

Is Fine-Tuning an Argument for a Creator? An Early Harvard Pioneer on Chemical and Biological Design Arguments

Fine tuning is a typical character of technical systems which have been well designed and optimized. Often designer protected their ideas by patenting. Fine tuning in nature is used as an argument for an intelligent designer (ID). Here Lawrence Joseph Henderson (1878-1942) is introduced, an American biologist and chemist, professor at Harvard University. He didn't use the term fine tuning, but he was fascinated by the many unique properties of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen and their stable compounds of water and carbonic acid. He remarked: "These are no mere accidents; an explanation is to seek." But at the same time, he rejected the idea of a creator. He admitted very honestly "that no explanation is at hand" and is still not until today!

Fine tuning is not a strong proof for a creator, like proofs in mathematics or physics. But fine tuning is an indication in favor of a creator and it becomes even stronger if the search for a natural explanation is not successful.

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I. Lawrence Joseph Henderson – Biographical lines

- A. L.J. Henderson (1878 – 1942)
- B. Youth and early education
- C. Harvard College
- D. Harvard University, Medical School
- E. University of Strasbourg (Franz Hofmeister)
- F. Lecturer and Professor at Harvard University

II. Scientific Working and Development of his Thinking

- A. Physical chemistry in physiological systems
- B. Acid - base - equilibrium, Henderson - Hasselbalch - Equation
- C. Blood - a physicochemical system

III. “The Fitness of the Environment” and “The Order of Nature”

- A. Impressed by the fitting of physicochemistry to physiology
- B. Knowing and accepting Darwin’s theory – but it is no explanation for this phenomenon
- C. Searching for an explanation – but until today no one is at hand

IV. Reflection on Fine Tuning as an Indication for a Creator

- A. Henderson is a credible witness of fine tuning in nature
- B. Agnostics and Christians - if they are honest – are both stopping further questioning (Job 38 – 42; John 21, 24-29)
- C. Fine tuning is an indication for a creator
- D. An indication becomes stronger if explanations are not found

Literature from L.J. Henderson:

The Fitness of the Environment (1913)

https://openlibrary.org/books/OL24169048M/The_fitness_of_the_environment

The Order of Nature (1917)

<https://archive.org/details/cu31924012262030/page/n5/mode/2up>

Blood: A Study in General Physiology (1928)

<https://archive.org/details/b29928771/page/n17/mode/2up>