

Michael Shermer's book *Why Darwin Matters* is his attempt to definitively prove that the theory of evolution is the final arbiter of what is actual truth. Shermer makes several what I would consider to be ad hominem attacks on intelligent design and seeks to link it with the notion of Biblical Creationism as well as far right Christianity, thereby playing off the stereotypes of these groups. Shermer appears to be advocating that if one really looks at the theory of evolution in a rational and logical manner, he will have no choice but to adopt its truth. However, as one will soon realize, Shermer's work is full of many of the same problematic positions, which critics have previously pointed out, including naturalism and many assumptions concerning evolution's ability to explain the origin of our world, universe, man, and the metaphysical reason for our existence. The following is a critique of Shermer's positions taken in this work.

The last sentence of *Why Darwin Matters* states, "Science matters because it is the preeminent story of our age, an epic saga about who we are, where we came from, and where we are going."¹ Shermer's position here says a great deal about his view of science as well as what he believes about questions of faith and the nature of God. Shermer believes that science via evolution is the great creator and arbiter of actual truth. Naturalism is defined as follows:

Nature is all there is-is the virtually unquestioned assumption that underlies not only natural science but intellectual work of all kinds. If naturalism is true, then humankind created God-not the other way around. In that case, rationality requires that we recognize the creator as the imaginary being he always has been, and that we rely on things that are real such as ourselves and the material world of nature. Reliance on the guidance of an imaginary supernatural being is called superstition.²

¹ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 161.

² Phillip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 7-8.

Gary Habermas defines naturalism in the following manner,

The naturalistic paradigm often assumes that God does not exist, that the universe and life within it are ultimately due to chance, and that miracles cannot occur.³

Habermas goes on to point out that those who believe in naturalism rule supernaturalism out prior to completing any investigation.⁴ The positions taken by Shermer throughout this book indicate that he subscribes to the theory of naturalism. Although Shermer's belief in naturalism is obvious throughout the book, a review of a couple of his positions and various quotations are sufficient to conclusively prove this point. Shermer advocates what he calls the Separate-World Model between science and religion. The model advocates that,

Since the scientific revolution, however, science has taken over the job of explaining the natural world, making obsolete ancient religious sagas of origins and creation. Yet religion thrives in the modern age because it still serves a useful purpose as an institution for social cohesiveness and as a guide to finding personal meaning and spirituality...⁵

Shermer also advocates that belief in God is an issue of faith, but science deals with factual, provable evidence.⁶ On page 124 of his book, Shermer even uses the term naturalism to draw a distinction between science and religion. Clearly, Shermer is a committed naturalist who sees God as nothing more than an imaginary entity. The problem with his commitment to this

³ Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 63.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 121.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

philosophy is that the philosophy has totally invaded the sciences and greatly affects scientific findings⁷.

The inherent naturalism in evolutionary theory goes all the way back to Darwin himself. On page 117 of his book Shermer actually details Darwin's loss of faith due to what he saw as evil in nature. Because Darwin saw in nature what he believed was evil, he lost his belief in God.⁸ Darwin's loss of faith continued as he observed the suffering of his fellow man and eventually experienced the death of his daughter.⁹ At that point, Darwin lost all belief in the existence of the God.¹⁰ Darwin's struggle was not unlike the struggle of many Christians today who grapple with the notion of why God allows evil, pain, and suffering in this world. The notion of theodicy is still a big theological issue today. Darwin's issues with evil and suffering were theological issues. Theological issues and questions require theological answers. Darwin's theological answer was framed in the following manner,

It appears to me (whether rightly or wrongly) that direct arguments against Christianity and theism produce hardly any effect on the public; and freedom of thought is best promoted by the gradual illumination of men's minds which follow(s) from the advance of science. It has, therefore, been always my object to avoid writing on religion, and I have confined myself to science...I may, however, have been unduly biased by the pain which it would give some members of my family if I aided in any way direct attacks on religion.¹¹

From this quotation, it appears to me that Darwin gave up his belief in a traditional God and for him, science, in the form of evolution, took the place of God. Evolutionist Michael Ruse points

⁷ Howard Van Till and Phillip E. Johnson, "God and Evolution: An Exchange" First Things, January 1993. Secured from <http://www.drjbloom.com> for class CSAP 629 in scientific apologetics.

