

GUEST COLUMN

The ‘mysterious’ has a place in science

By **JAMES HANAK**
Guest Columnist

Kathleen Parker, writing for the Orland Sentinel was printed in the Daily Local, August 6 as saying, “if Creationists are right and Genesis is to be taken literally, I’d bet my immortal soul that God is shaking his head right now thinking, “I never shoulda created the apple.” With this statement, she suggests that God (if He exists) is responsible for the current contentious debate over naturalism and intelligent design.

The assertion of the naturalist is that the discussion of intelligent design has no place in a science class. Why? Because it begins with an assumption that can not be proved. But, so does naturalism. Naturalism is the assumption that the universe we observe has always been here and has always acted in ways we can observe.

Yet, we know that we live in an expanding universe. Extrapolate backwards an expanding universe and we end up with a big bang theory. A thinking mind asks the question, “What happened before the ‘big bang?’” The naturalist would say we can not know. The inquisitive mind suggests that perhaps there might have been a force or intelligence behind the “big bang.” The naturalist would say that conclusion is “religion” and thus has no place in the discussion of science. The inquisitive mind says that it takes just as much faith (religion) to believe that the ‘big bang’ came out of nowhere as to believe in an intelligent designer that is not bound by the laws of nature.

This is not the only area where “religion” and “science” overlap. Albert Einstein, considered by some to be an atheist, stated, “The most beautiful and deepest experience a man can have is the sense of the mysterious. *It is the underlying principle of religion as well as all serious endeavor in art and science.* He who never had this experience seems to me, if not dead, then at least blind. (Denis Brian, *Einstein, A Life*, New York, 1996, p.128)

The “mysterious” is the influence that should drive us to consider if any and all our assumptions are correct. A well respected physics teacher once told me that in order to understand quantum physics, I must set aside all that I had learned about physics to that point. To him, setting aside

pre-conditioned assumptions and developing a “sense of the mysterious” was a positive thing in scientific thinking.

Even the Pennsylvania Academic Standards suggest that an effort to explore the “mysterious” is an admirable goal. The Standards for 10th and 12 grades, requires students to “analyze the theory of evolution.” It calls for students to “analyze data from fossil records, similarities in anatomy and physiology, embryological studies and DNA studies that are relevant to the theory of evolution.”

Many scientists have written on these issues suggesting that the physical evidence points to an intelligence designer – not a mindless process that can be observed only in the present.

One such writer, Lehigh professor, Mike Behe, received his Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of Pennsylvania and in 1978 wrote, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*.

He states: “The universe was set up for life with some sort of plan... It seems clear to me from biochemistry that genetic codes were deliberately designed. Many scientists ultimately want to rule out intelligent design because they view it as non-scientific. They view it as philosophical or spiritual, but I disagree with that. In my thinking, ID goes out and looks at nature. It

looks at what we have learned about nature and asks the question: what is the best way to explain what we have found in the nature?”

Perhaps the real problem with this debate is the fear that discussion of intelligent design will lead to the teaching of the “myths” of the Bible in public schools. If this did happen, at least Ms. Kathleen Parker might learn that there was no mention of an apple tree in the book of Genesis!

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