

Evolution Defended:

A response to John Baumgardner

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Editor:

John Baumgardner's talk at Fuller Lodge on Tuesday night was billed as an expose of intellectual fraud in evolution theory. It was actually an attack on scientific reductionism, and its philosophical foundation—a reality with identity and independent of consciousness. It was an attack on those foundations because Baumgardner and his sponsors believe in Creation, not evolution and it is very hard for God to create anything out of nothing if reality has identity (it "is what it is") and consciousness (including any gods') is only a faculty for perceiving reality.

Ever since the Enlightenment it has been recognized by most rational people that such a belief (in God) is irrational (Church fathers, like Tertullian - "I believe because it is absurd" - knew it earlier). As such, no rational argument can be made for believing in God - it is an act of faith and should be acknowledged as such. Of course, once rationality is breached, there is no way to stop: pretty soon one will believe what the pastor says about God, and then, what the Fuehrer says about everything ... But since integrity and consistency can only be proven to be virtues if rationality is a value, this is presumably not a problem for the faithful.

To those of us for whom rationality is a value, the true intellectual fraud was that Baumgardner posed as a rational man. In reality, by evading the enormous integrating and unifying power of modern scientific theories, by constructing strawmen based on quotations taken out of context, and by applying improper mathematical and physical arguments to contrived problems, Baumgardner attempted to disintegrate our knowledge and to suggest that there could be rational reasons to choose to be irrational. Tertullian, at least, was honest about what he was doing.

Because of this, it is clear why one cannot argue with such people by taking their arguments point by point. When they say that "X is so complex, only God

could understand it," and you carefully show that it can be understood scientifically, they will come back with "Y," "Z," ... until they hit something that is not understood. At which point, when you point out that everything else has been understood, and this will too, in time, you will be asked to prove it to them. Ever since Aristotle, it has been understood that one cannot prove a negative. The burden of proof is on he who asserts the positive. Since God is immaterial and unknowable, it is impossible to meet that burden of proof, and all the Creationist rhetoric is just an attempt to shift the burden.

I do not accept that burden.

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