⁸ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 117.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

out that modern evolution followed in the footsteps of Darwin and is a modern day religion.¹²

Ruse stresses the following,

Evolution is promoted by its practitioners as more than science. Evolution is promulgated as an ideology, a secular religion—a full-fledged alternative to Christianity, with meaning and morality...the literalists are absolutely right. Evolution is a religion. This was true of evolution in the beginning, and it is true of evolution still today...Evolution therefore came into being as a kind of secular ideology, an explicit substitute for Christianity. It stressed laws against miracles and, by analogy, it promoted progress against providence.¹³

Shermer's position, in my view, confirms Ruse's point. One portion of Shermer's book beginning on page 129 is called, "Evolution Makes for Good Theology." Shermer advocates that "evolution explains family values and social harmony."¹⁴ He continues that these values evolved in us to promote our survival, and religion simply placed an emphasis on these types of values.¹⁵ Shermer also states that "evolution also explains evil, original sin, and the Christian model of human nature."¹⁶ He claims that our evolution gave us our good and evil sides depending on what was needed at a particular time and/or place, thus we need laws to deal with this part of our "evolved nature."¹⁷ Shermer advocates that evolution is the sole cause for morality and that religious moral codes came about as a result of such evolution.¹⁸ Shermer continues that all "moral emotions such as guilt and shame, pride and altruism" also resulted from evolution for

¹² "How Evolution Became a Religion," National Post. 13 May 2000. Secured from <http://www.drjbloom.com> for class CSAP 629 in scientific apologetics.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 130.

¹⁵ Ibid., 130.

¹⁶ Ibid., 131.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

the purposes of “social control and group cohesion”.¹⁹ He also maintains that all other forms of morality, such as loving your neighbor and not committing adultery, are also the result of evolution, simply promoting group harmony and providing a way for males to ensure their genes are passed on.²⁰ Clearly, Shermer sees all morality as nothing more than a result of evolution. In essence, evolution has become Shermer’s creator and guide to all morality. He advocates that religion simply picked up on these useful evolutionary based codes of behavior, deemed them to be useful, and thus made them into religious moral codes.²¹ Like Darwin before him, Shermer’s religion is naturalism. This is especially rich when one considers that Shermer subscribes to what is known as the Separate World Model between religion and science, which seeks to keep religion and science in totally separate spheres.²² However, he has allowed naturalism to become his God and as mentioned in footnote 7 above, such religious philosophy is noticeably present throughout the sciences. So he has violated his own Separate World Model.

Shermer presents what he deems to be the facts of evolution in chapter 1 of his book. It is here that Shermer demonstrates rather gaping inconsistencies in his logic and positions. Shermer contends that “evolution is a historical science.”²³ Throughout the chapter he then lays out the basic beliefs of evolution, such as natural selection and common descent with small changes over time. He then argues that one can prove evolutionary theory by what he terms a “convergence of evidence.”²⁴ He explains that evolution is not just based on one field of science, but is confirmed by many findings across all the scientific fields.²⁵ He then attempts to take this position and use it to challenge creationists who challenge the fossil record for its lack of fossilized transitional

¹⁹ Ibid., 132.

²⁰ Ibid., 133-135.

²¹ Ibid., 136.

²² Ibid., 120-121

²³ Ibid., 2.

²⁴ Ibid., 12.

