richard Dawkins and P.Z. Myers who were deceived about the purpose of the film in an attempt to dupe people into believing that Darwinism leads to atheism."

For the sake of discussion, let's suppose you're right, that those individuals were "deceived." Question: What's that got to do with how they presented their own beliefs?

Nothing, but the film pointedly avoided interviewing religious evolutionists, like Ken Miller or Francis Collins, because that would have undermined their stupid Darwinism == Atheism trope.

Did they, or did they not, accurately present what they believe about evolution and religion and science?

Within the limits of crafty editing, certainly. It's hard to say whether you're being naive or simply dishonest if you're claiming that documentary filmmakers can't make interview subjects appear to say pretty much whatever they want them to by editing a multi-hour interview into a few sound bites.

How we approach science and religion and the wider culture cannot be reduced to the quality, or lack thereof, of a particular film.

But the honesty, or otherwise, of the religious side *can* be gaged by the honesty, or otherwise, of a film that is being touted a flagship in the battle between ID vs. the rational world view. In this respect, *Expelled* is a massive fail for religion.

For that larger issue, what matters is what beliefs people express, whether they can back up those beliefs, and whether those beliefs can be consistently and beneficially lived out in the everyday.

This seems to be a social or philosophical issue. I'm not sure what the connection is to science, or

even ID.

And instead of lauding ID critics Ken Miller and Francis Collins, you should instead be appalled at their philosophical inconsistency and hypocrisy. They claim to believe in the God of the Bible, yet the Bible teaches that all of us should be able to perceive His handiwork in creation. But these men deny that any such perception which ID theory would exemplify is even possible.

Not quite. They deny that ID is the vehicle through which the handiwork of God is proved, because their scientific training doesn't allow them to accept ID as a valid science. On the other hand, Collins sees the work of God in frozen waterfalls, and Miller believes he's ingesting the *actual body* of Christ every time he takes communion, so I certainly think they're holding up their end on the wacko religious belief side of things. McKnight lauds them because of their scientific honesty in dismissing ID. That they choose to believe in totally off the wall nonsense in the personal sphere is irrelevant to that.

What's more, standard evo-theory insists on the very randomness of the phenomenon, which randomness logically excludes a Designer.

Not really. In conjunction with natural selection, it simply makes the designer unnecessary. This is a bit different from "logically excluding" him (or her).

Yet in the Judeo-Christian religion God is most definitely a Designer! This makes Miller and Collins hypocrites, not thinkers to be lauded.

They argue that the designer created the materials, processes and forces by which evolution does its job. I would call this extremely misguided, rather than hypocritical, especially since the theory of evolution which, as scientists they are obliged intellectually to accept, says nothing about the origins of life. They can believe in both the divine creation of life *and* the truth of evolutionary theory with no conflict, it seems to me. (Until such time as we have a thorough naturalistic theory of abiogenesis, anyway.)

Sure, it's logically possible for God to have used an evolutionary process to get what He was after but it would not be random. Or at least, it could not be random within the parameters of Judeo-Christianity, to which Miller and Collins claim to subscribe. (And here again I remind you that if evolution really exists and is really random, then it is unpredictable, and if unpredictable, then untestable, so by your own standard it is not amenable to scientific study.)

Yes, but that's because you don't understand the application of random processes in evolution, as I've already shown. Listen, I don't know why you're harping on about Collins and Miller. Using the fact that they believe in the same supreme being as you to discredit their scientific credentials doesn't seem to me to be a great way to go about bolstering your own claims.

But perhaps that doesn't concern you, as long as you can use them to advance your own ideology.

Yes, far be it for a non-Christian to cherry pick. That's the preserve of bible scholars and, well, every other religious person on the planet, isn't it? Again, I don't think any atheist would fail to

take exception Collins' and Miller's religious views, but you haven't shown how that makes them incompetent to judge ID on its (lack of) merits, and given their achievements in the realm of biology, I think you'd be hard pressed to do so.

Regarding Darwinism and Nazism and other "isms," how can you fail to connect the logical dots? Sure, it is not necessary for an evolutionist to be either an atheist or a Nazi but what would we expect an atheist or a Nazi to be, if not evolutionary?

