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SERIOUSLY, AREN’T ATHEISTS EMBARRASSED BY P.Z. MYERS?

by Rabbi Moshe Averick

*One of my mentors, Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, (of blessed memory), made the following, rather sobering, observation about human nature: “Nobody ever allowed something as trivial as facts and logic to interfere with their agenda. If the facts and logic don’t fit, then the facts and logic will just have to fend for themselves.”*

Moshe, that's rich coming from a guy who has invisible friends. It's amazing how you guys can describe yourselves and not even realize it.

*Nowhere do we find more glaring examples of the human predilection for intellectual corruption than when we examine the writings and lectures of an ideologue who is driven, not by a burning desire for truth, but by a burning desire to further his or her own agenda. Having said that, we are now ready to introduce one of the more zealous and outspoken (meaning tiresome and obnoxious) advocates of the Darwinian/atheist worldview, P.Z. Myers.*

Moshe, you seem a little confused. There are millions of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews who also hold a Darwinian worldview. You are trying to connect 2 things that are not related. Since you don't seem to understand the terms, allow me to clarify: Atheism is disbelief in God. Darwinism, a term describing evolution, is a scientific theory explaining the development of life on Earth. They are 2 independent concepts as proven by the millions of religious believers I just mentioned.

*Dr. Myers is an associate professor of biology at the University of Minnesota-Morris, a satellite of the main state university, or as David Klinghoffer put it, “well known as the Harvard of Morris, Minnesota.”*

Come on Moshe, don't you even have the courage to use your own snark?

*In a lecture at the Atheist International Alliance in 2009 in Burbank, Ca., entitled Design vs. Chance, Myers administered, what he considered to be, a thorough thrashing of Intelligent Design theory.*

Moshe, from what I read of the event, those who attended agreed.

*What actually transpired was a startlingly clear demonstration of the aforementioned principle set forth by Rabbi Weinberg; namely, that there is no simple fact or logical construct that will not be trampled into dust when it gets in the way of an agenda. I leave it to the readers to decide for themselves which of those options more closely mirrors reality.*

Reality Moshe? What could a man who talks to invisible ghosts know about reality? You live in a childish little realm of angels and demons. You should be indicted for even using the word "reality."

*Myers began by presenting a brisk summary of Intelligent Design theory:*

*“The core of the argument is this: (A) Complexity can only be created by a designer, (B) Biology is really complex, (C) Biology was created by design.”*

*He then poses the following to his audience,*

*“What about the whole complexity issue? We biologists will freely admit that things are really complicated inside the cell. So how do we explain it? Don’t we have to resort to a Creator? And we say, of course not. There’s lots of things that are very complicated [and aren’t the result of an intelligent creator]. I’ll show you an example here.”*

*At this point in his PowerPoint presentation there is a photograph showing a rather large pile of driftwood along what is obviously a coastline. Myers informs us that it is Rialto Beach in upper Washington State. He continues…*

*“And this is a very common thing along beaches…driftwood. You find these walls of driftwood between you and getting down to the beach, real walls, very complicated walls. It has been constructed, who did it? We know the answer, natural processes did it. We don’t need a designer to build this kind of wall. This is complex, you simply can’t deny it. If I turn the projector off would you be able to draw it? No.”*

*To be honest, when I saw this lecture for the first time, I thought Myers was joking. A pile of driftwood as being analogous to the “complexity” of a living cell?!*

Moshe, Myers didn't say that the wall of driftwood was as complex as a living cell. He was using the driftwood as an example of something that is complex and has been designed by natural processes. If you want an example that is more complex you could consider complex crystalline structures such as those found in snowflakes. I'm not saying they're as complex as living cells, but they are so complex that no two are alike.

You are engaging in the "straw man logical fallacy" Moshe. So before lecturing us on logic, you might want to enroll in an introductory logic class where they will teach you how to avoid committing errors like the one you just made.

And Moshe, don't follow a question mark with an exclamation point: it makes you look like a teenage facebook refugee.

*Myers is arguing that since a “complex” and “complicated” pile of driftwood can accumulate through an undirected natural process, so can a living cell.*

Moshe, natural processes *are* directed: they are directed by laws of nature such as physics and chemistry. That makes 2 straw men now, Moshe. Keep going and you'll have enough straw men to start a bonfire.

*I guess if by “complexity” you mean a chaotic collection of junk, then I would have to agree;*

Moshe, check your DNA. If you are like other humans, then most of it *is* junk.

