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Not long ago, the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** offered a **preview** of its coming report, saying, "The evidence...is compelling" for human-caused global warming. "This isn't a smoking gun; climate is a battalion of intergalactic smoking missiles." The large majority of scientists hold to IPCC's opinion, but many dissenting voices can be heard in the world of science, from **those who believe** Al Gore has misrepresented the real data on the subject in **his film**, to **those who take issue** with various tenets of the argument for global warming.

Those of us who have reason to be concerned about the issue of climate change – which is all of us – are stuck between contrary claims. If scientists are at each other's throats, which side can we trust?

The global warming question parallels that other great scientific debate: the biological origins of life. **Intelligent Design** (ID) proponents are convinced that unguided evolution cannot explain all of life's complexity and variety. Most scientists, however, sneer at this suggestion and undermine the theory of ID by arguing that lay people who accept Intelligent Design do so based on political affiliation rather than a study scientific data. (Obviously, these same scientists believe that lay people who accept evolution do so because of their intelligence, rationality, and study of the subject.) The scientific majority see their detractors as being motivated by all the wrong things—a **book** was even published entitled *The Republican War On Science*.

In a sense, the critics are right: generally, conservatives *are* more likely to question human-caused global warming and to embrace Intelligent Design. Yet if we are aligning ourselves with a scientific side based on party lines, we certainly are approaching science from the wrong direction.

However, I think the relationship between political conservatives and those who adhere to Intelligent Design theories is not as strong as it appears. At the heart of the "Evolution-versus-Intelligent Design" controversy is a fundamental disagreement in how we ought to view the world, and this conflict runs far deeper than politics. The motivating force behind evolutionary theory, from the start, has been a worldview known as philosophical naturalism. The theory of philosophical naturalism states that matter an energy exist, interacting only by mathematically invariant laws or by chance. All explanations of our universe must be in terms of matter, energy, the laws of nature, chance, and nothing else. Ever.

Carl Sagan opened his *Cosmos* television series saying, "The cosmos is all there is, or was, or ever will be." When I first heard that, I wondered, "How does he know? How can this statement be proved by the scientific method alone?" Yet Sagan's statement of belief illustrates the divide between naturalistic science and ID's approach to understanding our universe.

By nature, Intelligent Design is open to the possibility that reality might just include more than Sagan's *Cosmos*. Such openness ought not to seem controversial. It's an attitude of humility before the facts, a refusal to close oneself off from discovering what might really exist. It's not deciding in advance that one knows all the possibilities. Intelligent Design doesn't claim to know the outcome before all the data is taken into consideration.

Many scientists adopt this modest posture, but more share the view voiced by **Richard Lewontin**, who argues for philosophical naturalism—a perspective he calls "materialism," meaning that only matter, that is, material discernable by the five senses, can be said to exist.

Lewontin **says**, "We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite* of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door." [Italics in the original.]

Here is a divide that runs far deeper than politics. The divide is, in part, spiritual—a natural overlap exists between those who support Intelligent Design and those who profess belief in God. One could not believe in God and support philosophical naturalism. And as a matter of current fact, there is some overlap between religious believers and political conservatives. What matters though, is to recognize that these overlaps are secondary. Those who support the theories and approach of Intelligent Design

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are not ignorant right-wingers, nor are they religious imbeciles. Rather, they are those who are open to discovery, those who may or may not believe in God or in the Republican Party.

Of course I cannot say I know for sure what the eventual outcome of ID research will be. Research may strongly establish its key points, such as the principle of **irreducible complexity**. (In a nutshell, irreducible complexity suggests that complex systems such as the eye could not arise through strict evolution, for its components like the retina, lens, and optic nerve are interdependent and useless on their own. No evolutionary advantage exists to simply having an optic nerve—the system of the eye would have to exist completely for it to benefit the organism.)

On the other hand, research ultimately may not support Intelligent Design's theses. Time will tell. However, I strongly support ID research, and my hunch is that it will prevail, for naturalistic evolution is based on a foundation that seems unsupportable, and even absurd. Researchers like Lewontin (and **Dawkins**, and **Simpson**, and **Wilson**, and many others) have decided in advance that there are certain facts they will never discover. But what if those facts are indeed facts? Naturalists will never find them, and if they do, they will be unable to admit them. Intelligent Design, though, could: it is a humbler perspective that allows for real scientific openness.

ID, like global warming, involves science that is beyond almost all of us. We could choose our position for political reasons. Some observers think that is what is going on in both cases. But a non-scientist can stand for ID research for reasons that have nothing to do with politics: because the chief alternative is based on an arrogant and unsupported view of reality.

Tom Gilson is Director of Strategic Processes in the Operational Advisory Services team for Campus Crusade for Christ. He maintains a blog at www.thinkingchristian.net.

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