

Creator or Blind Watchmaker?

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Abstract: Darwin's Blind Watchmaker Thesis is the current scientific consensus explanation that accounts for the origin of the species. It claims that the diversity and complexity of life (e.g. eyes, wings, and the mammalian brain) is an accidental result of an **unguided** purely natural process. R. Slifkin claims that evolution's Blind Watchmaker Thesis is compatible with traditional beliefs about G-d. There are four problems with this claim.

1. Is evolution as defined by the scientists true? Scientific evidence for this claim has not been produced to the level of confirmation standard in the hard sciences. Only when the scientific evidence has been produced, need we ask if it is compatible with Torah.
2. As a religious Jew, R. Slifkin's view of science is actually something quite different from the scientific consensus. His view is that G-d **guides** evolution—contradicting the scientific consensus of accidental **unguided** evolution. Indeed, contra R. Slifkin, evolution's Blind Watchmaker Thesis is incompatible with Torah.
3. If R. Slifkin allows himself leeway to contradict the scientific consensus then the same leeway should be allowed to those who believe in the historicity of the Torah's account of creation. Yet R. Slifkin consistently insists that we are bound by the vaunted objectivity of the scientific consensus.
4. Both the theistic and atheistic forms of evolution are committed to **scientific naturalism**, something that contradicts the Torah's account of the **meta-natural** Creation Week ending with the first Sabbath of creation.

The last objection is critical because it shows R. Slifkin's claim to be in violation of fundamental principles of Torah. When we make *kid-dush* every Friday night, the one thing we are not doing is celebrating evolution's Blind Watchmaker Thesis.

	Meta-natural Creation Week	Science's Blind Watchmaker Thesis
1	According to our <i>baalei mesora</i> , the first chapter of Genesis is a historically accurate account of the origin of the universe, in which the creative processes operating during the 6-day Creation Week (ending with the the first Sabbath of creation) are fundamentally different from the processes operating in the universe after the Creation Week. It is a category error to conflate these fundamentally different time periods.	What Creation Week? After the big-bang 13.7 billion years ago, the universe unfolds according to laws of nature. Subsequently, new entities come into existence solely according to laws of nature—there is no essential difference in the operation of the universe in a continuum since the big bang.
2	Specifically, the Creation Week was uniquely meta-natural in the sense that currently operating natural processes (e.g. gravity, random variation, natural selection) were not responsible for the origin of the universe and life. In fact, during the Creation Week, G-d instituted the laws of nature, with the whole system of nature achieving stability only at the end of the sixth day.	Methodological Naturalism: The origin of natural phenomena (e.g. the origin of galaxies, the solar system, planet earth, life) may not be explained by miracles, but must be explained solely by recourse to currently operating chance and natural processes (e.g. gravity, random variation, natural selection).
3	Meta-natural creation was not limited to the first instant of time: e.g. it is implicated in the origin of the earth & plant life, the sun, animals, and the first man— <i>Adam Harishon</i> —who had no parents. By contrast, post creation humans are born from humans. Concorantly, today we do not see men emerging directly from dead chemicals, nor do we see women conceiving and giving birth in one day without pain.	Perhaps the initial big bang was meta-natural, but nothing else. Nowadays, we can explain even the big bang solely via natural cause and effect (see Stephen Hawking, <i>The Grand Design</i> , 2010.) There was no first man as such. Tens of thousands of years ago modern man emerged via chance/natural processes from ape-like precursors.
4	A Supreme Intelligence is directly implicated. Haeckel's embryos, Junk DNA, and vestigial organs is wishful thinking on the part of evolutionists. In the Creation Week, everything was created in fully-formed perfection. Genomic decay might happen subsequent to the Creation Week.	Science may never appeal to intelligent causes. By definition, the blind-watchmaker thesis asserts that we are here by mindless, unguided, purposeless processes that did not have us in mind. There is strong evidence for this in the billions of years of evolution via random variation, natural selection, imperfect vestigial organs, junk DNA, and evolutionary debris (such as Haeckel's embryos).
5	Meta-natural creation ceased about 5771 years ago. However one understands time during the Creation Week, it consisted of 6 days, each day consisting of a single period of darkness and light. Billions of years of ordinary 24-hour earth-days did not pass.	Planet earth alone is over 4.5 billion years old—measured in ordinary approximately 24-hour earth-days.

Table 1: Competing explanations for the origin of the universe and life

	Meta-natural Creation Week	Slifkin-Blind-Watchmaker-Thesis
1	According to our <i>baalei mesora</i> , the first chapter of Genesis is a historically accurate account of the origin of the universe, in which the creative processes operating during the 6-day Creation Week (ending with the the first Sabbath of creation) are fundamentally different from the processes operating in the universe after the Creation Week. It is a category error to conflate these fundamentally different time periods.	There is no historical meta-natural Creation Week. This part of the Genesis story is non-historical allegory where it differs with the scientific consensus. After the big-bang 13.7 billion years ago, the universe unfolds according to laws of nature. Subsequently, new entities come into existence solely according to laws of nature—there is no essential difference in the operation of the universe in a continuum since the big bang.
2	Specifically, the Creation Week was uniquely meta-natural in the sense that currently operating natural processes (e.g. gravity, random variation, natural selection) were not responsible for the origin of the universe and life. In fact, during the Creation Week, G-d instituted the laws of nature, with the whole system of nature achieving stability only at the end of the sixth day.	Methodological Naturalism: The origin of natural phenomena (e.g. the origin of galaxies, the solar system, planet earth, life) may not be explained by miracles, but must be explained solely by recourse to currently operating chance and natural processes (e.g. gravity, random variation, natural selection).
3	Meta-natural creation was not limited to the first instant of time: e.g. it is implicated in the origin of the earth & plant life, the sun, animals, and the first man— <i>Adam Harishon</i> —who had no parents. By contrast, post creation humans are born from humans. Concordantly, today we do not see men emerging directly from dead chemicals, nor do we see women conceiving and giving birth in one day without pain.	The initial big bang was meta-natural, but not the origin of the galaxies, solar system, planet earth and life on it. Of course, it is possible that the scientific consensus will explain even the big bang via chance and natural causes. There was no first man as such. Tens of thousands of years ago modern man emerged via chance/natural processes from ape-like precursors.
4	A Supreme Intelligence is directly implicated. Haeckel’s embryos, Junk DNA, and vestigial organs is wishful thinking on the part of evolutionists. In the Creation Week, everything was created in fully-formed perfection. Genomic decay might happen subsequent to the Creation Week.	Intelligence is implicated in the fine-tuning of the laws of physics (provided it does not violate the scientific consensus). The billions of years of evolution via random mutation, natural selection, vestigial organs and evolutionary debris <i>appear</i> to indicate blind, purposeless processes. However, that is only in appearance. As in the Purim story, G-d is behind the randomness.
5	Meta-natural creation ceased about 5771 years ago. However one understands time during the Creation Week, it consisted of 6 days, each day consisting of a single period of darkness and light. Billions of years of ordinary 24-hour earth-days did not pass.	Planet earth alone is over 4.5 billion years old—measured in ordinary 24-hour earth-days.

Table 2: Evaluation of R. Slifkin’s claim that Darwin’s “blind-watchmaker thesis need not be incompatible with G-d”