

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ..."
The first words of the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution

San Francisco Atheists

Essay

The 'Soup' Manifesto

By Bernard Duncan Mayes Friday, February 12, 2010

Atheism is not enough. What is also needed is a new and on-going explanation of Existence. Let me suggest just such an explanation. I have called it The 'Soup' Manifesto:

According to relatively recent research, some of it undertaken in the last century, everything, living and non-living, our world and the universe around us can be said to be only energy interacting with itself. This working force takes many forms from the sub-atomic particles that make up everything to electro-magnetic forces like light, gravity, radio waves, objects that seem solid such as vegetables, our bodies, planet Earth, seemingly the 'dark matter' of outer space, and even ideas that are the product of our neurons. Thus everything is on the move, often so slowly we cannot see or feel it, often so fast it boggles the mind, an endless mixture similar to an enormous soup in which everything is always being redistributed until eventually (some think) it may reach an inert equilibrium. [1]

But this soup of energy in which we, our world and the universe around exist is without purpose. There is no 'grand plan'. 'Purpose' is a human concept derived from our perceived relationship between Cause and Effect and from which humanity benefits. [2] Look a bit closer: The interacting soup of energy of which everything is formed can be measured mathematically in bundles called 'quanta'. These bundles first coalesce by chance and are subject to other energetic forces forming tiny particles which then coalesce into atoms, molecules, amalgams, objects such as stars and planets, then by natural selection from single cells into more complex organisms such as plants and animals. The changes occur everywhere in the cosmos, sometimes slowly, sometimes rapidly. Thus we ourselves are slowly evolving and may reasonably assume that among the billions of stars and their planets there may be some where other organisms have also occurred and may have a similar history. [3]

We have also learned that the total energy from which everything is formed can never be increased or decreased, thus it has neither a beginning nor an end. Many have concluded that our present expanding universe resulted from the dispersal of a tightly knit bundle of energy [4] but this energy also must already have been in existence.

And as for history - again, it was the interaction of energy within our universe that resulted in the development of life by natural selection from single cells to complex organisms with neurological systems we call brains, and our brains then constructed civilizations (collections of ideas and artifacts). The evolutionary drive behind such developments is for survival which includes protection from the elements, predators and competitors, and nourishment. Otherwise existence itself 'leads' nowhere.

Thus we see that since there is only energy - no gods, no supernatural forces, and no souls. Our everyday life is entirely taken up with the virtually endless redistribution of energy which continues after life as it did before birth, all our parts being always drawn from or scattered among other organisms.

The morality that seems inevitably to derive from this is one of survival by means of inclusiveness, tolerance of others, and seemingly continued exploration.

- [1] The abstract nature of the term 'energy' is well explained in Brian L. Silver's *Ascent of Science* (Oxford 1998) p.6 , 402 Another helpful definition can be found in Galileo's Finger, *The Ten Great Ideas of Science* - Peter Atkins (Oxford 2003) p.83. The term was first used as a modern concept in 1807 by the versatile physicist Thomas Young. An alternative to soupism might be Energism but less tasty! The possible final state of the system is explained by Theodore Arabatzis and Kostas Gavroglu in *The Oxford Companion to the History of Modern Science* Ed. J. L. Heilbron (Oxford 2003)
- [2] Neil A Campbell *Biology* (Benjamin /Cummings 1993) p.427 This is the essence of 'natural selection'
- [3] Brian L. Silver *Ascent of Science* (Oxford 1998 p.214, 402, 411 also Neil A Campbell *Biology* (Benjamin/Cummings 1993) p.657
- [4] Evidence for a 'Big Bang' is the Hubble Recession (meaning expansion) discovered by E.P.Hubble 1929 and microwave background radiation discovered by Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson in 1965. See also Max Delbruck *Infinity; Logical Paradoxes in Mind from Matter?* (Blackwell 1986)

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this essay are those of the author, and not necessarily those of San Francisco Atheists or any other organization.