

Classical Scientific Method Does not Mean Atheism

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Editor:

John Baumgardner's response to my letter attributes statements to me that I did not make. I was advocating classical scientific method as the best approach to the solution of problems. I did not advocate or even mention atheism. I did not advocate any control over religious expression. Religion is "revealed": The body of knowledge in science is developed by application of a specific logical process. The two operate in different spheres. Science and atheism are two different things. Trouble comes when a person attempts selectively to accept or deny scientific observations primarily on the basis of religious beliefs. By definition, a "scientist" is a person who uses scientific method. Like Caesar's wife, a scientist must be above suspicion. The more "renowned" the scientist, the more careful he should be.

I was accused of proposing atheism as official policy for the laboratory. I was accused of advocating control over free religious expression. Those are serious accusations. I did neither.

The Greeks classified logical fallacies over two thousand years ago, and many fallacies appear in attempts to circumvent honest application of scientific method on any topic. Baumgardner's accusations against me are a good example of an argument ad hominum, with which you attack a person rather than logic (common in politics). Invocation of great theist scientists seems to have as its unstated conclusion that "therefore, creationism is true." True science should not use hidden premises; however, the type of argument used involves the non sequitur fallacy (argumentative leap). The most common fallacy I see used is "begging the question": The argument assumes as true what it needs to prove.

Hundreds of years of observations and measurements by thousands of scientists have provided the basis for the scientific theory of evolution. Has all of that been a conspiracy? Back to begging the question, can anyone prove

that "science has falsified evolution" without first accepting the premise that God created everything, most things, some things, or (fill in the blanks)? In science you state your hypotheses and premises, and I have yet to see all of the creationist premises and/or hypotheses clearly stated.

Incidentally, I hated to use the word "theory." Its use by creationists illustrates another fallacy, the fallacy of equivocation. This involves the deliberate use of the same word or phrase in more than one sense. A scientific theory is more solidly established than a hypothesis. The theory of evolution has seen an amazing process of accretion of facts since it was first proposed, and it has proved to have predictive value.

The fallacy of composition has often been used in attempts to disprove evolution. It involves the suggestion of some doubt and the application of that doubt to the attempted destruction of an entire body of knowledge. Each doubt must be critically analyzed, and I do not see that being done. Is it necessary to disprove anything to prove God? Do warped logic and outright lies support God?

I admit that I have not read Behe's book. I have, however, had a son who worked in Melvin Calvin's laboratory at Berkeley, and I have read many of Calvin's works. Calvin wrote Chemical Evolution, and he got a Nobel Prize. I have not seen any creationist work of similar stature. Perhaps a corporate philosophy that allows a lack of scientific rigor explains the lack of Nobel Prizes at Los Alamos.

I would have to see some scientific analysis of creationists' claims, made by creationists with rigorous methods, before I organized a symposium with them. I do not enjoy illogical polemics and vague claims. With or without scientific method, I suggest most strongly that John Baumgardner watch very closely what he says or writes about any scientist

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