

There is 'design' in nature, Brown biologist argues at AAAS

February 17 2008

Brown University biologist Kenneth Miller has to hand one victory to the “intelligent design” crowd. They know how to frame an issue.

“The idea that there is ‘design’ in nature is very appealing,” Miller said. “People want to believe that life isn’t purposeless and random. That’s why the intelligent design movement wins the emotional battle for adherents despite its utter lack of scientific support.

“To fight back, scientists need to reclaim the language of ‘design’ and the sense of purpose and value inherent in a scientific understanding of nature,” he said.

In a Feb. 17, 2008 symposium at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting in Boston, Miller will argue that science itself, including evolutionary biology, is predicated on the idea of “design” – the correlation of structure with function that lies at the heart of the molecular nature of life.

Miller will make his case in a session titled “Communicating Science in a Religious America”. Miller will join seven other experts to discuss ways to craft communication efforts around evolution, stem cell research, climate change and nanotechnology that are sensitive to religious communities while remaining true to science.

Miller is a cell biologist and the Royce Family Professor for Teaching Excellence at Brown. Miller is coauthor of four high school and college

biology textbooks, which are used by millions of students nationwide, and is regarded as America's leading defender of Darwin's theory of evolution. This year in South Carolina, Miller successfully defended one of his textbooks against an anti-evolution attack before the state school board. In 2005, he served as lead witness in the trial on evolution and intelligent design in Dover, Pennsylvania. His popular book, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution*, addresses the scientific status of evolutionary theory and its relationship to religious views of nature.

Miller will use arguments from his new book, *Only a Theory: Evolution and the Battle for America's Soul* to be published by Viking Press in May, for his AAAS talk. Miller will argue that the scientific community must address the attractiveness of the "design" concept and make the case that science itself is based on the idea of design – or the regularity of organization, function, and natural law that gives rise to the world in which we live.

He points out that structural and molecular biologists routinely speak of the design of proteins, signaling pathways, and cellular structures. He also notes that the human body bears the hallmarks of design, from the ball sockets that allows hips and shoulders to rotate to the "s" curve of the spine that allows for upright walking.

"There is, indeed, a design to life – an evolutionary design," Miller said. "The structures in our bodies have changed over time, as have its functions. Scientists should embrace this concept of 'design,' and in so doing, claim for science the sense of orderly rationality in nature to which the anti-evolution movement has long appealed."

Source: Brown University

Citation: There is 'design' in nature, Brown biologist argues at AAAS (2008, February 17)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-02-nature-brown-biologist-aaas.html>

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