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Can Science Test Supernatural Worldviews?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about whether science can test supernatural worldviews and how to respond to the claim that the Bible isn't against abortion since it contains a command to execute adulterous women without checking to make sure they're not pregnant.

* Can science test supernatural worldviews? If so, how? If not, why not?

* How would you respond to the claim that the Bible isn't against abortion since it contains a command to execute adulterous women without any provision to find out if they're pregnant.

Transcript

[Music] This is Stan to Reasons #SDRaskpodcast. I'm Amy Holland with me is Greg Coco. Hello, Greg.

Hi there, Amy. Today we're going to start with a question from Richard. Can science test supernatural world, I lost my ability to speak for a second.

Can science test supernatural worldviews, if so, how so, if not, why not? Science is equipped with its methodology and that's all I'm going to talk about here. I'm not going to talk about the reigning philosophical paradigm that largely controls what science is allowed to say, all right, which would be materialism. We're not doing that.

We're setting aside trying to deal with science as an epistemic motif as a way of gaining knowledge and it's meant to be used to tell us two things about the physical world because it uses principally empirical methods, observations, experiences that sensory mechanisms that we possess to see things in the physical world and then test in such a way that we can infer causation relationships, particularly event causation. So if one event causes another event, they can tell you they're in principle able to tell you about that. You take a base and you add it to an acidic liquid and you get salt and water.

I mean, that's just the way those things work. We know the chemical reactions that lead

to the consequence, all right. So it is certainly capable of telling us things about the physical world.

Now, I think that even though it is not capable of measuring the non-physical world, we can, we can properly infer things about the non-physical world based on some things we see in the physical world. Okay. So what careful science can do is identify intricate design features in the world that which design features say are irreducibly complex.

That is, the whole thing has to be assembled just so before it can function the way it's meant to function and no part of it can function at all. Now, this implies that the thing had been assembled in some fashion before a confunction. No naturalistic process can account for this.

Certainly not an evolutionary process, not classic Darwinian evolution, which requires that every little change along the way has to have some reproductive benefit. It has to. So what science could do is it can determine that these structures exist and the structures could not have been assembled bit by bit and still have any function at all, but rather had to be assembled as a whole.

Now, we can intuit from that observation, a designer, because we know from personal experience being agents ourselves that we can assemble things and make things that don't work as parts, but then do work as a whole. I'm looking at a telephone in front of me. I'm using a microphone.

All of these things are assembled from parts, and once all the parts are fitted together appropriately, then we get a function that is useful. Okay. So what we have is a scientific method or capability, a methodology that gives us a capability to observe certain facts about the physical world from which we can often properly infer something about a non-physical element.

Okay. In the physical world, you have, you simply have event causation. You have one event causing another event causing another event causing another event, and whenever you have an event, it is always appropriate to ask which event came before it to cause it, but that itself is an event by that is caused by some prior event.

So you can see right away of all you have is event causation, you're going to have an infinite regress that is vicious. All right, that's not going to work, but we are aware of a different type of cause, and that is agent causation, because we are agents ourselves, and agents can initiate a series of events. So think of all the dominoes standing up.

Let's just say they were standing there forever, and no physical thing is ever going to move them, except an agent can use a physical body that the agent controls and flick the first domino and all the rest of them start falling. The agent initiates a series of events. We're aware of that, and so when we look at events that need an initiator

outside of the physical universe, like the Big Bang, for example, or the whatever one construes as the origin of the universe, it makes sense based on our understanding of agency and causation, and a sufficient reason, these are all factors here, that are not, excuse me, they are not empirically determined, but they are essential for the scientific method to work at all.

We can then say the whole world came into being, and there must be a sufficient reason for that. There must be a cause, but the cause has to be adequate to the effect. And so in this way, and this is the classic cosmological arguments, whether it's the Kalam argument or the Leibnizian argument from sufficient reason, which doesn't require a beginning of the universe, not that one, there's still, we can still infer from the reality of the universe, a cause beyond the universe, a non-physical cause.