²⁵ Ibid., 13.

species.²⁶ Rather than deal with the objections of those who raise them, he simply creates a new way to deflect the objections. His position seems to advocate that raising objections in only one area that supports the theory is not enough. He is not willing to consider that there might be a problem with the theory unless the objector knocks down all evidence across all fields of science. In my mind this certainly suggests that Shermer is more interested in protecting the theory at all costs. Shermer continues in this vein by complaining that creationists have jumped on evolution because supporters have not been able to replicate the tenets of evolutionary theory in the lab.²⁷ Shermer then admits that evolution cannot be replicated in the lab.²⁸ However, he argue that the theory is still viable and true because science uses the

hypothetico-deductive method, in which one forms a hypothesis based on existing data, deduces a prediction from the hypothesis, then tests the prediction against further data.²⁹

This argument is very similar to the convergence theory he advocated earlier in the chapter. He essentially argues that even though evolution cannot be replicated in the laboratory, one can take data, make a prediction based upon that data, and then test that against additional data. He asserts that this method is perfectly acceptable for supporting the theory of evolution.³⁰ The problem with this position is that Shermer is guilty of applying a double standard. One of his major objections against the existence of God is that there is no way to “test the claim and show that it is false.”³¹ Yet when creationists require the standard be applied to evolution, Shermer changes the standard. Duane Gish advocates that there are certain standards that must be upheld for a theory to be considered science. He states,

²⁶ Ibid., 13.

²⁷ Ibid., 13.

²⁸ Ibid., 22.

²⁹ Ibid., 21.

³⁰ Ibid., 22.

³¹ Ibid., 121.

What criteria must be met for a theory to be considered as scientific in the usually accepted sense? George Gaylord Simpson has stated that, It is inherent in any definition of science that statements that cannot be checked by observation are not really about anything...or at the very least, they are not science. A definition of science given by the Oxford Dictionary is a branch of study which is concerned either with a connected body of demonstrated truths or with observed facts systematically classified and more or less colligated by being brought under general laws, and which includes trustworthy methods for the discovery of new truth within its own domain. Thus for a theory to qualify as a scientific theory, it must be supported by events, processes, or properties which can be observed, and the theory must be useful in predicting the outcome of future natural phenomena or laboratory experiments. An additional limitation usually imposed is that the theory must be capable of falsification. That is, it must be possible to conceive some experiment the failure of which would disprove the theory. It is on the basis of such criteria that most evolutionists insist that creation be refused consideration as a possible explanation for origins. Creation has not been witnessed by human observers, it cannot be test experimentally, and as a theory it is nonfalsifiable. The general theory also fails to meet these criteria...No one, as a matter of fact, has even observed the origin of a species by naturally occurring processes. Evolution has been postulated, but it has never been observed.³²

Shermer is clearly trying to argue both sides of the issue when it suits his purpose. When it comes to evolution, deductive extrapolations are fine even though they do not comply with Gish's position, but when it comes to creationism the same deductive extrapolations are not allowed, and a higher burden of proof is placed on any non-naturalistic explanations.

In his chapter on evolutionary facts, Shermer attempts to explain the gaps in the fossil record, which is one of the main areas in which the theory is attacked. He uses the notion of punctuated equilibrium to explain the gaps.³³ The theory advocates the following,

Species are so static and enduring that they leave plenty of fossils in the strata while they are in their stable state (equilibrium). The change from one species to another, however, happens relatively quickly on a geological time scale, and in these smaller, geographically isolated population groups (punctuated). In fact, species change happens so rapidly that few transitional carcasses created fossils to record the change...breaks in the fossil record are real; they express the way in which evolution occurs, not the fragments of an imperfect record. Of course the small group will also be reproducing,

³² Duane Gish. "Evolution-A Philosophy, Not A Science"

³³ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 11.

following the geometric increases that are observed in all species and will eventually form a relatively large population of individuals that retain their phenotype for a considerable time-and leave behind many well preserved fossils. Millions of years later this process results in a fossil record that records mostly the equilibrium. The punctuation is left in the blanks.³⁴

While Shermer simply states this new theory, he does nothing to deal with the questions that still exist in the records even with the positing of this theory. Jonathan Wells points out that this explosion in the Cambrian period is not what Darwin's theory advocated.³⁵ He advocated slow changes from a "common ancestor" which eventually leads to "major differences" and different species.³⁶ Additionally, Shermer does not define what the theory means by a relatively quick geological time scale. Phillip Johnson outlines the fact that in the Big Horn basin in Wyoming there is a "continuous local record of fossil deposits for about 5 million years," and there is no evidence of any "transition from one species to another."³⁷ Is a continuous record for 5 million not sufficient for some type of transitional evidence to be found?

