

## Paul Nelson - Design And Its Critics, 2000

Working definition of methodological naturalism (MN) - the statements of science must invoke only natural things and processes

Ronald Numbers - science is MN applied

Causation: natural vs. supernatural or natural vs. intelligent

Intelligent causation is what ID needs to be a research program

Darwin didn't follow MN

MN limits ability to discover truth

### **homicide detective**

#### **world A**

all deaths by: **1. nat. causes**  
**2. accident**

#### **world B**

all deaths by: **1. nat. causes**  
**2. accident**  
**3. suicide**  
**4. murder**

We could never discover that people die only by 1 and 2 if we necessarily restrict ourselves to those two modes of causation

Any evidence of death that points to 3 or 4 is perforce going to be interpreted in terms of the 1 and 2

You could never discover it because you have assumed it a priori

Allowing for 3 and 4 doesn't affect the facts of the world in any way, doesn't affect causes 1 or 2.

## Origins

### world A (MN)

**nat. law  
chance**

### world B

**nat. law  
chance  
design**

Design belongs in the tool kit of science (?)

Allowing for the possibility of design doesn't affect the facts of the world in any way

Design might be a tool that we never have to use, but we ought to have it around if the evidence requires it

Which world did Darwin inhabit?

Darwin tested a theory against observation and found it wanting

Darwin had a theory of creation of his time and he tested it against the natural world - a practice that MN says is impossible

Darwin saw the theory of creation as possibly true, it fell within the purview of science

It was an empirical question to be settled, not by philosophical dicta, but by looking at the evidence

Darwin lived in world B. What did no harm to Darwin, will do no harm to us

Design is empirically possible, it is testable against the evidence, it belongs among the causal possibilities that science considers

## **Conclusions:**

MN unjustifiably removes from the tool kit of science a type of causation that belongs in that tool kit

Allowing the possibility of design does not affect the facts of the world in any way.

We might live in a world where there is no design. Do we want to discover that, or presuppose it?

Science should want to discover the truth and not presuppose it, and give the evidence a chance to speak for itself

Once you exclude them, you can never discover them. You are forced to interpret whatever you see in light of the causal categories you allow

We could never discover that natural causes are sufficient if we have assumed that *a priori*. We have simply allowed no other possibility.

If you take an explanatory tool from the tool kit of science, it's gone, and what's left will force you to see the world in a certain way.

Not letting the evidence speak for itself

**If science is a truth-seeking enterprise, MN is unsound and belongs on the rubbish heap of history.**

**We should junk MN, it's a worthless *a priori*, and let the evidence speak for itself.**