

One Uncaused Event, None, or Many?

Updated March 30, 2007

IMAGINE A NANOTECHNOLOGY MACHINE far beyond the state of the art: a microminiaturized rotary motor and propeller system that drives a tiny vessel through liquid. The engine and drive mechanism are composed of 40 parts, including a rotor, stator, drive shaft, bushings, universal joint, and flexible propeller. The engine is powered by a flow of ions, can rotate at up to 100,000 rpm ... and can reverse direction in a quarter of a rotation. The system comes with an automatic feedback control mechanism. The engine itself is about 1/100,000th of an inch wide -- far smaller than can be seen by the human eye. Most of us would be pleasantly surprised to learn that some genius had designed such an engineering triumph. What might come as a greater surprise is that there is a dominant faction in the scientific community that is prepared to defend, at all costs, the assertion that this marvelous device could not possibly have been designed, must have been produced blindly by unintelligent material forces, and only gives the appearance -- we said appearance! -- of being designed. As you may have guessed, these astonishingly complex, tiny, and efficient engines exist. Millions of them exist inside you, in fact. They are true rotary motors that drive the "bacterial flagellum," a whip-like propulsion device for certain bacteria, including the famous E. coli that lives in your digestive system." (Peterson D., "The Little Engine That Could...Undo Darwinism," The American Spectator," 8 May 2005).

Richard:

In light of the complexity of the interior of any cell so ably described in the journal above, do you think that the hypothesis of irreducible biochemical complexity, that is, intelligent design of some kind, is a possibly valid alternative to the hypothesis of mindless self-organization controlled only by mindless selection and mutation?

Paul:

The bacterial flagellum? If you see a fundamental problem with that, it's just due to a lack of imagination. There are lots of channels in the cell that are used to export and import different things, there are caused a cell to export proteins that stuck together, forming a hair, and it found that it was useful to have hairs to protect itself or to allow itself to better stick to things. Then maybe some unrelated energy-consuming pumps in the cell found that they worked more efficiently if they associated themselves together into a ring, and they happened to do that around the hair attachment point. Then, a mutation caused the motors to start directly turning the hair...

It's easy to make up scenarios like this one. By the way "irreducible

complexity" is a ridiculous concept because evolution does not require things to always go up the complexity scale. The flagellum could have evolved from something with *more* parts. It's not a hypothesis, just some scenario for how it could have happened. I find it more probable because it's based on logical events instead of assuming that someone just made it like that.

Richard:

And I claim that the probability that the flagellum shows intelligent design. These are both assumptions.

Richard:

If there is a God, is it Spinoza's God (Pantheism): Pantheism (Greek: ('pan') = all and ('theos') = God) literally means "God is All" and "All is God". It is the view that everything is of an all-encompassing immanent God; or that the universe, or nature, and God are equivalent. More detailed definitions tend to emphasize the idea that natural law, existence, and the universe (the sum total of all that is, was, and shall be) is represented or personified in the theological principle of 'God'

Richard:

Does that mean you have no ideas about the nature or attributes of this something you have a name for? For example, do you not hold the view that the creator, the prime mover, the uncaused cause, the uncaused event, is infinite, eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, and/or omnipotent? These attributes are of logical as they follow from the premises and from the evidence of the Big Bang itself. Is there not an actual fact you can see, the residual background radiation plainly visible in between TV channels? Is that not an observable fact that physicists claim proves there was a beginning of matter, energy, space, and time?

Paul:

You can always have the alternative hypothesis that somebody just built everything, or that nothing really exists, that it's all a dream. But it's more fun for us to try to reason about nature based on what we see, using logic and mathematics instead of fantasy.

Richard:

Assume that you do not consider irreducible complexity to be a valid hypothesis. Dan, You believe in God but not Spinoza's/Einstein's

Pantheism/Deism, you say. Does it follow that God is OUTSIDE his creation and not in or part or all of his creation?

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Greg:

IMAGINE an argument in which you claim that some premise leads to a conclusion which suits you, but leads to the opposite conclusion when it doesn't: The argument is composed of just three parts, any existing object on the frontier of science, a miraculously omnipotent designer and a gullible listener. Since the frontier of science is, by definition known either not at all, or to but a few listeners, it follows that the gullible listener is baffled as to the sequence of material causes that might have produced the cited phenomenon. The argument then concludes that the omnipotent designer produces it.

In his rejoinder, your interlocutor marvels at the intricacy and power of this omnipotent designer, which he also does not quite understand. Following your line of reasoning, he claims that this even more stunning phenomena could not have arisen blindly from material causes, and so it too must be the product of an omnipotent designer. "AH NO", you say, "That is not the proper conclusion; there is NO infinite regress of intelligent designers."

Seeing that he is not permitted to employ the logic you first taught him, the gullible listener infers a class ladder of religious consciousness in which he occupies the lowest rung, while those who baffle him must have reached higher planes of consciousness where it is safe to appear inconsistent and still feel smugly faithful.

Richard:

Greg has enunciated an important notion:

"You say that is not the proper conclusion; there is NO infinite regress of intelligent designers." I don't recall taking any position on an infinite regress of intelligent designers inasmuch as that idea is debated repeatedly in the best intellectual circles as an alternative to a single Big Bang. It is also considered that there could be an infinite regress of unintelligent causes. I once heard Dirac surmise that there might have been 17 Big Crunches. However,

the total absence of empirical evidence for anything before the Big Bang does not support this fancy. We are left with an uncaused event.

Richard:

Intellectually the notion of an infinite regress of intelligent designers is elegant and appealing. However, an infinite regress of non intelligent causes is equally elegant and appealing, namely the bubble multiverse thesis, wherein our Big Bang was simply a bubble from another universe. So that gives us these possibilities:

1. One intelligent designer
2. One non intelligent designer
3. An infinite regress of intelligent designers.
- 4 An infinite regress of non intelligent designers. That now makes 4 possibilities for the existence of everything. Does anyone see any reason to choose one or the other? Does that exhaust the possibilities?

I like the notion that Prime Mover might not necessarily mean Intelligent or Prime Designer. Probably the non intelligent designer would be synonymous with non intelligent prime mover. Now we are beginning to think out of the box. It occurs to me that a hundred years from now we might look back on this dialog as from the Dark Ages. An example is the following wild accumulations of frontier thoughts:

<http://www.web-books.com/GoodPost/Articles/SeeGod.htm> which includes string theory, multiple dimensions, gravitons, branes, dark matter and dark energy.. The author thinks we could see God with gravitons, for example. Well, that certainly is an insane idea, but considering how vast is our current ignorance, perhaps we need some more insane ideas like this.