Shermer also posits a theory as to why people do not accept Darwin's theory. He lists five basic reasons for people to reject the theory: (1). "A general resistance to science" (2). "Belief that evolution is a threat to specific religious tenets" (3). "The fear that evolution degrades our humanity" (4). "The equation of evolution with ethical nihilism and moral degeneration" and (5). "The fear that evolutionary theory implies we have a fixed human nature."³⁸ Although I believe one could make a good philosophical argument to counter Shermer's above referenced philosophical positions, the one relevant, glaring issue for this paper that he fails to deal with is that there are many scientists who are skeptical about evolutionary

³⁴ Ibid., 11.

³⁵ Lee Strobel. *The Case For A Creator*. (Michigan: Zondervan 2004), 43.

³⁶ Ibid., 43.

³⁷ Phillip E. Johnson. *Darwin On Trial*. (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 51.

³⁸ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 30-31.

theory.³⁹ Many scientists are not objecting for the reasons Shermer cited, they object to the theory because it has evidence problems that certainly raise questions about its soundness.

Several scientists responded in the following manner,

We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life.⁴⁰

Additionally, according to Lee Strobel, after a 2001 PBS program on evolution, several scientists wrote a “151 page critique” claiming the program,

failed to present accurately and fairly the scientific problems with the evidence for Darwinian evolution and even systematically ignored disagreements among evolutionary biologists themselves.⁴¹

After failing to acknowledge that there are scientists who have problems with the theory of evolution based upon evidence problems, Shermer then goes forward with his theory of why people believe in God. Although he does not come out and say it, in my mind his question is really why do people believe in God instead of evolution? Shermer made a list of reasons why people so believe, and the third reason on his list was lower levels of education.⁴² In the next paragraph, he makes the following statement,

As people become older and more educated, they encounter other belief systems that lead them to see the connection between various personal and social influences and religious beliefs.⁴³

³⁹ Lee Strobel. *The Case For A Creator*. (Michigan: Zondervan 2004), 31-32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴² Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 36.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 36.

This struck me as Shermer saying that as people get older and more educated they get over their religion. It also appears that his findings and his conclusion indicate David Hume's influence on his thinking. Almost every source I have read included the topic of naturalism and makes some reference to David Hume's influence on science. There is no doubt that Shermer is influenced by Hume because he uses Hume's Maxim to lay the foundation for his chapter on debating intelligent design.⁴⁴ Yet when one examines Hume's writings concerning miracles, one quickly finds a parallel between Shermer's findings about lower levels of education and belief in God and Hume's views about those who believe in miracles. In Part II of his *Of Miracles*, Hume states

...that there never was a miraculous event established on so full an evidence...it forms as strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations, that they are observed chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous nations; or if a civilized people has ever given admission to any of them, that people will be found to have received them from ignorant and barbarous ancestors...people at a distance who are weak enough to think the matter at all worth enquiry, have no opportunity of receiving better information...the advantages are so great, of starting an imposture among an ignorant people, that, even though the delusion should be too gross to impose on the generality of them...it has a much better chance for succeeding in remote countries, than if the first scene had been laid in a city renowned for arts and knowledge⁴⁵

The similarities between Shermer and Hume in this regard are striking. When one looks at Shermer in light of the above referenced quotations, it is clear that the major inference of his positions indicate that only uneducated, ignorant people can believe in a creationism rather than evolution. However once they really become educated, and by "educated" he means educated in evolutionary theory, they will see such beliefs as false and adopt the more rational position of evolution. However, his position is simply incorrect because it is not just the uneducated who believe in creationism rather than evolution, but additionally many highly educated scientists,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 48-49.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 36-37.

who may not necessarily believe in creationism, have pointed out problems with evolution.⁴⁶ So given these cited findings, Shermer's inference about the uneducated being the major catalyst of creationism and thus the major opponents of evolution does not appear to hold water.