*In any case, no self-respecting ID theorist would ever use the term “complexity.”*

Moshe, ID theorists have not earned the right to self respect. That is why rational people ridicule them.

*The terms that are always used are “functional complexity” or “specified complexity.” In other words, complexity that achieves some pre-determined goal, complexity that clearly functions towards a specific purpose.*

Moshe, and there's where your entire argument goes down the toilet: you have no evidence to support your assertion that complexity is predetermined. By presupposing predestination you have inserted God into your argument. You have committed the logical fallacy of "Begging the Question."

*The argument is that “functional complexity” and “specified complexity” clearly are the result of intelligent intervention.*

Moshe, that is because you defined those terms in such a way (predetermined) that it implies an intelligent designer. That argument fails because of the logical flaw I just indicated.

*A pile of driftwood is immediately recognizable for exactly what it is; a random, disorganized, purposeless collection of….well, driftwood! To describe this argument as flawed logic would be misleading; we first would have to dignify it by labeling it as some form of logic in the first place. It is not flawed logic, it is simply ridiculous.*

Moshe, from what I've seen of your attempts to use logic, a warrant for your arrest should be issued for felony idiocy.

*It may be hard to believe, but it gets worse.*

Moshe, that *is* hard to believe. I don't know how your attempts at logic can get any worse.

*A photograph of an expertly-constructed brick wall surrounding a garden flashes on the screen. Dr. Myers continues:*

*“On the other hand we are familiar with this kind of wall. So this is also a wall, it’s one that we can recognize that has a specific purpose, that was built by human agents, and I’d have to say that of these two walls, which one is simpler? The human built one…When we look at natural walls [i.e driftwood] what we discover is natural things are built by chance and necessity, they are functionally unspecified, there’s nothing that says that a pile of driftwood is a wall…and they tend to be complex. In this sense, complex often means sloppy, but it’s still complex. Artificial walls [i.e. the brick wall] are built with intent, they are functionally very specific…and relatively simple."*

*Let’s carefully follow this “logic” as it leads us straight into a train wreck:*

*■Piles of driftwood are “functionally unspecified,” “sloppy,” are assembled randomly by natural processes, and are considered to be “complex.”*

*■Brick walls are “functionally very specific,” have a “specific purpose,” are assembled by intelligent agents, and are considered to be “simple.”*

*■Ergo, a living cell which is “complex” is comparable to a pile of “complex” driftwood and has nothing in common with the “simple” and “functionally very specific” brick wall that obviously is the product of intelligent design.*

Moshe, the train wreck you think you see, was your own.

Myers merely gave examples of complex things that can be designed (brick walls) and complex things that can be formed by natural processes (walls of driftwood).

As for cells there is no evidence that an invisible man had anything to do with their construction. Natural processes can account for everything we see under our microscopes.

*Does Myers actually expect us to believe that the simplest living organism that exists, a bacterium*

Wrong Moshe, google *viruses* and *prions* and you will discover other life forms that are far simpler than bacteria.

*which is, in the words of Australian microbiologist Michael Denton, “a veritable micro-miniaturized factory containing thousands of elegantly designed pieces of intricate molecular machinery, made up of all together one hundred thousand million atoms, far more complicated than any machinery built by man and without parallel in the non-living world*

Moshe, you can make the exact same statement about a pile of dog shit.

*an object resembling an immense automated factory carrying out almost as many unique functions as all the manufacturing activities of man on earth,” – is assembled like a pile of driftwood on a beach?*

Moshe, why are you trying to compare living things to inanimate objects? I thought you were the guy claiming to be using logic, and yet here you are comparing apples to oranges.

*Isn’t it glaringly obvious that it resembles, not the “functionally unspecified” and chaotic collection of driftwood, but the “functionally very specific,” “built with a purpose,” and “built with intent,” brick wall?!*

Moshe, in science "glaringly obvious" doesn't cut it. That is the same argument you offer us for your invisible ghost ... and we can't find him either.

And no, a cell doesn't resemble a brick wall.

*Has he gone mad? Has this man completely abandoned any semblance of rationality?*

Well Moshe, at least he isn't down on his knees every night talking to an invisible man.

*How is it possible that his audience continues to sit through this nonsense, bobbing their heads up and down in approval like a pack of toy dogs on the back window of a car?*

Actually Moshe, you just gave a perfect description of church. So what you are really doing is projecting.