Well, he could be a Christian, I guess, like Hitler. In case you missed it, the objection is that the impression the film gave was that the Holocaust happened *because* of Darwinism. Some people find the claim that the ultimate terrible expression of millennia of anti-Semitism should be laid at the feet of the man who first convincingly stated a theory of the evolution of life is just a tad disingenuous.

Evolutionism does not logically demand Nazism and atheism but it makes them logically justifiable.

Unfortunately for creationists, murderous tyrants' espousal of certain scientific a theory to justify their atrocious crimes doesn't *actually* disprove the theory, or indeed inform the theory in any way at all. (That's even assuming Hitler did in fact misuse evolution in the way the film claims.)

If evolution is real, then it is only reasonable to infer that there would be certain human subgroups more advanced than others.

Define "advanced". If you mean "have a greater fitness to their environment", then yes. If you mean some other value-based definition of "advanced", then evolution has nothing to say about that.

An evolutionist as an individual can certainly refuse to be racist, but that doesn't change the fact that evotheory logically and naturally supports racism as well as atheism.

Evolutionary theory has nothing to say about racism, unless it can be shown that a racist individual or group has some reproductive advantage over non-racists. It doesn't seem clear to me that that would be true. But what *astonishes* me is this continued evolutionist confusion between what the theory *explains* versus what it allegedly *causes*. If evolution can explain altruism or selfishness or murderous racism, that doesn't mean you get to blame the *theory* of evolution for those traits, any more than you get to blame the guy whom the theory was named after. It's almost childish in its transparency as a blame-passing ploy.

Within atheism, specifically, if there is no Creator to whom we're accountable, then why shouldn't we destroy the lives of others if that allows us to get what we want?

Come on, you're surely not dragging out these tired old arguments? (And I note we've suddenly gone from evolution to atheism.) Though, of course, ironically, evolution provides the answer. It's because if people behaved like that, the life expectancy of the members of such a group would plummet, which would be a powerful selection force against the behavior. It's the same reason predators only hunt when they're hungry. Indiscriminately wiping out all the prey in sight whether they need to eat or not would lead to deleterious results.

A strictly material universe with no One In Charge provides us with no grounds for

deriving an “ought” from an “is.”

Except in the face of evolutionary pressure. We've evolved strategies to maximize the reproductive success given the social groups we live in. Of course, in modern times, intelligence had distorted that evolutionary outcome, but it's still there. It's actually quite sad to see how *desperate* the religious are to come up with a supernatural explanation for the way we are.

Atheism is incapable of telling us how we “ought” to live, how we “ought” to treat one another. And since atheists reject a Creator, they have no alternative but to subscribe to some form of evo-theory. If evolution exists and is strictly natural and random, then it logically supports an amoral way of living; if lends justification to those wishing to oppress and destroy others.

Clearly you know very little about evolution and group selection. How can you even be having this argument when you're so ill-equipped to participate in it? Why is it so hard for you to accept altruism, love, kindness and all those good things as emergent behaviors, the wonderful flowering of the complexity of the human mind pollinated with the complexities of human societies, crafted by natural selection? Further, you speak of atheism as a competitor to religion for a source of moral values. This is yet another of your false dichotomies. A (secular) humanist philosophy can easily replace a Christian one, with no ill effects and many benefits. You also conflate (deliberate I suspect) “amoral” and “immoral”. Yes, atheism is amoral in that it doesn't impose a moral framework, but then why should it? It's concerned with the absence of a supernatural entity affecting the universe and our lives. It doesn't preclude any secular system of morals, and certainly doesn't imply an *immoral* world view.

“Nowhere does Stein mention the centuries of anti-Semitism before Darwin,” you say “in fact, Expelled all but ignores anti-Semitism as a reason for the Holocaust.” What you are so conveniently forgetting or ignoring is that evolutionism justifies antisemitism because, more broadly, evolutionism justifies racism.

See previously. Evolution “justifies” no such thing. Evolution (the fact) may explain partially or completely the human behaviors and traits that *lead* to racism etc, but that doesn't mean you get to blame evolution (the theory) for the occurrence of those things. You can blame its exponents, if you like, but their espousal of the theory doesn't make the theory itself culpable. A theory can't heard thousands of people into ovens. That takes other people.