Additionally, these findings seem to indicate that there appear to be many people, some who may be creationists and some who may not, that certainly seem to have a problem with the theory.

Next Shermer goes after the Intelligent Design movement. His attack is scattered throughout his work. However his general position throughout his work is that, "intelligent design creationists have no science to speak of."⁴⁷ One of the tactics that Shermer uses is to try to link intelligent design with creationism. A review of the Discovery Institute's website concerning intelligent design and creation indicates the following,

Is intelligent design theory the same as creationism? No. Intelligent design theory is simply an effort to empirically detect whether the "apparent design" in nature acknowledged by virtually all biologists is genuine design (the product of an intelligent cause) or is simply the product of an undirected process such as natural selection acting on random variations. Creationism is focused on defending a literal reading of the Genesis account, usually including the creation of the earth by the Biblical God a few thousand years ago. Unlike creationism, the scientific theory of intelligent design is agnostic regarding the source of design and has no commitment to defending Genesis, the Bible or any other sacred text. Honest critics of intelligent design acknowledge the difference between intelligent design and creationism. University of Wisconsin historian of science Ronald Numbers is critical of intelligent design, yet according to the Associated Press, he "agrees the creationist label is inaccurate when it comes to the ID [intelligent design] movement." Why, then, do some Darwinists keep trying to conflate intelligent design with creationism? According to Dr. Numbers, it is because they think such claims are "the easiest way to discredit intelligent design." In other words, the charge that intelligent design is "creationism" is a rhetorical strategy on the part of Darwinists who wish to delegitimize design theory without actually addressing the merits of its case.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Lee Strobel. *The Case For A Creator*. (Michigan: Zondervan 2004), 31

⁴⁷ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 46.

⁴⁸ Discovery Institute, *Top Questions*, available from website

<http://www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php>. accessed on 11/26/2007

It appears Shermer adopted the same tactic as other supporters of Darwinist theory. Intelligent Design is not creationism. Additionally, those who support the theory of intelligent design advocate the following position,

The theory of intelligent design holds that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection⁴⁹

This position clearly outlines what intelligent design believes about the universe. Shermer attempts to make intelligent design an attack on science. He accuses the intelligent design movement of losing the debate with the scientific community and thus simply attempting to have the government force its agenda onto the science establishment and into science curriculum.⁵⁰

Phillip Johnson points out that this type of attack is common for those for hard core evolutionists. He states,

If a genuine public debate on this subject were to occur, the shaky premises of blind watchmaker evolution would get a lot of unwanted attention. The debate is not likely to occur, though, because the main line argument against intelligent design in biology is not that the possibility has been impartially considered and refuted, but that intelligent design is inherently ineligible for scientific consideration because it implies the existence of a supernatural entity.⁵¹

When one examines Johnson's position, it is clear that he and other intelligent design advocates are not seeking to run from the debate. On the contrary, his comments specifically argue for having a debate between those who support blind Darwinian evolution and those who support intelligent design. Johnson also explains that intelligent design is not a science stopper and points out that those who argue that it is because the movement leaves open the possibility of the

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 90-91.

⁵¹ Phillip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 90.

supernatural have committed a fallacy of logic.⁵² Johnson advocates that the presence of divine intervention may set some limits on what science can understand, but it in no way makes everything that occurs in our world the result of such intervention, and science would still be needed in such a world.⁵³ Finally, Johnson also points out that scientists should only stop researching in a particular area of inquiry once they are convinced they have done all that they can do with their research in a particular area.⁵⁴ What Johnson and other intelligent design proponents seek is not to stop science, but to make sure that science is not overstating its evidence in an effort to protect devotion to a philosophical theory which has shaded and produced outcome based science.⁵⁵ The intelligent design movement is using science and it is not seeking to stop the advance of science. It is seeking open and honest science which inquires and provides the unbiased truth regardless of where such inquiry may go and what the truth might say.