*I didn’t think it was possible to present a more convoluted, agenda-driven response than the one with which I was presented by Dr. Jerry Coyne, an atheistic biologist at the University Chicago.*

Moshe, if you want to see a more convoluted, agenda driven response, just reread your own article.

*What was Dr. Coyne’s smug response to the simple fact that science has no clue how something as functionally complex as a bacterium could have emerged from non-life?*

Moshe, let me suggest a biology 101 class at any reputable university. Bacteria did not emerge from non-life, amino acids did. Then evolution explains how over millions of years, early life evolved into more complex organisms such as bacteria.

*“We may never understand how life originated on Earth, because the traces of early life have vanished. We know it happened at least once, but not how. I’m pretty confident that within, say, 50 years[!] we’ll be able to create life in a laboratory under the conditions of primitive Earth, but that, too, won’t tell us exactly how it did happen – only that it could.”*

*No wonder Dr. Coyne turned down an invitation to a moderated discussion with me on the subject of Origin of Life; even if he agreed today, he would need 50 more years to prepare his case!*

Moshe, Coyne probably turned you down because you are a moron. I understand why he might debate another biologist, but I don't know why he would waste his time debating someone who has demonstrated no understanding of even the basic principles of biology.

*Be that as it may, P.Z. Myers has clearly surpassed even Jerry Coyne. But the “jewel in the crown” of P.Z. Myers’ level of integrity and intellectual potency in this whole discussion is best illustrated by what he himself authored on his blog-site “Pharyngula,” on March 8, 2011:*

*“If we’re going to start comparing lacunae, let’s start with thermodynamics. We’ve got detailed, complete mathematical descriptions of a fundamental mechanism that drives all of biology; the Torah’s got nothin’…We win. Argument over. F\*\*k off, rabbi.”*

*I have to admit that I would find the prospect of a debate with Dr. Myers to be quite daunting.*

Moshe, what could you possibly offer on your side of the debate?

Evidence? Not in the last 2,000 years.

Twisted logic? Definitely.

Dishonesty? Without a doubt.

Ignorance? Already admitted into evidence.

Arrogance? Isn't that what faith means?

*After all, between his still-lifes of driftwood and his rich vocabulary of four letter words, it’s clear that this man is packing a devastating level of intellectual firepower.*

Moshe, considering that your career has been devoted to the study of ancient fairy tales, it is unlikely that you could ever recognize intellectual firepower.

Moshe, if it's true what women say about, *where men keep their brains,* perhaps in your case, they shaved off a little too much.

*But all sarcasm aside, I have a heartfelt question for all you skeptics out there and I want you to answer seriously: Doesn’t P.Z. Myers make you embarrassed to be an atheist?*

Moshe, PZ Myers has nothing to do with my disbelief in your invisible ghost; just like science, logic, and evidence had nothing at all to do with your beliefs.

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NAME CALLERS ARE JUST STUPID

By MEL ROTHENBURGER

Editor, The Daily News

*I didn’t take in the presentation by American associate professor Paul “PZ” Myers, and I’m glad.*

Mel, it's so refreshing to find a journalist who values his professional integrity so much that he will refuse to write about anything unless he actually has been there and knows what he is talking about. Oh wait, that's not you, is it?

*In reference to creationists, he said, among other things, “They’re ignorant and stupid and don’t know anything about history.”*

Mel, you'll have to forgive professor Myers. He has a gift for understatement.

*He was in town to speak on the issue of evolution vs. creationism, a topic that raises hackles and emotions but not necessarily intelligent debate.*

Mel, it's difficult to have an intelligent debate when only one side is participating in the intelligence portion of the debate.

*What it does raise is a lot of name calling, which is common to those who are insecure in their own beliefs and bereft of any powers of rational persuasion. Ironically, Myers urged people to stand up for their beliefs, but, apparently, that doesn’t include those with beliefs different from his own.*

That's right Mel, he was talking to skeptics. Religious zealots already stand up for theirs.

*He was brought in by the Kamloops Centre for Rational Thought, the brainchild of Bill Ligertwood, who also likes to use the “stupid” word from time to time when an idea doesn’t match his views. Myers is obviously amused by his own cleverness. The day before his visit to the Tournament Capital, he wrote on his blog: “I'll be descending from the skies like a wrathful angel, striding across the landscape with my eyes afire, crushing the pious with my righteous fury, while occasionally being mistaken for a cuddly waddling teddy bear, which will piss me off even more.”*

*Noting the controversy over the atheist bus signs here and in Kelowna, he continued: “Now I'm really angry, and I'm determined to wreak my vengeance on Kamloops when I arrive, just to teach them a lesson. I think I'll do something ferocious, like stand in an auditorium and talk. That'll learn the cowardly bastids.”*

*Such wit, or what passes for wit, runs throughout Myers’ blog as he ridicules his targets as “quacks” or “hate-mongering, ignorant bigots.”*

Mel, that's because those he is referring to usually are quacks, or hate-mongering ignorant bigots.