Conversely, if the God of the Bible exists, then He has made all “races” equal (and in fact only perceives one “race,” the human race) and we have no right to mistreat each other over reasons of ethnicity.

Which given the rampant racism of Christian Identity proponents is rather ironic, isn't it?

Biblical theism, then, logically justifies egalitarianism. But while a naturalistic thinker may indeed be anti-racist, he cannot logically justify his egalitarianism on the basis of his own worldview, nor have a basis for condemning the racism of others. The only way we can condemn racism is by appeal to a Higher Standard that makes all peoples equal.

Pathetic. It seems you really did start to scrape the barrel as you got towards the end of this. I have an existence proof for not needing to appeal to a deity when condemning racism, and it's

called "me". I can justify it very well, thank you, purely in terms of the social advantages of harmonious living, and basic humanity. I don't need a creator handing down rules for living when those rules can be explained very nicely through the evolution of complex social groups. In the same way, I can accept that humans, in certain situations, will kick the shit out of each other. What Commandment was that again?

Naturalistic evolution does not provide that standard, Mr. McKnight. (And this is the type of consideration, a consideration of moral "oughts" in life, that prompts us to be more interdisciplinary in our approach to science to consider other sources of knowledge, such as our own conscience.)

You are clearly making these statements on blind faith, not from any rational investigation of social systems and large-scale evolution. Where did the chimpanzee get his altruism from? Was that handed down from a Monkey Moses, or do you think it was possibly an evolved trait?

You also overlook the fact that evolutionism, as well as racism, likewise preceded Darwin. Many ancient philosophers subscribed to a form of evolutionism, and, more broadly, to naturalism. For instance, while the Bible has a point of agreement with pagan cosmogonies on the matter of a watery matrix at or just after the Beginning (see Gen. 1:2), many pagans in different cultures held that the watery matrix was the Beginning, was not preceded by, or created by, a transcendent God. Instead, the "gods" themselves emerged from this water-world and personified various forces of nature, giving rise to other features of the world and to other "gods." That is pagan, ancient naturalism. It is the same naturalism underlying Darwinian thinking the idea that Nature is "all," the "Ultimate," the bottom-line explanation for all that exists.

Haha. Sorry, I'm not sure what this is trying to prove. I just think that, 'That is pagan, ancient naturalism. It is the same naturalism underlying Darwinian thinking the idea that Nature is "all," the "Ultimate," the bottom-line explanation for all that exists.' is hilarious. I wasn't aware that Darwin spent the 500 pages of *The Origin* talking about the watery matrix.

Evolutionary scientists insist on naturalism as the controlling paradigm for scientific theorizing. Tell me, Mr. McKnight, what empirical science justifies that paradigm in the first place?

Different paragraph, same question. Science is its *own* justification. It gets results. It gets the results that gives us the pill to cure the headache we get from reading your nonsense. It gets the results that take us to the moon and wipes out whole diseases. It gets the results that reveal a universe infinitely more wondrous than that imagined by the primitive superstitious bronze-age wanderers who came up with your blinkered conception of existence.

ID theory is not an innately religious theory.

It was conceived as such, and is revealed to be such more and more as time goes on.

Tell me, what is religious about it? You haven't proved your point. How is a "higher intelligence" inherently religious?

It inherently religious in that it's a synonym (or maybe a pseudonym) for "The Christian Deity".

Sure, if

God is there, He's a higher intelligence but it does not logically follow that all higher intelligences equal God, or that all designers equal God. Tell me why the bare term "higher intelligence" or "intelligent designer" logically necessitates a supernatural being. It simply does not; and if you cannot or will not see that, then you're ideologically blinded.

As I've mentioned, you're either woefully misinformed about the true intent of ID, or you're a shameless shill who, against all the information we now have to the contrary, insists on pretending that ID != Creationism.

If you can back yourself up, Mr. McKnight, then do so. Of course, if your only interest is to propagate your preferred ideology, then how are you any different from what you perceive to be the deceptive propagandists behind Expelled?

Science roolz!

Regards,
A.J. Derksen