Shermer continues his attack on the Intelligent Design movement by pointing out that all the people he knows in the Intelligent Design movement are evangelical Christians and that their involvement with the design movement makes it suspect.⁵⁶ What Shermer fails to acknowledge is that if his position is valid, then it cuts both ways, as most in the sciences, including Shermer, subscribe to the theory of evolution and its inherent naturalism. Shermer also seeks to tear down intelligent design by complaining that those believers of intelligent design see the designer as God and actively seek to share and convince non-believers of this fact.⁵⁷ Shermer advocates that

⁵² Ibid., 92.

⁵³ Ibid., 92.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁶ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 107.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 110-111.

intelligent design is disingenuous because it does not openly declare this aspect.⁵⁸ Shermer himself admits that he has discussed with many of his friends in the movement their religious beliefs in this regard. So, just where is the disingenuous cover-up? Additionally, Shermer fails to realize that intelligent design by its own definition seeks to identify design in nature. In my mind that is a scientific exercise. The nature of the designer is a theological discussion, and as such those who support intelligent design have not weakened their position by leaving the hard core science discussion and entering a theological discussion at that point. Of course, they are going to call the designer God. They are Christians. Intelligent design points out the problems with science and if by doing that, a theological discussion comes about, then how does that detract from the problems of science? Shermer then attempts to further bolster his position by asserting that, “no scientists are using Intelligent Design theory.”⁵⁹ What about Hugh Ross, Guillermo Gonzalez, and Duane Gish? Are these folks not scientists? Shermer appears in my humble opinion to be attempting to scare the public with a grand conspiracy theory. Finally, Shermer attempts to tear down the movement by claiming that the Discovery Institute receives money from very religiously conservative individuals and organizations and advocates that the institute is nothing more than a political instrument.⁶⁰ Who is contributing to the institute may be interesting, but it does not in any way detract from the very serious problems of the Darwinian Theory. Shermer also challenges intelligent design scientists to propose “an alternative theory to account for the data.”⁶¹ He also advocates that these scientists should “roll up their sleeves” and go to work in the lab and in the field.⁶² However, when design scholars have attempted to do just that, they have been persecuted for their views by their institutions and their peers as in the case

⁵⁸ Ibid., 110

⁵⁹ Ibid., 111.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 112-113.

⁶¹ Ibid., 86.

⁶² Ibid., 93.

of William Dembski and Guillermo Gonzalez.⁶³ Given such treatment of these and other design scientists, the institute appears to be the only place these scientists can go to have a chance of expressing their views and sharing the evidence which supports those views.

In his attack on intelligent design, Shermer makes several specific scientific claims. Shermer appeals to Hume's Maxim as a reason for rejecting intelligent design which supports the possibility of supernatural design.⁶⁴ He explains the Maxim in the following manner,

The plain consequence is, that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavors to establish... I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle.⁶⁵

Gary Habermas points out that Hume's position is an "a priori rejection."⁶⁶ He goes on to point out several additional problems with Hume's position. Habermas points out that no amount of evidence would be sufficient for Hume to believe in miracles.⁶⁷ He also points out that someone's personal experiences, in this case the experience of a miracle, is irrelevant as it relates to the question of whether miracles happen because one person's experience is not comprehensive enough to generalize to all experience.⁶⁸ Norman Geisler also points this fact out in *In Defense of Miracles*.⁶⁹ Habermas goes on to explain that simply arguing that natural laws are the strongest explanation for how things occur does not answer the question or prove that

⁶³ See article database on Dembski and Gonzalez located at <http://www.discovery.org>. Specifically articles on Dembski written by Lauren Kern of the Houston Press and Tony Carnes for the Christian Science Monitor and specifically articles on Gonzalez written by the Discovery Institute Staff and the Iowa State University President.