*To be fair, he is mildly humorous in small doses, and not totally devoid of worthwhile commentary, at least not always. In one post, he contends that “… church attendance has nothing to do with morality or ethical behaviour or goodness of any kind.”*

*Fair enough. But in the next sentence, he is compelled to revert to his old name-calling self: “So why do so many people consider a weekly session with a deranged delusional ranter in a pulpit to be a seal of approval?”*

Mel, It would be name-calling if Myers were claiming that all clergy are deranged delusional ranters. But since he is only referring to those who are, then it is not name-calling ... but simply a fact.

*His disrespect for the beliefs of others probably reached its height when he asked people to send him a consecrated communion wafer so that he could “treat it with profound disrespect and heinous cracker abuse.”*

Not likely Mel. His cracker abuse was more likely a case of Myers just warming up. I think the best is yet to come.

*A lesser man than I might call such comments inconsiderate, bigoted, narrow-minded, arrogant, idiotic and stupid, but I shall not.*

Mel, I think you just did. Now who's being amused by his own cleverness?

*I will, instead, suggest that Associate Prof. Myers re-examine, in a positive way, his sense of common decency, and perhaps seek out an accredited counselor with experience in sensitivity training and anger management.*

Mel, when Christians tell nonbelievers that they are going to burn in hell, and deserve it, do you tell them to re-examine their sense of common decency? Have you ever told them to seek out professional help with experience in sensitivity training and anger management? No, you haven't. You are a hypocrite, Mel.

*No doubt, I would qualify, in his view, as ignorant and stupid because I wrote a few months ago the agnostic view that I don’t consider myself smart enough to figure out who, if anyone, runs the universe, and that atheists “possess a faith of their own, a belief in their own superior intelligence and knowledge that there is no God.”*

Mel, you do not understand Atheism. Any Atheist who claims to know that there is no God is a fool because they cannot support that claim with evidence. The Atheist position is that believers have not produced any evidence to support the existence of God, therefore, it would be irrational to believe in His existence.

And rejecting religious claims does not require faith, it only requires disbelief in religious claims. It is the ones who believe without evidence who require faith.

*I don’t believe in the theory of intelligent design, either, but just as believing in an all-powerful God doesn’t guarantee you’re a good person, neither does it mean you’re stupid or deserving of the kind of contempt in which Myers wallows.*

Mel, a person may be "stupid" in one area (say religion), yet be perfectly rational in other aspects of their life. It doesn't mean the person is stupid; it only means that in some cases they can be stupid. Likewise, Atheists are rational regarding religion but may hold idiotic beliefs such as Bigfoot or Homeopathy. The question isn't "are humans stupid?" The question is "to what degree?"

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

MOUSE TO ELEPHANT? JUST WAIT 24 MILLION GENERATIONS

Scientists have for the first time measured how fast large-scale evolution can occur in mammals, showing it takes 24 million generations for a mouse-sized animal to evolve to the size of an elephant.

This research describes increases and decreases in mammal size following the extinction of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. A team of 20 biologists and paleontologists discovered that rates of size decrease are much faster than growth rates. It takes only 100,000 generations for very large decreases, leading to dwarfism, to occur.

The study was unique because most previous work had focused on the small changes that occur within a species. Instead researchers concentrated on large-scale changes in body size. A less dramatic change, such as rabbit-sized to elephant-sized, takes 10 million generations.

The paper looked at 28 different groups of mammals, including elephants, primates and whales, from various continents and ocean basins over the past 70 million years. Size change was tracked in generations rather than years to allow meaningful comparison between species with differing life spans. Changes in whale size occurred at twice the rate of land mammals. This is probably because it's easier to be big in the water -- it helps support your weight.

Decreases in body size occurred more than ten times faster than the increases. Many miniature animals, such as the pygmy mammoth, dwarf hippo and 'hobbit' hominids lived on islands, helping to explain the size reduction. When animals do get smaller, they need less food and can reproduce faster, which are real advantages on small islands.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW (previously quoted)

"The power of accurate observation is commonly called cynicism

by those who have not got it."