So I'm being very careful how I'm answering this question, and I'm confining the scientific method to an empirical method, but I am saying we have more tools of knowledge than empiricism, that in fact, even science must use metaphysical principles, like causation and sufficient reason, etc. In order for science to work, well, if we have those tools, then we can take things that science discovers about the physical realm and properly infer, at least in principle, certain things about the non-physical, or if you will, supernatural realm as well. So we can use rational thinking about what we find in science, but not necessarily do experiments.

Since experimentation can only measure repeatable things, obviously that can't prove an agent in terms of showing that by doing an experiment that an agent did something, we don't use that to discover anything in history, which is all agent causation. We don't do experiments. So anyway, I agree, Greg, that what we can learn is anywhere that the worldview touches on the physical world, and there are implications that match the worldview.

By the way, you mentioned experimental repeatability, which is one of the most common features people think of regarding the scientific method. This is not a necessary part of the scientific method. There's all different areas of science where experimental repeatability is not a factor, like singularities, like the Big Bang.

I mean, there's no question that that is a proper feature of the scientific pursuit origin of the universe. A lot of that is simply math. I mean, some of it, like general relativity and special relativity, the math there, from the math you're properly in for an absolute beginning.

Or there are some observation involved there, maybe a redshift, observations, the galaxies, et cetera, et cetera, from which you infer an expanding universe and that logically infer a beginning, where you look at the second law of thermodynamics and you realize that there's an entropy, but we're not at maximum entropy now, so the universe can't be eternal, and so therefore, the universe must have had a beginning. And these

are all things that can be used that are not functions of experimental repeatability. The fact is that the scientific method isn't one thing.

It's a constellation of different things that apply at different times. But I think realistically or arguably, the element that is consistent throughout is that there is some use of empirical means along with rational means in order to discover things that are true about the physical universe, but can also be used, as I've said, to infer things about the non-physical universe. There are things that we know physically.

We can test, in a certain sense, physically, from which we can properly infer the existence of a soul. And this, for example, is remote viewing when a person seems to be totally expired, yet when they come back, they're able to describe things that happen down the hall or in a different city, that they went to while their body was inert and described them accurately. That's called remote viewing.

And there's thousands of examples of this. That's evidential to demonstrate that there is a, we have physical reasons, physically evidentiary reasons, dead body, but an individual then coming back to life who's reporting these things for which the only legitimate explanation is a rational soul, the existence of a rational soul. So these things dovetailed in some way.

And we want to be careful about that, but we can't, I think, arbitrarily dismiss these conclusions that follow from reflection on facts we learned from scientific methodology, that would be the imposition of an artificial worldview called materialism. So we want to follow the facts where they lead and not, the way I put it when I talk about this, do we want the right answers or do we want the right kind of answers? And ultimately, when it comes to science, when push comes to shove, they want the right kind of answers. And that's the imposition of metaphysical naturalism.

Let's go on to a question from Drew. How would you respond to this statement that was made in response to Mr. B's, "Is the Bible a Pro-Life Book video?" And here's the statement, "The Bible cannot be used against abortion. There is the commandment to execute adulterous women without any provision to check if they are pregnant." Well, I've actually never heard that one before, and it's interesting.

So since I haven't heard this, I have to think through it just a little bit. For one, we have to be careful of arguments from silence, all right? Just because there is no commandment or provision in there doesn't mean that this wasn't taken into consideration. It's just not part of the formal law, and possibly because it was not considered a factor.

And by the way, how do you tell a woman is pregnant anyway? We can do that now through medical means. Back then, there are obviously there's physical manifestations of pregnancy, but they don't manifest themselves until after gestation or after

fertilization. So there may be ambiguity there.

How do you know that? Okay. But it may have been the case. In fact, even in modern law, if a woman is scheduled to be executed and she's pregnant, the execution is delayed until she delivers, all right? So I have no reason to believe that that wasn't the case.