⁶⁴ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 49.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁶⁶ Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁹ Norman Geisler, *Miracles in the Modern World*. In *In Defense of Miracles*, eds. Gary Habermas and R. Douglas Geivett. (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 78.

miracles are impossible or improbable.⁷⁰ He also points out that natural laws are not absolutes, but are probabilities of what normally happens in a given situation.⁷¹ Geisler points out that Hume does not “weigh evidence for miracles; rather he adds evidence against them” and asserts the proper manner to look at evidence is to weigh it, not simply add it up and go with the largest number.⁷² Habermas and Geisler provide many additional problems with Hume’s positions in these cited works, but these are sufficient for one to get the point. Hume’s position is not defensible as it relates to Shermer’s use of it to attack Intelligent Design. Shermer’s use of such a position has the same problems as addressed above and certainly indicates that he has the same bias against anything that does not subscribe to his naturalistic view of the world and science. Shermer also advocates that one should rule out the possibility of natural explanations for events prior to attributing any event to the supernatural.⁷³ However, given the above reference to Hume and his positions on miracles as well as Shermer’s endorsement of Hume, would there ever be a time when he would admit to a miracle? It does not appear so. So if this is true, like Hume he will always find a natural answer. Shermer also advocates that the burden of proof is on the intelligent design movement and states the following,

...the burden of proof is on creationists and Intelligent Design advocates to provide extraordinary evidence for their extraordinary claim that a supernatural being of great power and intelligence performed a supernatural act in place of or contrary to natural law.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁷² Norman Geisler, *Miracles in the Modern World*. In *Defense of Miracles*, eds. Gary Habermas and R. Douglas Geivett. (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 78-79.

⁷³ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 49.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

One should notice that Shermer is requiring Intelligent Design to produce “extraordinary evidence” to prove its case. Can evolution meet the same burden? Is evolution based upon extraordinary evidence or simply natural explanations? John Bloom’s position in “Why Isn’t The Evidence Clearer?” appears to shed light on this subject. Professor Bloom states about scientists,

A scientist should be a healthy skeptic and desire controls and careful double-checking of his results, but the extreme skepticism of demanding a “glowing cross in the sky” cannot be considered scientific...Because in science one must place practical limits on his skepticism and recognize that clarity is relative, not absolute.⁷⁵

The burden of proof for Intelligent Design should be reasonable not extraordinary. Doubt should be reasonable doubt. Winfried Corduan points this fact out in his article entitled “Recognizing a Miracle”⁷⁶ I believe Bloom’s position also supports this type of burden too.

Shermer also argues that the universe is not finely tuned for life and posits that the universe has only become finely tuned recently in the history of the universe.⁷⁷ He also advocates that the universe is not fine tuned to for our benefit, but that we are fine tuned to the universe citing the possibility that there may be other non-carbon based forms of life in the universe.⁷⁸ Shermer also argues that string theory suggests that there could be numerous other universes and suggests that there must be intelligent life in them.⁷⁹ Shermer also advocates that a “grand unified theory” of physics will explain any notion of fine tuning in the universe.⁸⁰ Shermer also

⁷⁵ John A. Bloom. “Why Isn’t the Evidence Clearer.” Evidence For Faith: Deciding the God Question, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Dallas: Probe Books, 1991), 2 (original pages in book were 305-318. The quote comes from page 2 of my printed copy secured from Dr. Bloom’s website for class).

⁷⁶ Winfried Corduan. “Recognizing A Miracle” In Defense of Miracles, eds. Gary Habermas and R. Douglas Geivett. (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 109.

⁷⁷ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 56.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

advocates a multiverse theory and that those universes which are like ours should have life.⁸¹ He concludes his argument going back to Hume's Maxim, by asking,

Which is more likely? The universe was designed just for us, or that we see the universe as having been designed just for us?

First, W. David Beck in his article, *God's Existence*, points out that Hugh Ross lists several evidences that support the notion of intelligent design in the universe.⁸² In his book, *The Creator and The Cosmos*, Ross gives numerous examples of fine tuning in the universe. One such example is found in table 16.2, and this is a table that lists the probabilities of getting all the necessary prerequisites for life in a random system.⁸³ He concludes from such data that there is only one chance in 10 to the 144th power that a planet like Earth exists anywhere else in the universe, and thus concludes not only that there has been intelligent design, but "divine design".⁸⁴ Ross also deals effectively with the multiverse argument advocated by Shermer. He notes that no one can explain where these multiple universes come from.⁸⁵ He also points out that these so called multi-universes could all be the same rather than different as posed by supporters.⁸⁶ Ross also advocates that the big bang multi universe models can be "reconfigured as an inflationary big bang universe" model.⁸⁷ Perhaps the most important point Ross makes about these models is that the theory of general relativity makes it impossible for us to detect them.⁸⁸ Thus, the existence of these multi-verse arrangements, at least according to Ross, is not a

⁸¹ Ibid., 58.

⁸² W. David Beck. *God's Existence*. In *Defense of Miracles*, eds. Gary Habermas and R. Douglas Geivett. (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 157.

⁸³ Hugh Ross. *The Creator and the Cosmos*. (Colorado: Navpress, 2001), 194-198.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 198.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 171.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 172.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 172.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 173.

viable explanation for attacking evidences of design. Ross also points out that life must be carbon based and that other forms of life such as the silicon based form advocated by Shermer are not possible because silicon can only hold together 100 amino acids.⁸⁹ Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards in their book, *The Privileged Planet* address the notion of the Grand Unified Theory. They point out that such a theory would not solve the question of design, it would simply add to the question because it would simply “move up” the question “one level”; there would be one great principle from which everything else comes from and produces a “habitable universe.”⁹⁰

Shermer continues his attack next by advocating that Dembski’s explanatory filter is “nothing more than a thought experience and cannot be practically used in science.”⁹¹ Gary Habermas disagrees with Shermer’s position. He states the following,

These tests are complexity and specification, or specified complexity. Design can be detected when we have highly improbable, complex occurrences that also exhibit a highly identifiable, specified pattern. These tests are very similar to well-recognized methods that are used regularly in special sciences such as forensic science, artificial intelligence, cryptography, and archaeology. In these cases, testing is formulated to detect intelligent causes... These tests are fully scientific, and can demonstrate design rigorously.⁹²

Certainly these fields are considered to be scientific. Shermer seems to be ignorant of this technique being used in these fields, or has conveniently left out this fact in an effort to put forward his position. Either way, Shermer’s position does not seem to stand up to scrutiny.

Shermer then moves on to challenge the notion of irreducible complexity. He takes aim at the

⁸⁹ Ibid., 178.

⁹⁰ Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards. *The Privileged Planet*. (Washington D.C., Regency Publishing Inc., 2004), 264.

⁹¹ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 63.

⁹² Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 59.

bacteria flagellum to prove his point and argues that it is not complex because the three part flagellum can be simply reduced to a “two part” system.⁹³ Michael Behe addresses this in his interview with Lee Strobel in *The Case for a Creator*. Behe points out that making a machine with fewer parts is not the point of the argument and advocates that the point is whether evolution can account for the flagellum.⁹⁴ Shermer then asserts that some items could have originally evolved for one reason, but then further evolved in the system to provide for another purpose.⁹⁵ Again, Behe addresses this contention. He argues that even if something may have had a useful purpose in the structure prior to it becoming part of the irreducible complex system, evolution has failed to provide evidence to demonstrate how the finished irreducibly complex system was formed.⁹⁶ Clearly Shermer’s positions on irreducibly complex systems have some problems.

Shermer’s book offers nothing new in the ongoing debate between intelligent design and evolution. It contains the same arguments which evolution supporters have been making for quite some time. Shermer’s problem with intelligent design is not an evidential problem. It is a philosophical, worldview problem. These issues must be pointed out so that works of this nature are not just blindly accepted as fact. When one truly looks at Shermer’s positions, they are simply faith issues. Faith posited in a religion known as naturalism. Shermer should be ashamed that he doesn’t have the intestinal fortitude or intellectual honesty to admit such a faith.

⁹³ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 70.

⁹⁴ Lee Strobel. *The Case For A Creator*. (Michigan: Zondervan 2004), 199.

⁹⁵ Michael Shermer, *Why Darwin Matters* (New York: Owl Books, 2006), 69.

⁹⁶ Lee Strobel. *The Case For A Creator*. (Michigan: Zondervan 2004), 201.

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