But here's the other factor is you can't simply grab one verse and infer from that verse something that may not be true, and then make a blanket statement that the Bible is not pro-life. Do we have any other passages or sections of scripture or parts that is meant to indicate that the unborn is as fully human in God's eyes as a born person? And the answer is yes, we do. And I have argued from Luke chapter one, and I'm not sure Tim, I think in one of his red panelogics has Mr. B has made this point too, that there you have John the Baptist sleeping with joy in the womb of his mother.

He's not called John the Baptist there. He's not even called John yet, but he is himself. In other words, that is John the Baptist rigidly designated regardless of what they call him at that point.

It is the child that leaps with joy in his womb in the presence of Jesus, the Messiah, and John the Baptist at that point is a second trimester fetus, and Jesus is a zygote. Yet they are still, we can infer from the passage, they are still themselves as it were, and their noble selves indeed, even though they're in the womb. There's another thing I actually did an article on this, actually this 2122, and I did an interview a couple of weeks on this, and there's a passage there in some translations saying if there's a struggle and there is a miscarriage, a struggle where a woman is involved who's pregnant, there's a miscarriage that there's a fine that's levied, but if the woman dies, then life or life.

So it appears at least in some translations on first blush that the unborn is not treated in the same way as a born person in the law. But when you look more closely at the passage, you realize it doesn't say miscarriage in the original. There is a Hebrew word for that, but that isn't the word that's used.

Instead, it just simply says the child comes out. Now the child, so it's a premature birth, and then it says if, and so for a premature birth, there is a fine, but if there is any further damage or further injury, then the fine should be life or life. Okay, and so here's a passage when properly translated and understood in this context, does make the point that the unborn is a valuable human being on par with the mother of the child yet to be born.

Okay, so what I'm saying is we have some very, very clear passages that give decisive from which we can draw a decisive conclusion that the Bible is pro-life in the sense that we normally use the word. And so those arguments cannot be successfully invade against by making this reference to capital punishment of a woman when there's no

apparent test for pregnancy. There is a special horror in the Old Testament for the killing of children.

And I don't see why that wouldn't apply to the youngest, the ones in the womb as well, but in addition to everything you said, but also you have to keep in mind here too that if the woman is stoned for adultery, there's nothing there to whatsoever to do with abortion. It's a punishment for adultery. If a child dies because of that, that is a result of her of her sin.

Like in the Old Testament, you see that a lot. There are, think about David's son who died because of his sin. There's a, there's a resulting, the punishment for sin.

Yes, the consequence can move on to the next generation, move on to other people because of the parents, but the goal of the punishment is not to kill the child. The goal of the punishment is to punish adultery. So to say that this punishment is about abortion or that it makes it not pro-life is just to misunderstand what it's about.

Right. Good response, Amy. We've talked about other areas of the Old Testament because this comes up a lot.

But like you said, Greg, you have to look at the clear examples of where they're discussing the unborn children and the view of children and the view of human beings and the view of killing the innocent overall to make sense of this. And you can't just pick out one verse and then try to find some, I don't know, some loophole or something. That's exactly what it is.

I remember Tim making, Tim Barnett making the, a clever observation. He says, "Some people ask questions because they're looking for answers. Other people ask questions because they're looking for exits or something like that." And that would be kind of the loophole thing.

This, I think, is one of those examples. Well, thank you, Greg. And thank you, Richard, and Drew for your questions.

We always appreciate that. Send us your questions on Twitter with the hashtag #STRAsk. Or you can go through our website, just find our contact page and you'll have the option to choose what question you're asking.

So choose, I have another question, and put #STRAsk somewhere in your question. Just keep in mind you need to keep it to just maybe two sentences. It's only 280 characters for tweets, so try to keep it under that and then we'll consider your question.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Cogle for Stand to Reason. Thanks for listening.